

Warriors nip Cougars on Drew Wall Night

Written by Jim Ecker

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The girls basketball teams from Cedar Rapids Washington and Cedar Rapids Kennedy engaged in a spirited battle at the Kennedy gym Friday night.

When it was over, the players and fans from both teams joined forces to celebrate the spirit and memory of Kennedy sophomore Drew Wall, who lost his battle with cancer last month.

Washington won the Mississippi Valley Conference game, 57-56, when junior Aleena Hobbs swished a 3-pointer from the top of the key with 33 seconds left, a fitting way to celebrate her birthday.

A few minutes later, both sides put the game behind them to honor the memory of Drew Wall before a sea of purple in the Kennedy gym, with fans from both teams wearing special purple "Just Drew It" shirts that have become a best-selling item all over Eastern Iowa.

More than 2,800 of the Drew Wall T-shirts and polo shirts have been sold. All told, more than \$40,000 has been raised for the Drew Wall LIVESTRONG Fund with proceeds from the shirts and other activities.

Aaron Stecker, the athletic director at Kennedy, conducted the post-game ceremony and spoke about Drew Wall's grace and dignity during his illness. He then gave the microphone to Doug Wall, Drew's father, who expressed the family's deep appreciation for everyone's thoughts and kindness.

"Our family has just been overwhelmed by the support and the love by the whole community in Eastern Iowa," Doug Wall remarked. "It's been phenomenal. We're so lucky to live here."

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"We're so grateful to all of you," he said.

Doug Wall was accompanied by his wife, Robin, and their son, Adam, who is a freshman at Kennedy.

The "Just Drew It" shirts have been ordered by schools all over Eastern Iowa. Washington High School purchased 200 of them and many Washington fans and players wore them proudly Friday night.

"His legacy is becoming larger than life," said Stecker.

Knowing Drew Wall as he did, Stecker said Drew would not have wanted a moment of silence on his behalf Friday night. Instead, Stecker led a chant that went from one side of the gym to the other, involving fans and players for both teams.

"Just ... Drew ... It!" went the chant. "Just ... Drew ... It!"

Washington fans got it started with "Just," Kennedy students followed with "Drew" and Kennedy's adult fans finished with "It!"

"Just-Drew-It ... Just-Drew-It ... Just-Drew-It," they yelled over and over.

"This place is about spirit, this place is about hope, this place is about living strong," said Stecker. "Thanks so much for letting Drew's spirit live on."

Wall was a member of the Kennedy golf team. He played basketball when he was younger and was popular among the entire Kennedy community.

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The Washington girls basketball team sat on its bench during the ceremony, many of them wearing "Just Drew It" shirts. The Washington boys basketball team lined one of the walls, with the Kennedy boys at the other end and the Kennedy girls sitting on their bench.

Abbie Herb led the Warriors with 16 points. Hobbs finished with 14 points. Madison Kramer and Dani Franklin added 10 points apiece.

Washington trailed at halftime, 40-27. The Warriors held the Cougars to 16 points in the second half and finished their comeback victory on the 3-pointer by Hobbs.

Paige Hendrickson led Kennedy with 15 points. Jordan Holmes scored 14. Stephanie Botkin contributed 11 points and Madison Meier had 10.

WASHINGTON (57): Herb 8 0-0 16, Malcolm 0 0-0 0, Hobbs 4 4-5 14, Bjornsen 2 0-0 4, Glenski 0 0-0 0, Kramer 4 1-2 10, Franklin 3 3-5 10, Cook 1 0-0 3, Jones 0 0-0 0. Totals 22 8-12 57.

KENNEDY (56): Meier 3 3-4 10, DeLong 0 0-0 0, Holmes 6 0-0 14, B.Vis 1 2-2 4, Wagner 0 0-0 0, M.Vis 1 0-0 2, Hendrickson 7 0-0 15, Botkin 4 3-8 11, Milbrath 0 0-0 0. Totals 22 8-14 56.

Halftime - Kennedy 40, Washington 27. 3-point goals - Washington 5 (Hobbs 2, Kramer 1, Franklin 1, Cook 1), Kennedy 4 (Holmes 2, Meier 1, Hendrickson 1).

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