

Kennedy girls top J-Hawks in star-crossed game

Written by Jim Ecker

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Taylor Jacobson was talking to some of her Jefferson teammates Friday night after their basketball game at Jefferson when Kennedy junior Morgan Martin passed by.

Their crutches almost touched.

It was a star-crossed night for two of the premier basketball players in the Metro area, but the Kennedy Cougars fared better without Martin than the J-Hawks did without Jacobson.

The Cougars got balanced scoring and topped the J-Hawks, 54-42, in a Mississippi Valley Conference game that does not count in the league standings.

Morgan tore the MPFL ligament on the outside of her left knee Nov. 30, but was hoping to start playing again in early January. Unfortunately for Martin and the Cougars, she took a misstep in practice and will miss at least another three weeks.

Morgan was an all-state player at Quincy Notre Dame in Illinois last season before transferring to Kennedy. She got hurt in the second game of the year.

The injury was called a sprained ligament at first, but her doctor later said it was torn. No surgery is planned at this point.

"You hope good things for her," said Kennedy Coach Tony Vis.

Jacobson played in only five games for Jefferson last season due to a badly sprained ankle, but she recovered and averaged 8.9 points, 3.1 rebounds, 1.9 steals and 1.7 rebounds in the first 10 games this season.

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Then came the pre-game warmups Friday night before the contest against Kennedy.

"I got stepped on in warmups," Jacobson said after the game. "I was going up for a layup, so I wasn't paying attention to who did it."

She hurt her right ankle, the same one that plagued her last season. "When I went down I knew something was wrong, but it feels a little better now," she said after the game.

Jacobson left the court in tears a few minutes before tipoff and went to the hospital for X-rays. The initial diagnosis was a sprained ankle with no broken bones, but she's scheduled for more tests on Saturday to make sure.

She's not certain how much playing time she'll have to miss. "Hopefully not long," she said.

Jacobson is also a track star for the J-Hawks and plans to compete at the University of Northern Iowa next year.

Kennedy Coach Vis knew Martin wouldn't play Friday night, but Jefferson Coach Jason Edwards had to do some quick shuffling when Jacobson got hurt. He put Maddy Blietz in the starting lineup and altered his rotations, all at the last second.

The J-Hawks tried their best, without complaint.

"One of the things Coach told us even before Taylor got hurt was that you've got to play for something that's bigger than yourself," said Jefferson senior Maddie Koolbeck, who led her team with 11 points.

Koolbeck was referring to her coach's comments about Gail Eivins, a Jefferson parent and

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volunteer who is battling pancreatic cancer. Jefferson held a fundraiser in his behalf at Friday's game.

Kennedy led 35-23 at halftime and quickly extended the margin to 15 points on a number of occasions. The lead reached 16 points at 51-35 with 2:29 left, but the J-Hawks made a late rally and pulled within nine points before running out of time.

Kennedy (6-2) won the game despite not making a single field goal in the fourth quarter. The Cougars scored all eight of their points in the final stanza at the foul line.

"Wow," said Vis. "I didn't even know that. Jeff didn't stop playing and made it very interesting to the end."

Jordan Holmes led the Cougars with 11 points. Paige Hendrickson chipped in with 10 points.

Kaitlyn Davidson scored 10 points for Jefferson (3-8).

KENNEDY (54): Meier 2 2-2 6, DeLong 1 1-1 3, Holmes 3 3-4 11, B.Vis 1 0-0 2, Wagner 2 4-6 8, M.Vis 3 0-0 7, Hendrickson 3 4-4 10, Botkin 2 3-4 7. Totals 17 17-21 54.

JEFFERSON (42): Starks 0 0-0 0, Davidson 3 3-4 10, Blietz 2 0-0 4, Stromert 0 0-0 0, Broghammer 2 0-0 4, Brathwaite 1 2-4 4, Koolbeck 4 2-2 11, Ollinger 4 1-2 9. Totals 16 8-12 42.

Halftime - Kennedy 35, Jefferson 23. 3-point goals - Kennedy 3 (Holmes 2, M.Vis 1), Jefferson 2 (Davidson 1, Koolbeck 1).