

Hutchins sparks Prairie by J-Hawks

Written by Tom Fruehling

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In a fast-paced duel from start to finish, the Jefferson girls had Prairie on the run early but faded halfway through and fell, 73-64, on their home turf Tuesday night.

“We felt lucky to be down by only one at halftime,” said Prairie Coach Steve Doser. “And I thought the first three minutes of the second half were really key.

“We came out a lot more aggressive. We really picked it up, had a great rebounding effort and made some shots. That was the difference.”

Down by as many as eight points in the first half, Prairie took its first lead at 33-32 right after the intermission on a long two-pointer by leading scorer Cyerra Hutchins.

Rock-solid all night in all phases of the game, the 5-foot -10 senior collected a career-high 24 points. But as is often the case with Prairie, as perennial all-conference point guard Madison Dellamuth goes, so go the Hawks.

The senior floor leader took but two shots in the first half, sinking a jump shot to start the second quarter.

“Coach,” Dellamuth said, “is always telling me, 'Look for your shot, look for your shot.' But

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others were getting open so I was passing off. I didn't need to score.”

With some locker room encouragement from Doser, the Bradley-bound fourth-year starter came out with a fury after halftime.

She scored first on a put-back, drove the lane for another and sank three free throws in the first five minutes of the third quarter. She ended up with 13 points on three for six shooting and seven of nine from the line.

“We definitely fed off of her after halftime,” said Hutchins, a Kirkwood recruit who is often the recipient of Dellamuth’s pinpoint passes. “We played with more intensity.”

When Hutchins hit a 3-pointer to open the fourth quarter and then tapped in a rebound, the Hawks took their biggest lead at 56-44. They finished it off on the free throw line as the J-Hawks tried to extend the game with fouls.

With two freshmen and a sophomore in the starting lineup, Jefferson Coach Jason Edwards was tickled pink with their fast getaway.

Ninth grader Avery Guy (daughter of sophomore coach Willie Guy) plays point guard and didn't make a turnover all night. Playing both under the basket and on the perimeter are sophomore Amanda Ollinger and freshman Kennedy Dighton. They're both over six-feet tall and sturdy, yet agile enough to run the floor and hit from the outside.

Even with a height advantage, however, Jefferson was out-rebounded 39-21. And the Hawks pulled down 11 offensive boards to the J-Hawks' four.

“That gave them seven more possessions,” Edwards pointed out. “And a lot of their points were on second-chance shots.

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“Really, it came down to rebounding and the fact that they made more free throws (26 of 36) than we shot (16 for 18).”

Before fouling out late, Ollinger led Jefferson with 19 points while Dighton totaled nine points with two 3-pointers.

Senior Maddy Blietz kept her team in the game in the second half with her feisty defense along with 10 of her 14 total points.

“Prairie was division champ last year,” Edwards noted. “I told the girls that to be a champ you have to take advantage of your opportunities.

“We had our chances tonight. We were right there. We just couldn't get over the hump.”

Doser said he was impressed with the young J-Hawk group. “We beat a good team tonight,” he acknowledged.

PRAIRIE (73): Cyerra Hutchins 8 7-11 24, Emilie Rotter 3 3-4 9, Olivia Usher 3 6-8 13, Madison Dellamuth 3 7-9 13, Makenzie Stoffer 3 1-2 7, Taylor Moenk 1 0-0 2, Maddie Adams 0 0-0 0, Lynsey Altenhofen 1 2-2 5. Totals 22 26-36 73.

JEFFERSON (64): Amanda Ollinger 6 6-6 19, Kennedy Dighton 3 1-2 9, Avery Guy 1 3-4 5, Maddy Blietz 6 2-2 14, Kieley Brathwaite 2 0-0 5, Sam Kitterman 2 0-0 4, Autume Starks 0 2-2 2, Erin Kuba 2 2-2 6, Cassandra Veglahn 0 0-0 0. Totals 22 16-18 64.

Halftime – Jefferson 32, Prairie 31. 3-point goals – Prairie 3 (Hutchins, Altenhofen, Usher), Jefferson 4 (Dighton 2, Ollinger, Brathwaite). Total fouls – Prairie 17, Jefferson 25. Fouled out – Ollinger.

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