

Cougars build big lead, hold on to beat Saints

Written by Mike Condon

Tuesday, 14 January 2014 23:04 -

Kennedy girls basketball coach Tony Vis didn't spend much time in the locker room after his team's 54-46 home win Tuesday night over rival Xavier.

The time for talking will come prior to practice on Wednesday.

Despite sporting 9-2 overall record (4-1 in the Mississippi Valley Conference) and a No. 6 state ranking in Class 5A, Vis was not a happy man after Tuesday's game.

"We've had three straight games of lackluster effort," he said. "We've had lackluster execution and I'm just tired of watching it."

The players know things have to change and change quickly. When asked if lineup changes could be coming, Vis said he wouldn't make any decisions based on Tuesday's game, but said he would consider changes if warranted.

"These last three games since the Christmas break haven't been the brightest," admitted Kennedy senior forward Paige Hendrickson. "We have played well at times, then we just seem to forget to do things like set the screens, the little things that makes things work well."

"Coach mentioned that we are going to have a long talk before practice (Wednesday)," she continued. "He said he was going to talk to the seniors about us playing better together and also the (younger) kids believing in us and believing in them."

The Cougars came out firing against the Saints, building a 19-4 lead after the first quarter. The lead increased to 23-4 early in the second quarter. After that, it was a different story as Xavier outscored the hosts, 42-31, the rest of the way.

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"To (Xavier Coach Tom Lilly's) credit, he got out of the zone after the first quarter," Vis said. "We really struggled against their man. Still, we knew they were going to play man in the second half and we really didn't come out of the locker room at halftime with any intensity."

Lilly, whose team has played a brutal schedule featuring one rated team after another, felt he had to start in a zone to combat the inside presence of Morgan Martin and Stephanie Botkin.

"Sometimes you just outcoach yourself a little bit," Lilly said. "We just thought early we would really have to match up with their size so we thought we would do something we thought that they would really not be ready for."

The Saints (6-6, 3-4 MVC) took their chances allowing Kennedy to fire from the outside. The Cougars netted four of their five 3-point baskets in the first eight minutes and appeared to be on their way to an easy night.

But the defending Class 4A state champion Saints kept chipping away, eventually getting the deficit down to 49-42 in the fourth quarter, but never got any closer.

"Xavier isn't the kind of team that is going to go away," Vis said. "They are tough-minded kids who never quit."

Lilly liked the way his team competed, but added that the Saints need more on the offensive end.

"I don't think (Kennedy's) press really hurt us that much," he said. "We didn't have near the turnovers that they were expecting."

"We still have to find some rhythm shooters and people that want to shoot with confidence,"

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Lilly continued. "That will only come with practice."

Madison Meier led the Cougars with 17 points. Hendrickson added 10. Junior Morgan Breitbach led Xavier with 13 points while Hayley Deutmeyer and Maddie Bertsch finished with 10 apiece.

Kennedy plays at Dubuque Senior on Friday while the Saints will host Dubuque Wahlert.

XAVIER (46): Morgan Breitbach 6 1-2 13, Lizzy Bailey 0 4-4 4, Hayley Deutmeyer 4 0-0 10, Abby Watson 2 0-0 4, Maddie Bertsch 5 0-0 10, Jenny Dickes 0 0-0 0, Meghan Joens 2 1-2 5, Erin Drahozal 0 0-0 0, Claire Christianson 0 0-0 0, Brylee Bastian 0 0-0 0, Madi Nelson 0 0-0 0. Totals 19 6-8 46.

KENNEDY (54): Madison Meier 5 4-5 17, Jordan Holmes 2 1-4 6, Paige Hendrickson 3 4-7 10, Stephanie Botkin 2 0-1 4, Morgan Martin 4 1-2 9, Carly Langhurst 0 0-0 0, Sydney Hayden 1 0-0 3, Brinley Milbrath 0 0-0 0, Mariah Vis 0 0-0 0, Madison DeLong 1 1-2 3, Abby Hellweg 1 0-0 2. Totals 19 11-21 54.

Xavier	4	9	10	23 – 46
Kennedy	19	8	11	16 – 54

3-point goals - Xavier 2 (Deutmeyer 2), Kennedy 5 (Meier 3, Hayden, Holmes). Total fouls - Xavier 16, Kennedy 15. Fouled out - None. Turnovers - Xavier 21, Kennedy 15.