

Cougars finish fast for 5th win

Written by Mike Koolbeck

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For three quarters Kennedy was the gang that couldn't shoot straight Tuesday night at the Cougar gym.

It's a good thing games last four quarters.

Kennedy outscored Waterloo West 24-9 in the fourth period and pulled away for a 57-47 win in a Mississippi Valley Conference boys basketball game.

Cody Bell scored 15 points to lead the Cougars (5-1, 3-1 MVC). Elliott Christians had 11 points and 14 rebounds, and Trevor Heitland and Josh Jahlas added nine points apiece.

Dale Jones scored 19 points and grabbed 14 rebounds to lead West (3-3, 2-2).

"What we did is we ground out a win," Kennedy Coach Bob Fontana said. "Until we get everybody back, that's what we have to do."

Kennedy played its sixth straight game without seniors starters Josiah Coleman and Darius

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Fuller. Both were [suspended](#) before the season for violating school rules. The suspensions were for from seven to 10 games.

But the season so far isn't about who hasn't been able to play for the Cougars. It's about the blue-collar effort of the guys that are on the court.

"I'm really proud of our guys," Fontana said. "We're 5-1 at Christmas time. That's a great tribute to them. We have a team that likes each other and gets along well together and that's important."

West used a 10-0 spurt at the end of the first half to take a 29-26 lead at halftime. The Wahawks held a 38-33 lead after three quarters.

"I didn't come down hard on the guys at halftime," Fontana said. "I just said, 'We are our worst enemy right now.' We threw the ball away three straight times with a seven-point lead. We forgot how we got that lead."

They remembered in the fourth quarter.

Christians' two free throws with 5:31 left in the game started a 10-0 run by the Cougars that turned a five-point deficit into a 45-40 lead. His three-point play with 4:10 left tied the game, 40-40, and Alex Hayden's 3-pointer with 3:36 left broke the tie and put the Cougars ahead to stay.

Kennedy had missed its first 12 treys before Hayden drained his shot. Hayden had missed five.

"We just needed to stay confident," said Bell, who also missed five trey attempts. "We know we can shoot from out there, so we just have to keep shooting."

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The Cougars kept shooting, which helped in another ways.

"It really opened the lane and we kept back cutting and setting picks," Bell said.

The Cougars also kept playing defense. And once they got their lead, West lost composure and forced some bad shots.

"We got some stops when we needed to late and we got some rebounds, and they were just killing us on the boards," Fontana said.

West outrebounded the Cougars 9-2 in the second quarter. Christians had three rebounds in the first half, but snared 11 in the second.

"Coach told us to keep our heads up," said the 6-foot-7 Christians. "(West) is a bunch of leapers. Even if you do box them out, they can go up over you and get the rebound.

"(But) I trust my teammates to block out the guy closest to them. If we do that we should get our share of rebounds."

Christians also made all seven of his free throws, including five in the fourth quarter.

Kennedy was 9-for-15 from the free throw line in the fourth quarter.

The Cougars' net game is Jan. 3 at home against Dubuque Wahlert.

WATERLOO WEST (47): DaQuan Moore 2 2-4 6, DiMarco Mallett 3 3-4 10, Carderrius Smith 2

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1-2 3, Dale Jones 6 6-6 19, Tre Johnson 1 1-2 4, Malik Green 1 0-0 3, TJ Morgan 0 0-0 0, Alex Young 1 0-0 2, Xavier Hightower 0 0-0 0. Totals 15 13-18 47.

KENNEDY (57): Alex Hayden 3 0-0 7, Trevor Heitland 3 3-8 9, Josh Jahlas 4 1-2 9, Cody Bell 7 1-1 15, Elliott Christians 2 7-7 11, AJ Carter 0 0-0 0, Ben Struss 1 0-0 2, Patrick Martin 2 0-1 4. Totals 21 12-19 57.

Halftime -- Waterloo West 29, Kennedy 26. 3-point goals -- Waterloo West 4 (Mallett, Jones, Johnson, Green), Kennedy 1 (Hayden). Fouled out -- None.