

Justin Decker was happy and optimistic about the future when he left the Kennedy High School gym Friday night.

Jon McKowen was disappointed and frustrated.

Guess who won?

The Washington Warriors played a solid game from start to finish and defeated the Cougars, 58-42, in a Mississippi Valley Conference game that
paired two Metro clubs in desperate need of victories.

Washington raised its records to 6-10 overall and 3-8 in the league. Kennedy fell to 6-11 overall and 4-8 in the MVC.

"To be honest, we played the best we have all year defensively," said Decker, in his first year as the head coach at Washington. "I challenged
our guys to play a 32-minute game and we finally got one out of them.

"It's great to see that they're still buying in."

McKowen led Kennedy to the Class 4A state tournament in his first two years as head coach, but this year's club has not jelled and appears to have

issues with team chemistry.

"When things didn't go well, we kind of separated," McKowen said. "We're really good when we play together, and all teams are really average when you don't. That's just what happened tonight.

"When Plan A didn't happen, we bounced the ball too much and the ball stuck a little bit too much. We took shots that we could get anytime. We don't shoot those in practice at all. We need practice to carry over. We have to find a way.

"We need to get that looseness during games when the crowd is here," he said.

Keion Wills led Washington with 16 points, including a perfect 8-for-8 showing at the foul line. Laveechie Williams added 10 points for the Warriors and Ian Thomas had nine markers.



Drake Brewster led Kennedy with 10 points, but had only two points in the second half. Matt Gardner and Derrick Diggins scored nine points for the Cougars.

McKowen yanked Diggins from the game after just six seconds of the fourth period after Diggins

appeared to get careless with the ball, leading to an easy layup by Hunter Strait. Diggins sat for about 2 1/2 minutes before returning to action.

McKowen was called for a technical foul midway through the fourth quarter for questioning a no-call against Washington.

The game was tied, 26-26, midway through the third quarter when the Warriors began to take control. Dallas Hobbs scored twice to help Washington take a 34-28 advantage and the Warriors continued to pull away from there.

That easy layup by Strait made it 38-29 to start the fourth quarter, then Noah Dawson and Nolan Potter scored for the Warriors to make it 42-29. Kennedy never got closer than 10 points again.

"This is a win that I think will get us right back on track," Decker said. "They just played so hard. That's what's great about a long season, we can see that development as it goes on.

"The bench was great tonight. It was the best it's been all year.

"We haven't figured it out," Decker cautioned. "We put one game together. Can we put more games together in a row? Then we'll answer that question."

WASHINGTON (58): Wills 3 8-8 16, Collins 1 0-0 3, Strait 3 0-0 7, Dawson 1 0-0 2, Beard 0 0-0 0, Hobbs 2 0-0 4, Thomas 2 3-4 9, Westmoreland 0 0-0 0, Jackson 2 0-0 5, Williams 5 0-0 10, Potter 1 0-0 2, Henningsen 0 0-0 0. Totals 20 11-12 58.

KENNEDY (42): Haynes 0 0-0 0, Brewster 5 0-0 10, Gardner 4 0-0 9, Berst 3 0-0 8, Duehr 0 0-0 0, Olejniczak 0 0-0 0, Krall 1 0-0 2, Diggins 3 2-2 9,
Foley 0 0-0 0, Bisenius 0 2-4 2, Harris 0 0-0 0, Beyer 0 0-0 0, Wiebel 1
0-0 2, King 0 0-0 0, Wall 0 0-0 0. Totals 17 4-6 42.

Halftime - Washington 21, Kennedy 18. 3-point goals - Washington 7 (Wills 2, Thomas 2, Collins 1, Strait 1, Jackson 1), Kennedy 4 (Berst 2, Grdner
1, Diggins 1).