

Hot Kennedy boys surge by Warriors

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Kennedy Cougars and Washington Warriors rose to the occasion on Hall of Fame Night at Washington on Friday.

The hot-shooting Cougars rose a little higher.

Kennedy nailed 61.4 percent of its shots and canned eight 3-pointers in an exciting 75-64 victory over the Warriors in a Mississippi Valley Conference boys basketball game before a lively crowd at Washington.

Zach Daniels and Brendon Manning scored 19 points apiece for Kennedy. Manning also grabbed 10 rebounds against the taller Warriors for an impressive double-double.

Bryton Heisler contributed 11 points and fearless freshman Derrick Diggins also popped in 11 points for the winners (12-5, 9-3).

Washington (8-9, 6-6) bolted to a quick 9-1 lead and Kennedy Coach Jon McKowen called a timeout to remind his guys how they were supposed to play the game.

"I told them that we were on our heels," said McKowen. "I felt like we were a step slow in everything because we weren't ready, we weren't anticipating.

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"Got overwhelmed with the atmosphere a little bit," he thought. "We have to play on our toes and we have to play downhill to be really good. That's our strength. We're fast, we can shoot the ball. We handle the ball well.

"We're not a methodical team, and we were playing very methodical and slow."

The Cougars got the message and responded, but the Warriors also played at a high level and made 55.1 percent of their shots in the ballgame. The difference in the contest came from long range, with Kennedy nailing 9-of-18 from behind the 3-point arc and Washington going 4-for-18.



Daniels and Diggins both had three triples for Kennedy at crucial times. Manning, Cole Murdock and Drake Brewster also hit 3-pointers for Kennedy.

"It's a tough matchup for our guys, because they're quick and can shoot it and we don't have the quickest guards on the perimeter defensively sometimes," said Washington Coach Adam Sanchez. "They exploit you by spacing you. That's what they've done all season. They space you and shoot it well."

Both clubs made some remarkable plays during the 32-minute classic, perhaps none better than a behind-the-back move by Heisler for a big layup for Kennedy. It was a fun game to watch and a fun game to play.

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"Inner-city games are always fun and crazy," said Manning. "We knew Wash was going to bring it to us.

"Wash has some pretty big guys. We just have heart. We don't have the size, but we have the ability to play the game."

Kennedy surged to a 50-43 lead on Heisler's steal and layup, but Washington responded and tied the game 58-58 on a layup by Keegan Moore on a nifty feed from freshman Hunter Strait.

Manning came up with a steal and layup to give the Cougars a 60-58 lead, then Daniels hit a clutch 3-pointer to make it 63-58. Maurice Arrington pulled Washington within 63-60, but Diggins coolly nailed a 3-pointer from the corner to give Kennedy a 66-60 advantage.

Diggins began the season on the sophomore team, but the ninth grader has cracked the starting lineup for the varsity. McKowen likes what he's seen of the rookie this year.

"His poise," said McKowen. "The situation is not too big for him. He stays calm, collected. He's very comfortable on the basketball floor. And he's a great teammate."

Arrington pulled Washington within 68-64 on two free throws with 2:15 left, but Kennedy finished the game with a 7-0 spurt to win by a deceiving 11 points.

"I thought we played too quick in the fourth quarter when they got faster on their end," said Sanchez. "That's what they want to do is push the tempo. They got it going in their favor a little bit at times.

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"Like I told our guys, I thought our effort was outstanding," he said. "Sometimes you lay it on the line and see how well you can play and you see what the score ends up being.

"We just couldn't get over the hump to get that two- or three-point lead when we needed it," said Sanchez. "A couple of free throws, a couple of open shots here and there and it could have been a different ballgame."

Moore paced Washington with 17 points with some athletic moves near the bucket. Keion Wills and Arrington scored 12 points apiece for the Warriors. Julian Good-Jones, who has signed to play football at Iowa State, gave the Warriors a lift with eight points.

KENNEDY (75): Daniels 7 2-2 19, Heisler 4 3-3 11, Murdock 2 0-0 5, Gardner 1 0-0 2, Diggins 4 0-0 11, Manning 7 4-5 19, Girling 0 0-0 0, Techau 0 0-0 0, Brewster 2 3-4 8. Totals 27 12-14 75.

WASHINGTON (64): Kramer 0 1-2 1, Strait 2 0-0 6, Hoeger 0 0-0 0, Wills 6 0-0 12, Arrington 5 2-3 12, Moore 7 3-5 17, Printy 2 0-0 6, Williams 1 0-0 2, Dawson 0 0-0 0, Good Jones 4 0-0 8. Totals 27 6-10 64.

Halftime - Kennedy 34, Washington 32. 3-point goals - Kennedy 9 (Daniels 3, Diggins 3, Murdock 1, Manning 1, Brewster 1), Washington 4 (Strait 2, Printy 2).