

## Herb helps Mustangs top Clarke

Written by Jim Ecker

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Abby Herb collected a double-double for Mount Mercy Wednesday night with 18 points and 10 rebounds, but the 6-foot sophomore from Cedar Rapids was not entirely satisfied with her performance.

"I want to give myself a B-minus, because I missed a lot of shots I should have made," she said, "But then I got out of that funk and really started getting in my groove."

Herb and the Mustangs put together an 11-0 streak late in the game and trimmed Clarke, 58-53, in a Midwest Collegiate Conference game at the Hennessey Recreation Center.

Herb made only 2-of-9 shots during a painstaking first half, then sharpened in the second half when it counted.

"I got more focused in the second half," said Herb, a Washington grad. "My teammates came up to me at halftime and said, 'Abby, we need you,' and they really helped me get prepared for it."

Most players would cherish a double-double with 18 points and 10 rebounds, but Herb could have scored 25 or 30 points with a little luck.

"I know, if I would have made my layups in the first half," she said. "That's something I need to work on."

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Herb poured in 35 points in a game earlier this season, so she's capable of major outbursts like that.

Mount Mercy Coach Aaron Jennings runs a lot of his offense through Herb and was happy with her performance, even though it could have been better. "That's just part of being young," he noted. "She's still just a sophomore."

Even with a B-minus, Herb helped the Mustangs raise their records above .500 to 13-12 overall and 4-3 in the conference.

The Mustangs trailed 44-42 with 5:35 left in the game when they finally caught fire and took control with an 11-0 spurt. Paige Last began the streak with a 3-pointer and Alisa Weiland hit two free throws for a 47-44 advantage.

Herb hit two foul shots and added a layup for a 51-44 margin, then Danielle Herdliska hit a shot to make it 53-44 with about two minutes left to give the Mustangs some breathing room.



"That last five minutes we executed," said Jennings. "We slowed down and we ran a play every single time and they executed. We played great defense and we finally got some stops in a row."

Their offense and defense fed off each other at crunch time.

"We ran the plays the Coach called and we gave each other the ball in the right spots at the right time and finished the shots," said Herb.

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Jennings acknowledged it was a case of "winning ugly," for the most part. "We always play ugly games against Clarke. Nobody gets to 60," he said. "It's just a battle."

Christa Oldham scored 12 points for Mount Mercy despite missing a few minutes down the stretch with a bloody nose, suffered in a collision with a Clarke player. She wiped off the blood and returned to make some key plays.

"She's tough," said Jennings. "She's about as tough as they come. She was on the ground about 12 times, just always getting knocked down. That's why she wears kneepads."

Katelyn Hoppman scored 16 points and grabbed 15 rebounds for Clarke (14-11, 5-3).

**CLARKE (53):** Whittington 0 0-0 0, Prochaska 3 4-5 10, Ernst 3 1-4 7, Shepler 3 2-2 10, Hahn 1 2-2 4, Ricker 0 0-0 0, Hamilton 0 0-0 0, Petkoff 2 0-0 6, Needham 0 0-0 0, Hoppman 6 4-6 16, Kleppin 0 0-0 0, Aasen 0 0-0 0. Totals 18 13-19 53.

**MOUNT MERCY (58):** Herb 6 5-6 18, Herdliska 2 2-2 7, Oldham 3 6-8 12, Weiland 1 2-2 4, Zeitler 2 0-0 4, Timms 1 1-2 4, Sexton 1 0-0 3, Last 1 0-0 3, Dolan 1 1-2 3. Totals 18 17-22 58.

Halftime - Mount Mercy 23, Clarke 22. 3-point goals - Clarke 4 (Petkoff 2, Shepler 2), Mount Mercy 5 (Herb 1, Herdliska 1, Timms 1, Sexton 1, Last 1).