

Howell's tirades spark Wash to title

Written by Jim Ecker

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Cedar Rapids Washington Coach Frank Howell had a couple of tirades in the first half Tuesday night that would have made Fran McCaffery blush, but his girls didn't mind and the tactic worked.

The eighth-ranked Warriors recovered from a slow start and defeated No.9 Kennedy, 64-55, to clinch at least a tie for the Valley Division title in the Mississippi Valley Conference.

Washington (16-4, 11-1) can win the outright Valley title Friday night against Jefferson at home.

Howell screamed at his players and slammed his clipboard to the floor during a timeout late in the first quarter after the Warriors committed a string of turnovers and fell behind 16-4. The veteran coach got red-faced again as he ripped into Dani Franklin between the first and second periods.

"I just didn't think we were playing to our full potential," said Howell. "I was hoping they would prove me right, and they did. They really came around.

"I told Mike Johnson and Ralph Plagman, I tried as hard as I could to break that thing. It just wouldn't break," he joked about the wounded clipboard. "I was willing to keep trying, but those timeouts only last so long."

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Plagman, the Washington principal, patted Howell on the back on the way to the locker room after the game. Johnson is an associate principal at Washington.

Franklin sparked a 19-0 run for the Warriors in the third quarter that transformed a 12-point deficit into a seven-point lead at 43-36 late in the period. Franklin scored nine straight points during the spurt and Callie Cook hit a pair of 3-pointers to help fuel the surge.

Franklin, the team's star player, got an earful from Howell in the first half when she had trouble getting untracked, but she responded like a champion and finished with a game-best 22 points.

"I've seen him angry, but I think that gets us motivated and gets us going, realizing that we really need to step it up," said Franklin. "His message was that we're better than this."

Cook, sidelined with a foot injury earlier in the season, tossed in four 3-pointers and scored 14 points for Washington. She also responded favorably to Howell's explosions.

"It's an energy kick," she said. "I used it more as motivation. He's been angry before. I think he knows we respond well to it. I think we're all pretty hard heads, so we can take it."

Howell also spent a lot of time applauding his players as they mounted their strong comeback and clinched a share of the division crown.

"Coaching basketball is like white water rafting," he said. "You go through a period of time where it's calm and a period where it's turbulent, so it's not very good for our health when we're in this profession, to tell you the truth."

"I just believed in those guys. That's the biggest thing," he said. "I just wanted to see it manifest itself a little bit and have these guys play to their full potential. In the second half we were pretty close to that."

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Aleena Hobbs scored 12 points for Washington and Jasmyne Jones made five free throws in the final two minutes to help keep Kennedy at bay.

Washington finished with 25 turnovers, many of them in the first half, but Kennedy reciprocated by committing 21 turnovers, many of them in the second half when the Warriors roared back with their 19-0 surge.

The Cougars missed all 13 of their 3-pointers, compared to 6 of 18 from long range for Washington. "Right now we just can't buy an outside shot, unfortunately," said Kennedy Coach Tony Vis, whose club also had shooting woes in a loss at Jefferson Friday night.

Kennedy jumped to a 16-4 lead in the first quarter and led 34-20 late in the first half, but Washington pulled within 34-24 at halftime and owned the second half.

"We were the aggressor in the first half and forced them into a lot of turnovers," said Vis. "We were up 14 and had things going our way, and then unfortunately ... And then in the third quarter they became the aggressor and came after us and we got on our heels and we kind of melted."

Paige Hendrickson scored 12 points for Kennedy (14-6, 8-4). Jordan Holmes finished with 11 points and Morgan Martin had 10.

Washington has a one-game lead over Waterloo West for the Valley Division title with one game left in the regular season for both clubs.

Franklin grabbed 10 rebounds for the Warriors, who avenged a 74-49 loss to Kennedy in their first meeting Dec. 20 at Washington in a non-conference game.

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Washington helped its cause Tuesday by cashing 24 of 30 free throws for 80 percent.

WASHINGTON (64): Clark 1 0-0 2, Cook 4 2-3 14, Hobbs 3 6-8 12, Jones 0 6-9 6, Semrau 0 0-0 0, Hartman 2 0-0 4, West-Doyle 0 2-2 2, Franklin 7 6-6 22, O'Donnell 0 2-2 2, Kamin 0 0-0 0, Ochs 0 0-0 0, Visser 0 0-0 0. Totals 17 24-30 64.

KENNEDY (55): Meier 0 2-2 2, DeLong 1 0-0 2, Holmes 5 1-2 11, Langhurst 3 0-2 6, Hellweg 0 0-0 0, Hayden 0 0-1 0, Milbrath 1 2-2 4, Hendrickson 4 4-6 12, Botkin 2 4-4 8, Martin 3 4-5 10. Totals 19 17-24 55.

Halftime - Kennedy 34, Washington 24. 3-point goals - Washington 6 (Cook 4, Franklin 2), Kennedy none. Fouled out - O'Donnell, Botkin.