

Young J-Hawks upset No.9 Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker
Friday, 07 February 2014 23:12 -

The young kids on the Cedar Rapids Jefferson girls basketball team are growing up before our very eyes.

Freshman Avery Guy played the best game of her young career and scored 15 points Friday night as the J-Hawks upended ninth-ranked Kennedy, 59-47, to snap a 13-game losing streak against the Cougars.

Sophomore Amanda Ollinger also scored 15 points for Jefferson and freshman Kennedy Dighton had 12 as the three talented youngsters combined for 42 markers.

The experienced Cougars (14-5, 8-3) had four seniors and a junior in the starting lineup, but the young J-Hawks controlled the game from start to finish.

"Sometimes it's hard to believe that we are only freshmen and sophomores and we still have two or three more years together," said Ollinger. "So it's really exciting. I'm just really excited for the future."

Ollinger and Dighton, a pair of mobile post players, have been scoring big points for the J-Hawks (9-10, 6-6) all season, but Guy broke out of her shell with a steady floor game, good defense and sparkling passes.

"I finally got my confidence up," said Guy, a 5-foot-6 point guard who was averaging a paltry 2.8 points when the game began. "At the beginning of the season I was a little tentative with my shots."

Guy was a top athlete in middle school and jumped right onto the floor at Jefferson, but had

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adjustments to make. Her father is Willie Guy, who played football at Iowa and is one of Jefferson's assistant coaches.

"It was a little different at first," she said about making the transition to high school. "You're coming in young and playing with older people. But once you get into the game you get used to it a little and you just play."

Guy's best move Friday came midway through the fourth quarter when she used a hesitation dribble to shed a defender, drove hard to the basket, got fouled and completed a three-point play for a 48-36 advantage.

"Avery played an incredible game, not just as the point guard but as a scorer and defender," said Ollinger. "She was really on tonight. We really needed that."

Jefferson jumped to an 18-9 lead in the first quarter and led at every juncture after that. Kennedy pulled within four points at halftime and within two points at the start of the second half at 26-24, but the J-Hawks kept the lead.

"We never got it going," said Kennedy Coach Tony Vis. "Then in the third quarter they hit us with another run and finished us off."

The Cougars missed 16 of their first 18 shots and never got untracked against the J-Hawks, who kept switching defenses and kept the visitors guessing much of the night.

"It's frustrating," said Vis. "We kept hurting ourselves with turnovers. On top of that we didn't shoot it worth a crap."

Ollinger and Dighton did not practice Monday or Tuesday due to injuries, Ollinger with an injured wrist and Dighton with a sore back, but they were raring to go Friday night.

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Jefferson Coach Jason Edwards was delighted with his club's performance.

"We came close against really good teams before, and I'm just proud of the fact that we finished and we're starting to play with the energy that we need to," he said. "We've been through some battles and they just kept believing in each other and kept battling."

Guy drove to the basket and made two free throws to give Jefferson a 2-0 lead when the game was just two seconds old. She followed a short time later with a 3-pointer and helped her club by going 8 for 9 at the foul line.

"The thing about Avery, she keeps working," said Edwards. "She has a good demeanor. She doesn't get too high, she doesn't get too low. That's what you want from a point guard."

Ollinger, one of the top players in the Mississippi Valley Conference, has enjoyed watching Guy develop this season.

"Avery has gotten a lot better," she said. "So has everyone else on the team. She keeps working hard in practice every day and keeps improving."

"And she wants to get better, which is what really sets her apart. And it's going to make her a really good point guard for us."

Senior Maddy Blietz popped in a pair of 3-pointers and scored 10 points for Jefferson, giving the J-Hawks four players in double figures.

"It was the best game for us this season. Finally," said Guy. "All four quarters."

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Stephanie Botkin led Kennedy with 16 points. Paige Hendrickson scored 10 points for the Cougars.

KENNEDY (47): Meier 1 0-0 3, DeLong 0 0-0 0, Holmes 0 0-0 0, Vis 0 0-0 0, Langhurst 2 0-0 6, Hellweg 0 0-0 0, Hayden 1 0-0 3, Milbrath 0 0-0 0, Hendrickson 2 6-6 10, Botkin 4 8-10 16, Marin 3 3-4 9. Totals 13 17-20 47.

JEFFERSON (59): Starks 0 0-0 0, Rolwes 0 0-0 0, Kitterman 0 1-3 1, Blietz 4 0-0 10, Veglahn 0 0-0 0, Guy 3 8-9 15, Kuba 0 1-2 1, Carter 1 3-4 5, Brathwaite 1 3-4 5, Dahlen-Zeck 0 0-0 0, Dighton 6 0-0 12, Ollinger 3 8-8 15. Totals 17 21-26 59.

Halftime - Jefferson 26, Kennedy 22. 3-point goals - Kennedy 4 (Langhurst 2, Meier 1, Hayden 1), Jefferson 4 (Blietz 2, Guy 1, Ollinger 1). Fouled out - Holmes, Blietz.