

Botkin joins 1,000/500 club for Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 10 February 2015 20:25 - Last Updated Wednesday, 11 February 2015 05:50



Stephanie Botkin missed her first two shots Tuesday night and had only five points for the Kennedy Cougars in their home game against Jefferson.

She didn't miss a whole lot after that and ended up becoming only the ninth player in Metro history with 1,000 points and 500 rebounds in her career.

Botkin popped in 24 points and Lela Sellers had 26 as No. 8 Kennedy recovered from a sluggish first half and pounded the J-Hawks, 65-26, in a Mississippi Valley Conference game.

Botkin, a lanky 6-foot senior, began the game with 981 points and knew exactly what she needed to reach 1,000 in her four-year varsity career.

That contributed to her relatively slow start.

"In the first half I was a little nervous, because I knew what I needed," she said. "I missed a couple of shots, but I guess during halftime I focused a little bit."

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Botkin tossed in 13 points during a third-quarter blitz that saw Kennedy outscore Jefferson 23-2, giving the Cougars a commanding 48-17 lead. That lifted her to 999 entering the final stanza, and she reached the 1,000-point milestone in style by canning a 3-pointer with 5:54 left in the game.

Kennedy Coach Tony Vis immediately called a timeout to embrace the milestone and the public address announcer informed the crowd that Botkin had reached 1,000. Botkin hit another triple - her fourth of the night - a short time later and finished the game at 1,005.

"I'm really excited about it," she said. "I mean, it's not about me, it's about our team and how successful we are, but it's a really cool accomplishment."

Botkin grabbed six rebounds and has 533 in her career.

Botkin joined Shelby Hembera of Cedar Valley Christian, Morgan Paige of Marion, Kiah Stokes of Linn-Mar, Jenny Jacobsen of Regis, Jade Rogers of Kennedy, Tammy Brauer of Kennedy, Beth Driscoll of Linn-Mar and Kayla Pirtle of Washington as the only members of the 1000 point/500 rebound club in Metro history during the 5-on-5 era.

"Not some bad company there," said Vis. "She's done a great job in one of the best conferences in the state of Iowa in doing what she's done. It's an extreme credit to her."

It's not like Botkin has a chart on her bedroom wall at home with her career numbers, but she's known for a few weeks that she was approaching 1,000 points.

"It kind of dawned on me last week," she said. "We have a couple of younger players on the

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team who have been following it: 'Bot, you're this close. You need to score this many points per game.'

"I kind of forgot about it, and then last week it kind of dawned on me how close I was."

Botkin, who has committed to Washington University in St. Louis, is averaging 16.7 points and 6.9 rebounds for Kennedy, the best numbers of her career.

"I had an incredible opportunity coming in as a freshman that not many kids get," she said. "My freshman year was a lot about learning."

Botkin became one of the team leaders as a sophomore and now is a member of an exclusive club. Of more importance to her, Kennedy is 15-5 overall and riding a five-game winning streak that includes an impressive victory over sixth-ranked Iowa City West.

"It couldn't be better," said Botkin. "We're working really well as a team together, we're having a lot of fun. We're coming together at the right time. We're a good team."

Kennedy Dighton scored nine points in the first quarter for Jefferson. She got shut out the rest of the night, but finished as her team's leading scorer.

The J-Hawks fell to 7-13.

JEFFERSON (26): Rolwes 0 0-0 0, Robinson 1 0-0 3, Kitterman 1 2-2 4, Guy 1 0-0 2, Melton 0 0-0 0, Wise 3 0-0 8, Veglahn 0 0-0 0, Dighton 4 0-0 9.
Totals 10 2-2 26.

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KENNEDY (65): Dunham 0 0-0 0, Dye 2 0-0 5, Hamilton 0 0-0 0, Hayden 1 0-0 2, Sellers 11 3-5 26, Steele 0 0-0 0, Timmerman 0 0-0 0, A. Hellweg 1 0-0 2, Milbrath 1 0-0 2, Runels 2 0-0 4, Dolphin 0 0-0 0, Botkin 9 2-4 24, A. Hellweg 0 0-0 0. Totals 27 5-9 65.

Halftime - Kennedy 25, Jefferson 15. 3-point goals - Jefferson 4 (Wise 2, Robinson 1, Dighton 1), Kennedy 6 (Botkin 4, Dye 1, Sellers 1).