

On her 18th birthday Tuesday night, Lela Sellers' wish came true.

Fellow Kennedy seniors Linden Runels and Sydney Hayden made sure of it.

"All I wanted for my birthday was a 'W,' and we got it," Sellers said after her 17-point performance helped lead the Class 5A fourth-ranked
Cougars to a 60-47 win over ninth-ranked Linn-Mar.

The silky-smooth 6-foot Division I signee may have been high scorer, but a strong supporting cast made the difference in a 19-8 fourth quarter that
sealed Kennedy's 11th straight victory.

None were more helpful than the unheralded Runels and sharpshooter Hayden. With the game on the line, the two came through.

After a sometimes-sloppy three quarters, the Cougars had inched ahead of the Lions (6-2) just 41-39. But Hayden, the state's leading 3-point
shooter who was held to only two points in the first half, hit her first
long-range shot of the night to open the final period.

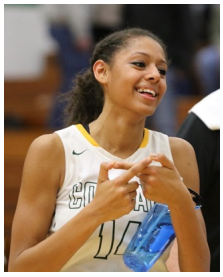
When Kennedy super sophomore Hailey Dolphin hit a short jumper soon after, the Cougars were off to the races on a 11-0 three-minute run.

Runels knocked down a trey, grabbed a rebound on the other end and fed Hayden for another bomb. Dolphin sank two free throws and Runels one to
give the Cougars a comfortable 55-42 lead with two minutes to go.

Cougar coach Tony Vis, whose senior-dominated squad is 11-1 after a season-opening loss to top-rated Waukee, credited adjustments made at
halftime to turning the game around.

"I thought we left a lot of points out there in the first half with missed shots," he said. "But we're a second half team. For one thing, we're in
great shape. And we have great team chemistry.

"We executed a lot better in the second half. And we really locked-down defensively. That was the difference."



Runels came up with some key stops and rebounds at crucial times.

"Linden is the type of player who sets the screen, makes the extra pass, does the dirty work that doesn't show up in the statistics," Vis said.
"She's a great chemistry kid, our glue kid."

For her part, the solid 5-foot-8 forward said unselfish teamwork is the secret to their success so far.

"Everybody plays a part, and everybody plays for each other," said Runels, who scored 10 for

the night. “We’re always encouraging each other. And we find the player that’s hot.

“Tonight, we made some key shots at the right time.”

In the second half, for instance, it was Hayden with 11 points and Sellers with nine. Dolphin, the only non-senior among the starters, had eight second-half points with six of them coming from the free throw line toward the end.

In addition to her 17 points, Sellers collected eight rebounds and held Linn-Mar star Amanda Ollinger to a relatively quiet night. While scoring 15 points and pulling down 11 rebounds, Ollinger was just five for 18 from the field.

“Lela had a great night for her birthday,” Vis said. “Amanda was her match-up all night. And Lela did a fantastic job.”

LINN-MAR (47): Akers 0 0-0 0, Frese 1 0-0 2, Lancial 0 0-0 0, Finley 3 1-4 8, Ollinger 5 3-6 15, Johnson 2 0-0 6, Murphy 4 0-0 12, Spies 2 0-0 4, Larson 0 0-0 0. Totals 17 4-10 47.

KENNEDY (60): Langhurst 2 1-1 5, Hayden 4 3-5 13, Sellers 6 3-3 17, Dolphin 2 8-10 12, Runels 3 3-4 10, Hamilton 1 0-0 3, Hellweg 0 0-0 0, Meier 0 0-0 0. Totals 18 18-23 60.

Halftime – Linn-Mar 26, Kennedy 23. 3-point goals – Linn-Mar 9 (Murphy 4, Johnson 2, Ollinger 2, Finley 1), Kennedy 6 (Hayden 2, Sellers 2, Runels 1, Hamilton 1).