

Cougars beat J-Hawks in final second

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 09 February 2016 23:45 - Last Updated Wednesday, 10 February 2016 00:39



There have been some tough losses, some ill-advised shots and some long meetings after games, but the Kennedy Cougars vow they won't quit and they won't back down from anyone.

It showed Tuesday night.

Drake Brewster muscled in a basket with 0.9 seconds left Tuesday to give Kennedy a 60-59 victory over Jefferson in a Mississippi Valley Conference tussle at the Jefferson gym.

The J-Hawks led by eight points entering the fourth period and led by four points with 37 seconds left in the game, but the Cougars kept battling and beat the J-Hawks for the ninth straight time.

Both clubs have only seven wins this year -- Kennedy is 7-11 and Jefferson is 7-12 -- and they were evenly matched Tuesday.

"These guys have really believed in each other all year," Kennedy coach Jon McKowen said. "With a six- or seven-win team at this time of year, usually they're racing out of the gym after practice. These guys mess around with each other more than any team I've ever had."

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"The kids have never stopped believing in each other, they're just not sure how to do that on the court. I think this is a step in the right direction today.

"That's one of those wins that can really springboard you to the postseason."

Adam Van Oort gave Jefferson a 59-56 lead with two free throws with 37 seconds to go. Matt Berst pulled Kennedy within 59-58 with two foul shots with 26 seconds left, then the Cougars forced a turnover and got the ball with 17 seconds remaining.

McKowen called his final timeout with 8.5 seconds left and designed a play to get Brewster the ball in the corner, but the J-Hawks kicked the in-bounds pass away and the Cougars had to try something else with 8.1 seconds left.



Derrick Diggins made the in-bounds pass to 5-foot-5 sophomore Jackson Foley, who passed the ball to Brewster in the lane with just a few seconds remaining and the game hanging in the balance. Brewster drew a crowd of J-Hawks, but found a way to get to the basket and score.

"I caught the ball, faced up," Brewster said. "He (a J-Hawk defender) was playing real tight, so I pump-faked and went to the hoop."

Brewster got the shot to drop for the 60-59 lead and was fouled. He missed the free throw on purpose with 0.9 seconds left and the J-Hawks did not have time to get a final shot.

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Brewster finished with 18 points for Kennedy.

"We're not going to quit," he vowed. "The losses actually bring us closer. We buckled down."

Michael Bisenius popped in six 3-pointers for Kennedy -- many from long range -- and led the Cougars with 20 points. "Coach tells me not to shoot those," he said of the 25 footers, "but I sometimes shoot them."

McKowen doesn't mind, as long as they come within the structure of the offense.

"He can really stretch them, can't he?" McKowen asked. "We got him the ball on time, in rhythm, and in the right spot."

James Brown Jr. led Jefferson with 14 points, Van Oort finished with 13 and Kane Kramer had 12 points with four 3-pointers. The J-Hawks led by eight points at halftime and held the upper hand for most of the second half, but the Cougars stole it away.

"I expect when I look back at the game film, the overall execution of the game plan wasn't there," Jefferson coach Brandon Horman said. "We had some moments where we went on some nice runs and made some nice stops defensively, but we got away from what we needed to do as a team to be successful."

Jefferson has lost six games this season by a combined total of 11 points, including a pair of one-point losses to Kennedy.

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Kennedy played short-handed Tuesday night. Matt Gardner broke his foot in two places in practice and Derek Girling was limited to spot duty with a sprained ankle.

KENNEDY (60): Brewster 8 1-3 18, Wall 2 0-0 4, Bisenius 7 0-0 20, Berst 0 2-2 2, Foley 1 0-0 2, Duehr 0 0-0 0, Diggins 2 2-4 6, Beyer 4 0-0 8, Haynes 0 0-0 0, Girling 0 0-0 0. Totals 24 5-9 60.

JEFFERSON (59): Green 2 1-2 5, Van Oort 4 4-5 13, McKinney 4 1-1 9, Kramer 4 0-0 12, Webb 2 0-0 6, Brown 5 4-4 14, McCauley 0 0-0 0, Wiedering 0 0-0 0, Larsen 0 0-0 0, Szabo 0 0-0 0. Totals 21 10-12 59.

Halftime - Jefferson 35, Kennedy 27. 3-point goals - Kennedy 7 (Bisenius 6, Brewster 1), Jefferson 7 (Kramer 4, Webb 2, Van Oort 1).