

Konigsmark, J-Hawks push No. 9 Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

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Tyler Konigsmark and the Jefferson J-Hawks could have quit on themselves a long time ago in the midst of a grueling campaign, but they proved Tuesday night against Kennedy that they're alive and kicking.

Unfortunately for the J-Hawks, their best effort of the season was not good enough.

The Kennedy Cougars took Jefferson's best punch and escaped with a 79-69 victory in an entertaining Mississippi Valley Conference game at Kennedy.

Konigsmark poured in 22 points in the first half alone and finished with a career-best 27 points in a sterling performance. The J-Hawks have a dismal 1-and-17 record and have lost 12 games by lopsided scores, but they trailed the No. 9 team in the state by only two points at 62-60 midway through the fourth quarter.

Kennedy scored 12 straight points for a 74-60 lead to put the game away, but it was a terrific effort by the visitors from the southwest side of town.

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"Credit to the boys," said Brandon Horman, in his first year as Jefferson's head coach. "It's been a challenging year for the boys as far as coming back every single day after not receiving the results they would like, night-in and night-out.

"I give them credit for hanging in there. They haven't quit on themselves. They're still hanging in there and they're still fighting hard."

Brendon Manning poured in 25 points to pace Kennedy (13-5, 10-3). Bryton Heisler chipped in with 15 points and Cole Murdock scored 12 as the Cougars finally pulled away.

Konigsmark, a rugged 6-foot-4 senior with a nice touch, was a scoring machine in the first half. His 22 points led Jefferson to a 35-34 edge at intermission. He got only five more points in the second half when Kennedy re-focused its defense, but it was still a night to remember.

"Coach told me to drive the ball," he said. "I haven't been driving the ball lately. I'm not shooting a high percentage like I did last year. It worked out in the first half."

Konigsmark was averaging nine points per game when the night began, but he tripled his average with strong drives to the bucket and three 3-pointers. He's had some big scoring games this season with 19 and 16 twice, but nothing like this against a quality team like Kennedy.

"That's Tyler Konigsmark and what he's capable of doing," said Horman. "He's a guy, when things are going well they're definitely going well for

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him. He brings great energy. He can score in so many different ways and he can absorb that contact and finish.



"He plays with great passion," said Horman. "He loves playing the game. He wants to succeed, he wants his teammates to succeed. He's a great teammate in that sense. He wants to be the best that he possibly can."

Kennedy smoked Jefferson, 74-43, in their first meeting at Jefferson Jan. 16, but this was an entirely different story. The J-Hawks (1-17, 0-13) showed signs of improvement against top-ranked Iowa City West last Friday and took another step Tuesday.

"We have three games left in the regular season," said Konigsmark. "We have Washington on Friday. Another big game for us. We'll see what we can do there."

Bryce Cardis scored 12 points for Jefferson and Adam Van Oort netted 11.

"We're building up," said Horman. "We're not out of time yet."

Murdock hit a 3-pointer to give Kennedy a 65-60 lead and ignite the decisive 12-0 spurt in the fourth quarter. Heisler and Brewster scored to make it 69-60, then Heisler nailed a 3-pointer to make it 72-60. Heisler

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cached two free throws for a 74-60 advantage.

"I think for our entire team fatigue set in," said Horman.

The Cougars knew they escaped a close call and saluted the J-Hawks.

"They gave a good effort," said Manning. "We just weren't there defensively tonight. We gave up direct drives and weren't contesting all the shots and we weren't taking charges."

"Konigsmark had a nice game and it took us awhile to slow him down," said Kennedy Coach Jon McKowen. "We were gambling too much. And when you gamble, it takes you out of position."

JEFFERSON (69): Cardis 5 1-1 12, Wiederin 0 0-0 0, Webb 2 0-0 4, Van Oort 2 5-5 11, Konigsmark 10 4-4 27, Kramer 4 0-0 9, Furrow 0 0-0 0, Hunt 0 0-0 0, Green 3 0-1 6. Totals 26 10-11 69.

KENNEDY (79): Daniels 3 0-0 8, Heisler 3 8-11 15, Murdock 4 2-2 12, Gardner 0 0-0 0, Bisenius 0 0-0 0, Diggins 3 2-2 8, Manning 10 5-5 25, Girling 0 4-6 4, Hall 0 0-0 0, Techau 0 0-0 0, Brewster 3 1-2 7. Totals 26 21-26 79.

Halftime - Jefferson 35, Kennedy 34. 3-point goals - Jefferson 7 (Konigsmark 3, Van Oort 2, Cardis 1, Kramer 1), Kennedy 5 (Daniels 2, Murdock 2, Heisler 1).