

Mount Mercy hoops postponed by rain

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 23 February 2019 22:26 -



Mount Mercy's game against Central Methodist University was postponed by rain Saturday, but there was a twist.

It was basketball, not baseball.

Water began dripping from the ceiling at the Hennessey Recreation Center in the second half of the men's basketball game, stopping action with 16 minutes, 10 seconds left to play.

A combination of rain and melting snow apparently led to the problem, with the water falling onto the floor near mid-court. Officials waited an hour for the problem to subside, but ultimately decided the court was unplayable and sent everyone home.

The game will be resumed at a later date with Central Methodist holding a 40-36 lead.

Paul Gavin, the athletic director and former men's basketball coach at Mount Mercy, said he'd never experienced a situation like this.

"As the athletic director you try to think of all the possible scenarios in terms of crisis management," he said. "This is not one we thought about it. And unfortunately we could not do a whole lot about it."

Gavin called the commissioner of the Heart of America Conference to learn the protocol for an

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unplayable court. He was told to postpone the game and reschedule it at a time that is convenient for both schools.

The Central Methodist basketball team planned to return home to Fayette, Mo., after the game was postponed, a drive of about 4 1/2 hours. Mount Mercy Coach Aaron Jennings and Central Methodist Coach Mike Davis plan to confer Sunday and pick a day to finish the game.

Mount Mercy is scheduled to host Grand View on Wednesday night. Central Methodist plays at William Penn in Oskaloosa on Wednesday night and Davis indicated it might be possible to finish the game against Mount Mercy on Tuesday night before heading to Oskaloosa.

Davis said there are other issues to consider, such as a charter bus, hotel rooms and missed class time,

"It will be Monday or Tuesday. We have to get the game in," he said.

Mount Mercy and Central Methodist are both jockeying for spots in the Heart of America Conference playoffs with one week left in the regular season. The conference tournament begins March 5.

Davis said he's run into a problem like this before and said Mount Mercy did everything it possibly could.

"We waited," said Davis. "They did everything by the book. They called the right people. You're looking at the safety of your players."

Gavin called the facilities department and the public safety department at Mount Mercy to get their input on the situation. Everyone agreed to wait and see if the leak would stop, but it never did.

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"We thought the water was slowing down, but we were getting water every two or three seconds," said Gavin.

Gavin said they might have been able to continue playing if the leak had occurred in a corner of the floor or near the baseline, but the water was dripping in the middle of the court near the center circle. They decided it would not be possible to have people race onto the court with towels with play in action, due to the location.

"Safety is of utmost concern," said Gavin. "We'll get professionals in here and get it taken care of."

The Mount Mercy and Central Methodist women's basketball teams played their game prior to the men's game without incident.

Mount Mercy officials said this is the first time that a basketball game has been postponed after it had begun at the Hennessey Recreation Center. One year, a pipe broke at the arena several days before a game and the contest was moved to Kirkwood.

There was not time Saturday to suddenly switch the men's game to Coe or Kirkwood, even if those courts had been available.