

Speedy Harrington helps sink Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

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James Harrington is the fastest kid in Iowa and a prolific scorer for the Cedar Falls basketball team, but there's something else you need to know about him.

He's also a terrific defensive player.

Harrington starred on both ends of the floor Thursday night as the third-ranked Tigers clipped No. 8 Kennedy, 66-58, on Senior Night in the Kennedy gym.

Harrington personally outscored all four of Kennedy's guards, 17-9, and forced the Cougars into a series of costly mistakes.

"He is just so fast. And he's got a knack for jumping up and getting in the passing lanes at the top of that 1-3-1 (zone defense)," said Cedar Falls Coach Tom Bardal. "He's such a great athlete, he makes that pass really hard.

"I don't think he gets the credit he deserves. The last couple of games he's been so good on defense. To see that at this time of the year, you're real proud of him and the effort you get from him."

Harrington, a 6-foot senior, was the sprint champion at the Class 4A state track meet last spring and will be heading to the University of Alabama on a track scholarship. He's also an excellent basketball player with a 19-point scoring average.

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"I shook his hand and I said, 'Good luck at Alabama,'" Kennedy Coach Bob Fontana remarked. "I said I think you're a great player, and I'm sure as hell glad I don't have to face you anymore."

Harrington said he enjoys playing defense.

"The first half I wasn't making shots, so I tried to make an impact on the game as much as I could, and tonight it was on the defensive end," he said. "I just had to lock down and play good defense. Defense leads to offense."

Harrington scored only three points in the first half, all on free throws, but he loosened up in the second half to help the Tigers (19-2, 14-2) score the most points against Kennedy (15-6, 10-6) all season.

Cedar Falls scored 10 straight points early in the third quarter to grab a 39-31 lead and eventually stretched the margin to 11 points at 46-35 early in the fourth quarter. The Cougars looked doomed, but then Josiah Coleman went to work for the home team.

Coleman poured in 15 points in the last six minutes of the game to give Kennedy a fighting chance with a series of 3-pointers and strong drives to the basket. His final bucket pulled the Cougars within 60-58 with 21.4 seconds left, but the rally ended there.

Coleman was fouled on that basket, but he missed the free throw that would have made it a one-point game. Isaac Boettger made two foul shots for Cedar Falls with 20.3 seconds left to make it 62-58, then Coleman missed a 3-pointer.

Boettger hit two more free throws with 9.2 seconds left and Harrington finished the scoring with two more charity shots with 2.6 seconds remaining.

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Kennedy committed 24 fouls and Cedar Falls cashed 28 of 38 at the free throw line. The Tigers committed 16 fouls, and the Cougars converted only 7 of 14 foul shots.

Caleb Konieczny displayed deadly shooting and led Cedar Falls with 18 points. Harrington scored 17, Tony Johnson 14 and Boettger 12 in a balanced attack.

Coleman topped Kennedy with 18 points, with 15 of his markers coming during his prolific flurry in the final quarter. Cody Bell also fueled Kennedy's comeback and finished with 14 points with four 3-pointers. Elliott Christians scored 13.

Trevor Heitland led Kennedy's guards with seven points. Darius Fuller, Kennedy's starting point guard who has played well in recent weeks, was shut out.

Kennedy will be idle until meeting Xavier or Washington in the substate semifinals next Friday, Feb. 24 at Kennedy.

CEDAR FALLS (66): Harrington 4 9-14 17, Konieczny 5 6-6 18, Kalund Brown 0 2-4 2, Boettger 2 8-8 12, Johnson 5 2-2 14, Kalehl Brown 0 1-4 1, Gardner 1 0-0 2, Clark 0 0-0 0. Totals 17 28-38 66.

KENNEDY (58): Fuller 0 0-0 0, Heitland 2 3-4 7, Coleman 7 1-3 18, Bell 5 0-2 14, Christians 5 3-5 13, Jahlas 1 0-0 2, Struss 1 0-0 2, Hayden 0 0-0 0, Martin 1 0-0 2. Totals 22 7-14 58.

Halftime - Kennedy 26, Cedar Falls 23. 3-point goals - Cedar Falls 4 (Konieczny 2, Johnson 2), Kennedy 7 (Bell 4, Coleman 3).