

No. 10 Warriors halt No. 7 Kennedy's streak

Written by Carl Gonder

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The Washington Warriors had one mission on Friday night: Stop Courtney Strait.

Mission accomplished.

Using a smothering man-to-man defense, No. 10 Washington shut down one of the state's best scorers and defeated No. 7 Kennedy, 66-50, on Hall of Fame Night at the Warrior gym.

The mercurial Warriors moved to 12-6 (10-4 MVC), while the Cougars had a six-game winning streak snapped and dropped to 10-7 (7-6). Washington has won four of their last five games with two regular season contests left.

Kennedy Coach Dennis Roloff was impressed with the Warriors, but felt Strait was roughed up.

"Wash caught fire with a big run and we never recovered from that," he said. "They played very well, they shot very well, which they should on their home floor. They lived up to their billing and did a nice job.

"Courtney took a beating tonight," he said. "There was a lot of holding and that, but unless the official calls it, you do it. She got kneed late in the game and that hurt and I don't even know if she will be able to play tomorrow night.

"They focused on her and the kids (who guarded her) each had four fouls. They could have fouled out very easily."

Roloff says Strait is one of the hardest workers he has ever coached.

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"She is a tough kid and puts the work in. She is a gym rat and just a fantastic kid," he said. "Everyone would like to have one like her."

Back on Jan. 6, Strait torched the Warriors with 34 points in a 62-59 upset win. She has committed to play collegiately at Division II Truman State University in Kirksville, Mo.

Strait averages 21.2 points per game, but Tasha Roundtree and Brooke Foreman took turns shadowing the dangerous 5-10 senior, limiting her to just one field goal and seven points in the first half as the Warriors built a 25-20 lead. Strait finished with five field goals and hit 10-of-12 free throws for 21 points.

Roundtree and Foreman did everything from face-blocking to full denial, to fronting her in the post. It worked. Strait had few open looks and did not get into an offensive rhythm.

Warrior Coach Frank Howell was surprised to learn that Washington had a 20-0 run in the second and third quarters.

"I didn't realize that it was twenty-zero. I didn't know it was that extreme," he said. "This Kennedy team has turned a lot of heads this season. I mean, they are for real. They came in with a six-game win streak, so for us to be able to do that against such a good team on Hall of Fame Night is a big deal for us."

Trailing 20-12 in the second frame, the Warriors ran off 13 straight points to close out the half and then scored seven more points to start the third quarter to lead, 32-20. Strait broke the drought with two free throws with 5:53 left in the third quarter, but the damage had been done and Kennedy had to play catch-up for the rest of the game.

Washington led 44-33 after three sessions and by as many as 17 points in the fourth quarter.

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"I was pleased overall," Howell said. "We had Tasha and Brooke on Strait at times and then we were able to bring back side help. One of the things we hoped would happen was that if the ball came out of her hands, it would be difficult for her to get it back in her hands. We did a really good job of that."

Madison Meier swished a pair of 3-point goals and had 12 points, the only other double-figure scorer for the Cougars. Promising freshman Stephanie Botkin, averaging nine points a game, got into foul trouble and had just three points.

Washington enjoyed its most balanced effort of the year with four players in double-digits including Danielle Franklin with 15 (five rebounds and two steals), Abby Herb 12 points (eight rebounds and three blocks), Foreman 11 points (6-of-8 shooting and four assists) and Jazz Royster played a solid game with a double-double of 10 points and 10 boards.

Washington outrebounded Kennedy 37-25 and had 16 turnovers to the Cougars' 20. The Warriors limited Kennedy to just 26 percent shooting on the night. Washington hit 48 percent from the floor and had 16 assists for the second straight game.

The Warriors host Cedar Falls on Tuesday and then finish the regular season at Linn-Mar. Kennedy travels to Linn-Mar Saturday and also plays Iowa City West, Jefferson and Marion to close out the season before tournament play begins.

Howell said that he is looking forward to Regional play. The Warriors get a bye in the first round and will play either Clinton or North Scott in the regional semifinal at home on Feb. 17. Iowa City High is on the other side of the bracket. City High beat Washington in overtime on Jan. 23.

"Hopefully, we can get back to the regional final again," he said.

KENNEDY (50) Madison Meier 4 2-2 12, Courtney Strait 5 10-12 21, Kaylese Johnson 0 0-0 0, Jordan Holmes 3 2-3 9, Paige Hendrickson 1 3-4 5, Stephanie Botkin 1 1-6 3, Capria Davis 0 0-1 0. Totals 14 18-28 50.

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WASHINGTON (66) Jazz Royster 4 2-2 10, Madison Kramer 3 0-2 7, Kelli Klaus 3 0-0 6, Abby Herb 3 6-8 12, Brooke Foreman 5 1-4 11, Aleena Hobbs 1 0-0 2, Danielle Franklin 6 2-2 15, Tasha Roundtree 1 0-0 3, Totals 26 10-15 66.

Halftime -- Washington 25, Kennedy 20. 3-point goals - Washington 4-12 (Foreman 1, Kramer 1, Roundtree 1, Franklin 1). Kennedy 5-16 (Meier 2, Strait 1, Holmes 1).