

Mustangs turn up defense on Coe

Written by Mike Condon

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The Mount Mercy Mustangs were picked to finish sixth in their final season in the Midwest Collegiate Conference.

Coach Paul Gavin admitted his men's basketball team has been playing with a chip on its shoulder and that chip fell squarely on visiting Coe on Saturday afternoon at the Hennessey Recreation Center.

Mount Mercy's pesky defense forced 21 turnovers, 12 in the first half. The Kohawks could never get into a consistent offensive flow as the Mustangs raced to a convincing 81-65 victory.

"Our kids have worked awfully hard this year," Gavin said after his team moved to 9-3 with the win. "It was a tough year last year, both personally and privately and they've worked really hard to change the culture here.

"It's been a lot of fun to be with these guys each and every day."

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That fun continued on Saturday. The Mustangs jumped to an 8-1 lead in the first three minutes and built it to double digits on a 3-point basket by Da'Quan Moore with 11:27 left in the first half.

The margin never got under nine the rest of the way.

Coe Coach Bryan Martin took one look at the stat sheet and quickly found the difference in the game.

"First off, I want to credit Mount Mercy," he said. "They have a great team this year and they came out and really took the fight to us.

"The only real disappointing thing for me was that we didn't respond to that," Martin added. "Their pressure made it hard for us in everything we tried to do. We turned it over way too much. Our turnovers were fueling their offense."

Mount Mercy's balance was also difficult for Coe to handle. The Mustangs made eight 3-point field goals and dominated on the inside, outscoring the Kohawks, 38-20, in the paint.

"That makes me feel good because I coach the big guys," Gavin said. "They really came to play.

Mount Mercy led 41-27 at the break before Coe (3-2) cut the lead to 56-47 on a 3-point basket from Lincoln Vorba with 11:14 remaining.

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"We did some nice things in spurts," Martin said. "The problem was we just couldn't do them consistently and that goes back to the job Mount Mercy did against us. We can learn a lot from today."

The Mustangs responded with a 6-0 run to regain control, fueled by a pair of lay-ins from Dondre Osborne, who led Mount Mercy with 14 points.

"I thought he and Da'Quan did a good job of handling the ball today," Gavin said. "I like the way we look right now. We have a ways to go, but we are off to a great start."

Brothers Matt and JR Vonderhaar led Coe with 14 points apiece.

COE (65): Timm 1 1-2 3, M. Vonderhaar, 4 2-2 14, Daoust 0 0-0 0, JT Vonderhaar 5 4-5 12, Fahey 1 0-2 2, Pyritz 0 0-0 0, Ditch 0 0-0 0, Blumberg 0 0-0 0, Jirak 1 0-0 3, Meyer 3 4-4 11, Wadsworth 0 0-0 0, Vorba 3 2-2 11, Shedeck 1 0-0 2, Pflughaupt 0 0-0 0, Bernhard 0 0-0 0, Stix 0 0-0 0, Schmarzo 2 0-0 5, Everhart 0 0-0 0, Delgado 0 0-0 0. Totals: 21 13-17 65.

MOUNT MERCY (81): Houston 3 4-4 10, Osborne 7 0-0 14, Matos 3 3-4 10, Miesner 2 0-0 5, Struss 5 0-1 12, Goines 0 0-0 0, Boonstoppel 3 4-4 12, Moore 2 0-0 6, Murdock 0 0-0 0, Johnson 0 0-0 0, Price-Majors 3 0-0 6, Lamaak 2 0-0 4, Clark 0 0-0 0 Gogg 1 0-0 2. Totals: 31 11-13 81.

Halftime: Mount Mercy 41, Coe 27. 3-point goals: Coe 10 (M. Vonderhaar 4, Jirak 1, Meyer 1, Vorba 3, Schmarzo 1). Mount Mercy 8 (Matos 1, Miesner 1, Struss 2, Boonstoppel 2, Moore 2). Total fouls: Coe 16, Mount Mercy 20. Fouled out: none. Technical fouls: none.