

No. 20 Mustangs shot down by Waldorf

Written by Jim Ecker

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Mount Mercy coach Aaron Jennings said two months ago that his team's defense (or lack thereof) would determine how far the Mustangs get this season.

He's still saying it.

The 20th-ranked Mustangs suffered massive breakdowns on defense in the first half Thursday night and lost to Waldorf, 99-92, in an NAIA shootout at the Hennessey Recreation Center.

Waldorf poured in 65 points in the first half and shot 62.3 percent for the game as Mount Mercy's eight-game winning streak came to a screeching halt.

All-American Erik Brewer sparkled with 28 points for Waldorf, Tyler Parrish popped in 25 points and June Prowell added 22 as they riddled the Mustangs all night.

"That's our Big Three," said Waldorf coach Nigel Jenkins.

Brewer, Parrish and Prowell combined for 75 points and shot 28 for 41 from the floor.

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"They were all playing well together and we couldn't stop them," Jennings said.

Jennings was impressed with the Warriors, but unhappy with his club's performance on defense.

"That's obviously a very dangerous team, but a team that averages 75 points a game. And we give up 65 in the first half," Jennings said. "We weren't ready to go, and that's on me.

"I've got to figure out a way to motivate this team better. I've got to figure out a way to get this team prepared, so when the ball goes up they're ready to play."

In addition to shooting so well, the visitors pounded Mount Mercy on the boards by a 44-24 margin.

Waldorf led 65-44 at halftime and took its biggest lead at 67-44 with the first basket of the second half, but Mount Mercy battled back and made it exciting in the final minutes.



The Mustangs pulled within 98-92 with 63 seconds left on a layup by Alex Houston. Waldorf committed a charging foul, giving Mount Mercy a chance to get closer, but Tre Wagner missed an open 3-pointer that could have made it a three-point game.

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Waldorf hit one free throw for a 99-92 lead with 28 seconds left and Chris Ford missed a layup to end the rally.

Ford led Mount Mercy (18-6) with 20 points. Kyle Lamaak and Wagner scored 18 points apiece and Houston had 16.

"We can score with anybody. And tonight we scored 92, so that's not the problem," Jennings said. "We need to work harder on defense, we need to play better 'team' defense."

Waldorf (13-9) committed 22 turnovers for its only blemish Thursday night. The Mustangs had only eight turnovers, and that discrepancy helped the home team chop its 23-point deficit to just six points.

Jenkins said his team played its best 20 minutes of basketball during the first half Thursday.

"That was pretty impressive for us," he remarked. "We were able to knock down 3's. I think that's what got it going."

Waldorf shot 8-for-14 on 3-pointers in the first half. Brewer, a silky 6-foot-6 senior from Las Vegas, hit two straight triples to begin the game as Waldorf began the contest with an 8-0 margin and led from start to finish.

It's hard to believe Waldorf has lost nine games this season, but Jenkins said Brewer and Prowell have battled injuries. Jenkins also said his team has hurt itself at times by playing poorly and he was not happy with the way his team performed in the second half when the Warriors were outscored 48-34.

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"We have a good team. We do," he said. "We should have closed this win better than we did. I'm not happy with our guys the way we finished it. Great first half, awful second half."

Mount Mercy and Waldorf will meet again Feb. 17 in Forest City.

WALDORF (99): Parrish 10 2-2 25, Prowell 8 5-6 22, Morgan 4 2-4 10, Brewer 10 4-5 28, English 0 0-0 0, Brown 3 1-1 8, Collins 0 0-0 0, Curry 1 0-0 2, Verdin 2 0-2 4. Totals 38 14-20 99.

MOUNT MERCY (92): Houston 6 4-6 16, Wagner 5 6-6 18, Ford 8 4-5 20, Parker 0 1-2 1, Bedford 1 3-4 5, Strong 0 0-0 0, Murdock 0 0-0 0, Brawner-Henley 2 3-5 8, Lamaak 8 1-1 18, Struss 1 0-0 3, Gogg 0 3-4 3. Totals 31 25-33 92.

Halftime - Waldorf 65, Mount Mercy 44. 3-point goals - Waldorf 9 (Brewer 4, Parrish 3, Prowell 1, Brown 1), Mount Mercy 5 (Wagner 2, Brawner-Henley 1, Lamaak 1, Struss 1).