

Warriors whip Cougars for 3rd win in row

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 06 February 2013 00:21 -

It's hard to call a guy the "Metro Coach of the Year" when his team has won only four games all season, but you might want to give Adam Sanchez a serious look.

The young man has performed miracles with the Cedar Rapids Washington boys basketball team this season in his first year as head coach.

The Warriors, winless and hopeless a year ago, drilled the Kennedy Cougars 54-38 Tuesday night for their third Mississippi Valley Conference victory in a row.

Washington raised its records to 4-14 overall and 4-9 in the MVC, but it's a far cry better than most people expected after the Warriors finished 0-21 last season.

Sanchez, 29, replaced Brad Metzger as head coach and the Warriors have made tremendous progress, both individually and as a team.

"He has a lot of energy," said senior Peter Holmes, who endured the winless campaign a year ago with several other teammates. "He encouraged the seniors to step up this season, and I think we have."

Sanchez had been an assistant coach at Wartburg, Drake and Grand View, but he'd never been a head coach before coming to Washington. If he had listened to the advice of friends and mentors, he would not have accepted the job.

"More than a few" people told him to turn it down.

"A lot of the advice was, 'It's a really good school, it's a really good program, you'll have a great administration to work for, but it's going to be a big project,'" he said.

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Sanchez arrived during the summer and put the team to work. "Coach has definitely brought so much energy," said senior Brock Butterfield. "He's just a great leader."

The Warriors have played hard all season, and now the hard work is paying off.

"Effort-wise, we've been playing that way all year long. Now they're learning how to win these games," said Sanchez. "Their effort has been awesome throughout and they just continued to get better, and now it's resulting in wins."

Hard work is important, but so is a little luck. Just ask Butterfield, who tossed in a 70-footer at the end of the third quarter for a lucky 3-pointer to snap a 32-32 tie and give the Warriors a 35-32 advantage.

Kennedy worked for the final shot of the third period, but the Cougars missed and Butterfield grabbed the defensive rebound.

"There were only about eight seconds left on the clock when they were running their play," he said. "As soon as I got the rebound I thought the clock was ready to expire, but I looked up and there were two seconds left. I just took a couple of dribbles and threw it up."

Butterfield was standing near the Kennedy free throw line when he grabbed the ball with his left hand and fired away. It went straight in.

"As soon as I threw it up I thought it was really short," he said. "I didn't think it would make it to the hoop. But I'm happy. I don't know how much luckier I can get after that."

John Bardsley made two free throws to pull the Cougars (10-7, 7-6) within 35-34 to start the third quarter, but Washington went to work and took control.

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Austin Bergstrom scored for the Warriors and got fouled. He missed the free throw, but Washington grabbed the offensive rebound and Montaves Anderson ended up hitting two free throws for a four-point possession and a 39-34 lead.

Kennedy committed a turnover and Holmes made a layup. Kennedy missed a shot and Holmes scored again for a 43-34 advantage. The Cougars never got closer than seven points again.

Washington has four victories this season, and two of them have been against Kennedy. They'll meet for a third time Feb. 18 at Kennedy in the opening round of the Class 4A substate tournament.

Butterfield knows what they say about trying to beat a team for the third time in one season. "Very hard," he said.

The Warriors defeated the Cougars, 53-50, for their first victory of the season Dec. 14 at Kennedy. The Warriors then lost 10 games in a row and fell to 1-14 before staging a three-game winning streak with triumphs over Hempstead (47-41), Prairie (46-43) and Kennedy (54-38).

Washington appears to have winnable games at Jefferson this Friday and at Iowa City High next Tuesday before confronting No.4 Dubuque Senior in the final game of the regular season on Feb. 14.

Holmes likes where the team is headed.

"We have a new rhythm," he said. "We're practicing hard. We worked hard in the offseason.

"We just didn't want to have that feeling we had after every loss last year."

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Holmes led Washington with 11 points. Bergstrom finished with 10.

Blake Murdock led Kennedy with 14 points.

KENNEDY (38): B.Murdock 5 2-2 14, Carter 0 0-0 0, Fuller 0 0-0 0, Bardsley 1 3-3 5, Buck 0 0-0 0, Martin 2 1-2 5, Koelling 4 0-0 8, Johnson 0 0-0 0, C.Murdock 0 0-0 0, Holzer 0 0-0 0, Jacobus 0 0-0 0, Heitland 0 0-0 0, Struss 3 0-0 6. Totals 15 6-7 38.

WASHINGTON (54): Anderson 1 2-4 4, Bergstrom 3 2-3 10, Butterfield 3 0-0 8, Taylor 0 3-4 3, Snitker 0 0-0 0, Nelson 0 0-0 0, Rosenthal 1 2-3 4, Holmes 5 1-2 11, Oney 0 0-0 0, Claassen 0 0-0 0, Soenksen 1 0-0 2, Newman 2 0-0 6, Kramer 1 2-2 4, Clark 1 0-0 2, Good-Jones 0 0-0 0. Totals 18 12-18 54.

Halftime - Kennedy 21, Washington 21. 3-point goals - Kennedy 2 (B.Murdock 2), Washington 6 (Bergstrom 2, Butterfield 2, Newman 2).