

Kennedy girls end Wash's title hopes

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 05 February 2013 23:09 -

Many of the girls on the Kennedy and Washington basketball teams are friends from playing on the same AAU clubs during the spring and summer, but there's no love lost when they tangle in high school games.

"Everything off the court is friendly and we get along, but once we're on the court the friendship kind of goes away," Kennedy junior Paige Hendrickson said Tuesday night. "We play to win."

Did they ever, on both sides.

Stephanie Botkin tossed in 25 points and Hendrickson notched 24 as the Cougars dented the Warriors, 72-65, in a highly entertaining Mississippi Valley Conference game in the Washington gym.

The setback knocked Washington (14-6, 8-4) out of contention for the Valley Division title with its fourth MVC loss of the season.

Kennedy jumped to a 21-13 lead after one quarter as Botkin poured in 13 points all by herself, but the Warriors rallied for a 35-29 edge at halftime.

The Cougars (12-7, 8-4) came roaring back and it was a fight to the finish in the second half, with both teams making clutch baskets and big plays.

"The third and fourth quarters our kids showed a lot of heart," said Kennedy Coach Tony Vis. "Both teams threw some heavyweight punches at each other. Both teams took it on the chin and hopped up and kept plugging away."

"I'm just happy we made some plays down the stretch. I don't know if six to eight weeks ago we would have finished like that. I'm very proud of our kids tonight."

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Washington nipped Kennedy, 57-56, seven weeks ago at Kennedy on a 3-pointer at the buzzer, but this time the Cougars made the biggest plays in the final seconds.

Dani Franklin drilled a 3-pointer to pull Washington within 64-63 and the Warriors went into a full-court press, but they neglected to guard Botkin at the other end of the floor and Hendrickson spotted her for an uncontested layup and a 66-63 edge.

Aleena Hobbs scored with 32 seconds left to pull the Warriors within 66-65, but Hendrickson claimed the victory for Kennedy with four straight free throws and a layup at the buzzer.

It was a fun game to watch and a fun game to win.

"I think we played together as a team a lot better than we usually do," said Botkin, a 6-foot sophomore. "We came out strong, which is really important."

Botkin was the strongest of them all in that first quarter when she notched 13 points, matching Washington's entire output as a team.

"She was unbelievable," said Vis. "Tonight she came out like a woman possessed in the first half and played lights out and just did a great job."

Vis thought Botkin had a little extra motivation against Washington center Abby Herb, because Herb may have outplayed Botkin when they met in December.

"I think that's been under Steph's skin for awhile and she was motivated to come out and get a little bit of redemption," the coach said.

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Washington will finish the MVC season at Jefferson Friday night and could finish with a 9-4 league record, but Prairie and Waterloo West are both 9-3 in the Valley Division and they'll clash Friday night in Waterloo for the title.

The Warriors beat Kennedy and Prairie in non-conference games this season, but they lost to the Cougars and Hawks in the games that counted in the standings. "We won the wrong games," quipped Washington Coach Frank Howell.

Howell thought both teams played at high level.

"I thought Botkin was really good, and I thought Kennedy showed a lot of composure down the stretch," he remarked.

Franklin scored 19 points for Washington and Hobbs finished with 17. Herb and Madison Kramer scored 10 points apiece for the home team. Franklin made four 3-pointers.

Jordan Holmes scored 11 points for Kennedy and Madison Meier added nine.

"Tonight it was a heavyweight battle against what I feel is a top-10 team in the state," said Vis, who cherished the victory.

KENNEDY (72): Meier 3 2-2 9, DeLong 0 0-0 0, Holmes 4 2-2 11, B.Vis 1 0-0 2, Wagner 0 1-2 1, M.Vis 0 0-0 0, Hendrickson 9 4-4 24, Botkin 8 9-13 25. Totals 25 18-23 72.

WASHINGTON (65): Herb 4 2-2 10, Malcolm 1 0-0 3, Hobbs 6 3-3 17, Bjornsen 2 0-0 4, Glenski 0 0-0 0, Kramer 4 0-2 10, Franklin 7 1-2 19, Cook 1 0-0 2. Totals 25 6-9 65.

Halftime - Washington 35, Kennedy 29. 3-point goals - Kennedy 4 (Hendrickson 2, Meier 1,

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Holmes 1), Washington 9 (Franklin 4, Kramer 2, Hobbs 2, Malcolm 1).