

Strait leads Kennedy girls past Decorah

Written by Don Taylor

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Courtney Strait's senior leadership proved to be the determining factor Saturday night as Kennedy defeated Decorah in a non-conference girls basketball game, 59-45, at Kennedy.

Strait scored 15 first-half points, including three 3-point baskets, and added seven second-half points to finish with 22.

"It was a game that we needed our senior to take charge in and she did," said Kennedy Coach Dennis Roloff, regarding Strait's performance. "She really played a great game when we needed her to.

"After the schedule we had this past week, we found it difficult to get mentally up for tonight, but we are playing pretty well right now."

No. 14 Kennedy knocked off three straight top 10-ranked foes, including a 70-66 upset of No. 6 Iowa City High Friday night, before facing Decorah.

Decorah played predominantly a 1-3-1 zone, but in the first half the Vikings didn't really extend it and the Cougars took advantage. They used penetration until the defense collapsed, and then either dished to freshman post Stephanie Botkin, who finished with 13 points, or kicked it out to Strait on the perimeter.

In the second half Decorah extended its defense, but was the victim of transition baskets by

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Kennedy's Kaylese Johnson, who finished with nine points.

"Having Botkin inside really takes a lot of pressure off of the rest of the offense because they have to respect what she can do inside and the kick out and perimeter shot has been working well for us lately," said Strait. "Our team is playing with a lot of confidence right now and that helps our intensity, because we are trusting in each other and that is the difference. That's why when we get tired in the third game of the week we can fight through all that."

Decorah (4-14) showed signs of excellent ball movement and had some quality shooters. The Vikings were led in scoring by Anna Madrigal with 11 and Katrina Shindelar put in 10.

"Decorah is a fundamentally sound team that passes well and has strong rebounding," said Roloff. "I am pleased with the way we are playing right now. We are in the middle of a tough stretch. We played top 10 rated Prairie and Iowa City City High this past week and we have Washington and Iowa City West on the road coming up.

"We got the win we should have gotten tonight and now we have a week to get ready for Washington."

Kennedy (10-6) is on the road for its next five games. The Cougars play at No. 7 Washington Friday at 7:30 p.m.

DECORAH (45): Arend 3 1-2 7, Kuehner 1 0-0 2, Madrigal 4 2-4 11, Shindelar 4 2-2 10, Gentry 2 0-0 6, Ingvalson 1 0-2 2, Svestka 0 0-0 0, Wettach 1 0-0 2, Hartman 0 3-4, Olinger 0 0-0 0, Mitchell 1 0-0 2, McDonough 0 0-0 0, Haindfield, 0 0-2 0, Begnaud 0 0-0 0. Totals 17 8-16 45.

KENNEDY (59) Meier 2 1-1 5, Strait 8 2-4 22, Johnson 4 1-2 9, Hendrickson 2 1-2 5, Botkin 6 1-1 13, Holmes 1 0-0 2, Davis 1 0-0 3, Nelson 0 0-0 0, Zinser 0 0-0 0, Sohn 0 0-0 0, Reinhart 0 0-0 0, Schwartzhoff 0 0-0 0. Totals 24 6-10 59.

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Halftime — Kennedy 35, Decorah 24. 3-point goals - Decorah 3 (Madrigal 1, Gentry 2), Kennedy 5 (Davis 1, Strait 4). Fouled out - None.