

Cougars suppress Jarrod Uthoff, J-Hawks

Written by Tom Fruehling

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The sixth-ranked Kennedy Cougars did to the second-ranked Jefferson J-Hawks on Friday night what Washington did last month.

They kept 6-foot-8 all-stater Jarrod Uthoff from getting the ball in the middle much of the game and then bottled him up with two or three defenders when he did get it.

Averaging 28.8 points coming into the Mississippi Valley matchup of one-loss teams, Uthoff made four of just 10 shots taken from the field (including one three-pointer) and was held to 12 points.

Without his usual scoring, Jefferson didn't have enough firepower to overcome the hard-nosed effort Kennedy put on in a 44-37 win.

In its only other loss this season, 49-41 at Washington on Dec. 17, Jefferson got just 17 points from its usual high-scoring center.

"That was our key coming in, to stop Uthoff," said Cougar Coach Bob Fontana. "Christian French did a heckuva job on him all night."

Playing a tough man-to-man defense much of the game, the burly 6-foot-6 French kept Uthoff away from the basket. Equally rugged 6-foot-5 forwards Jake Manning and Kyle Lamaak sagged in on the Jeff star anytime he touched the ball.

"We played pretty dang good defense all night," said Fontana, whose team's only loss this year was 62-47 at the hands of Dubuque Wahlert on Jan. 4. "And at times, it was outstanding."

Lamaak, who was sick with the flu all day Friday, said the two teams know each other's strengths are evenly matched. Keeping Uthoff in check was the deciding factor.

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The big center took only four shots in the first half, and his only two points came on a tipped rebound halfway through the second quarter.

Still, Kennedy could manage only a 19-18 lead at the half.

Slick ball-handler Tyler Meiborg kept the J-Hawks in the game, scoring all 11 of his points by halftime.

The game seesawed back and forth in the third quarter.

Uthoff picked up his third foul just a minute into the second half, but that seemed to light a fire under him. His eight third-quarter points helped Jefferson take a 31-28 lead.

According to Jefferson Coach Stu Ordman, the turning point came with 6:20 to go when Kennedy picked up its sixth team foul to only two for the J-Hawks.

"We missed three perimeter shots on our next three possessions, and that was the game," the glum coach said afterward.

From then on, the Cougars' flashy Josiah Coleman took over, hitting eight of his game-high 15 points.

Besides Meiborg and Uthoff, the only other J-Hawk to score more than two points was Alec Saunders with 10.

JEFFERSON (37): Taylor Olson 1 0-0 2, Jarrod Uthoff 4 3-5 12, Tyler Meiborg 4 1-3 11, Alec

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Saunders 4 2-5 10, Ky Kramer 1 0-0 2, Michael Rooney 0 0-0 0, Alec Brown 0 0-0 0, Alexander Denny 0 0-0 0. Totals 14 6-13 37..

KENNEDY (44): Kyle Lamaak 4 1-1 10, Jake Manning 1 3-4 5, Christian French 2 1-2 5, Josiah Coleman 4 4-5 15 , Jake Misener 1 2-4 5, Darius Fuller 1 2-4 4, Trevor Heitland 0 0-0 0, Elliott Christians 0 0-0 0, Herschel Dixon 0 0-0 0. Totals 13 13-20 44.