

Murdock helps Cougars trim J-Hawks

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 10 January 2014 23:16 - Last Updated Friday, 10 January 2014 23:53



Cole Murdock has a nice touch on a golf course for Kennedy High School, which has one of the top golf programs in the state.

He's developing a nice touch on the basketball floor as well.

Murdock tossed in a pair of clutch 3-pointers in the fourth quarter Friday night to help the Cougars fend off Jefferson, 55-52, in a Mississippi Valley Conference game at Kennedy.

Murdock finished with a team-high 13 points as the Cougars raised their records to 6-1 overall and 4-0 in the MVC under first-year coach Jon McKowen.

Murdock, a junior, plans to play golf in college, but he likes basketball and enjoys taking a break from golf during the winter.

"It's just good to get away from the sticks for awhile," he said. "I think it's good for you to get away from the sport that you want to do in college and you love, but it's not good to overload yourself and wear yourself out before you're in college."

Murdock likes to hit golf balls at the indoor facility at Elmcrest Country Club on Sundays during the winter, but other than that he's focused on basketball right now. However, he plans to stop playing AAU basketball this summer for Pump N' Run and play in major golf tournaments instead as he looks for a spot to play in college.

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Ideally, he'd like to find a college where he could play golf and basketball. "It would be hard for me to give up basketball at this point," he said.

Murdock has a nice touch on his 3-pointers and was 8 for 17 heading into Friday's game. He hit three more against the J-Hawks to help Kennedy win a game it could have lost against Jefferson, which fell to 1-6 overall and 0-5 in the MVC.

"Cole's been getting better every day," said McKowen. "Cole is very, very coachable. He works hard on the little things in practice. He's a good shooter. We want to get him more shots around the 3-point line.

"Cole is really developing that mid-range game now, which is going to make him difficult to guard."

Murdock hit a 3-pointer to snap a 38-38 tie at the start of the fourth quarter and give the Cougars a 41-38 lead. They never trailed again. He swished another 3-pointer for a 45-40 advantage and made a floater down the lane for a 49-44 lead.

Jacob Olson pulled Jefferson within 52-49 with a 3-pointer with 35 seconds left and Bryce Cardis pulled the J-Hawks within 54-52 with a 3-pointer with 16 seconds to go.

Derek Jacobus made one free throw to give Kennedy a 55-52 lead with 10 seconds left. Jefferson had a chance to force overtime, but Olson's 3-pointer in the final seconds hit the front of the rim and bounced away.

McKowen was not entirely happy with his team's performance, but glad they found a way to win.

"It felt like Game 1 again," he said. "We made mistakes we haven't made for a long time. That's

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the frustrating part, but when you have 20 days off (for the holidays) that's a big worry."

McKowen thought the Cougars made too many bad passes and other mistakes, but overall thought the shot selection was good.

"They told me we missed 14 consecutive shots in the second half, but it didn't feel like that because we were getting great shots," he said.

A.J. Carter, Bryton Heisler and Drew Heitland scored 10 points apiece for Kennedy.

Olson paced Jefferson with 19 points. The senior point guard had made only 1 of 15 3-point shots all season for 6.7 percent, but he hit four triples against the Cougars.

"He proved tonight that he could shoot the ball a little bit," said McKowen. "That makes them a different team. They made some shots and we didn't, but we found a way to grind it out and get a win."

Cardis scored seven points for Jefferson in the fourth quarter and finished with 10 points.

"Our effort and attitude were what they should be," said Jefferson Coach Stu Ordman. "That should now be a standard, and we can even go higher than that. Now it's execution. Our execution needs to improve dramatically."

Both teams play again Saturday. Kennedy faces Reedsburg (Wis.) at an event at the Wisconsin Dells, while Jefferson hosts Maquoketa Saturday night.

JEFFERSON (52): Olson 7 1-2 19, Cardis 4 1-2 10, J.Van Oort 2 1-1 5, Wiederin 2 0-0 4, Colbert 1 0-0 2, Larson 3 1-1 7, A.Van Oort 0 1-2 1, Konigsmark 1 1-2 4. Totals 20 6-10 52.

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KENNEDY (55): Daniels 0 4-6 4, Carter 4 1-2 10, Jacobus 0 1-2 1, Bil 2 0-0 4, Murdock 5 0-0 13, Buck 0 0-0 0, Heisler 2 5-8 10, Holzer 1 0-0 2, Manning 0 1-2 1, Heitland 4 2-2 10. Totals 18 14-24 55.

Halftime - Kennedy 32, Jefferson 26. 3-point goals - Jefferson 6 (Olson 4, Cardis 1, Konigsmark 1), Kennedy 5 (Murdock 3, Carter, 1, Heisler 1). Fouled out - Cardis.