

Sellers helps Cougars win 10th in row

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Kennedy Cougars have found a remedy for teams that like to double-team Lela Sellers near the basket and make it hard for her to get her hands on the basketball.

The solution? Move the lanky 5-foot-11 senior to point guard and let her create her own offense.

It worked Saturday night.

Sellers poured in 26 points as the Cougars handed North Scott its first loss of the season, 56-52, in a battle of highly ranked teams at the Kennedy gym to begin the new year.

Kennedy, ranked No. 4 in Class 5A, won its 10th straight game and raised its record to 10-1. North Scott, ranked No. 9 in Class 4A, fell to 8-1 after beginning the season with eight straight victories.

Sellers has the ability to play any position on the floor. Coach Tony Vis likes to station her near the basket to use her long arms and jumping

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ability, but not when the opponent sags its defense to slow her down.

"I feel like a bunch of teams know that I'm going to play the post," said Sellers. "They know they have to double me in the post, so if I go to the wing I know I can get them off the dribble and go by them."

"I love being the wing. Honestly, I love handling the ball, so it's good."

Sellers said she'll play the wing or off-guard position at Liberty University next year and she's entirely comfortable with the ball in her hands 25 feet from the basket, either as the point guard or off-guard.

Sydney Hayden, the top 3-point shooter in the state, is Kennedy's primary point guard, but she can shift to an off-guard spot if the Cougars need Sellers to create her own offense.

Sellers scored 15 of her 26 points in the second half with a variety of drives to the basket, often finishing with her left hand to fool the defense.

"She was really good," said Vis. "You could tell ahead of time she was ready to go. In the shoot-around, she had a little bounce in her step. Before the game, she was trying to get people fired up and stuff."

"You could tell she was ready to go. And she came out tonight and played outstanding. She showed why she's one of the best players in the state."

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Sellers took over the Metro scoring lead at 19.3 points per game, moving ahead of Amanda Ollinger of Linn-Mar who is sitting at 19.0 per game.

On one of her drives in the second half, Sellers made a terrific ball fake to freeze the defense and put the ball in the basket.

"That's my favorite move," she said. "When I'm going in, I love faking them out and shooting the layup. Usually last year or the year before, I'd miss the layup. It's a good move, but now I'm getting it down."



Sellers scored nine points in the third quarter and Hayden hit her only 3-pointer of the night to give Kennedy a 12-point lead at 39-27 late in the stanza, but North Scott rallied and pulled within four points at 39-35 and 41-37 in the fourth quarter.

Hailey Dolphin hit a big 3-pointer to give the Cougars some breathing room at 50-42 with about 55 seconds left and Hayden made two foul shots with 20 seconds remaining to make it 52-42 and clinch the deal.

"It's a big win," said Vis. "I was telling the girls, I've had the flu since yesterday, and I told them I wish I felt a little better so I could tell them how I really feel about it."

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"They were pumped about it," he said. "They knew it was a big win over a really good team. We had to play well on our floor.

"They made us earn everything. They made a great run there in the fourth quarter and made things very interesting and our kids found a way."

Dolphin finished with nine points for Kennedy. Karli Rucker tossed in four 3-pointers and led North Scott with 27 points.

NORTH SCOTT (46): R.Rucker 0 1-2 1, K.Rucker 9 5-6 27, Loussaert 0 0-0 0, Bogner 1 0-0 3, Schmidt 2 0-0 5, Moeller 3 0-0 7, Wiersema 0 0-0 0, Claussen 1 1-2 3. Totals 16 7-10 46.

KENNEDY (52): Langhurst 2 3-4 7, Hamilton 2 0-0 5, Hayden 1 2-2 5, Sellers 10 5-9 26, Hellweg 0 0-0 0, Dolphin 3 2-5 9, Runels 0 0-0 0, Meier 0 0-0 0. Totals 18 12-20 52.

Halftime - Kennedy 27, North Scott 21. 3-point goals - North Scott 7 (K.Rucker 4, Bogner 1, Schmidt 1, Moeller 1), Kennedy 4 (Hamilton 1, Hayden 1, Sellers 1, Dolphin 1).