

When the Mount Mercy Mustangs are cooking, you need a tote machine to keep track of all the points.

They were cooking Monday night.

The Mustangs scored their most points in five years with a 115-91 verdict over Culver-Stockton in a Heart of America ballgame at the Hennessey Recreation Center.

Michael Brawner-Henley led seven Mustangs into double figures with 23 points as the home team scored early and often.

Mount Mercy averaged only 70.7 points during a three-game losing streak prior to Thanksgiving, but the Mustangs revved up the attack against Culver-Stockton.

"I thought we got back to playing the way we want to play," said Coach Aaron Jennings. "I thought Benedictine and Clarke, and even St. Ambrose, did a good job of dictating tempo and kind of bullying us, pushing us around (in the setbacks).

"And today we played very free. We were playing fast, but under control. And when you do those things I think we're a dangerous team. And you saw that tonight."

Mount Mercy poured in 107 and 105 points in its first two games this season, so the Mustangs have serious firepower on this year's team.

Dennis McKinney scored 19 points, Bailey Basala 14, Mike Evans 13, Antwain Strong 13, Emilio Villagrana 11 and Mohammed Albagami 10 Monday night. All five starters reached double figures, with Basala and Albagami making it off the bench.

The 115 points were the most for the Mustangs since a 121-80 victory over Judson University on Nov. 23, 2013.

"I was really happy to see us play with the right pace and play together," said Jennings. "We had a lot of assists tonight, which is how we want to play."

Mount Mercy collected 18 assists on 40 baskets. Strong led the way with eight assists, several of them on pretty passes that hit teammates in stride for easy baskets.



The Mustangs made 40 of 71 shots for 56.3 percent. They really sizzled in the first half, nailing 22 of 35 shots for 62.9 percent on their way to a 63-49 advantage at intermission. Culver-Stockton shot 60.6 percent in the first half and trailed by 14.

Mount Mercy built a 27-point lead at 79-52 with 16:04 left in the game. The Mustangs appeared to get a little complacent at that point and saw the visitors pull within 14 points at 84-70, but Mount Mercy get rolling again and steadily pulled away.

Jennings liked the way his club responded after losing to St. Ambrose (75-74), Clarke (87-73) and Benedictine (79-65).

"We definitely knew that a three-game losing streak wasn't the way we needed to carry ourselves," he remarked. "It wasn't the way we needed to play.

"So we've been on them in practice. We've been working hard and hopefully this gets us back moving in the right direction."

Mount Mercy raised its records to 3-3 overall and 1-2 in the conference. Culver-Stockton fell to 4-4 overall and 1-3 in the league. Mason Vires poured in 32 points for the Wildcats.

Mount Mercy's next game is Thursday night at home against Graceland, the 2018 NAIA national champions.

"I'm glad we've got them at home," said Jennings, "but we've got to learn these next two days, we've got to get better and we've got to be ready to play."

**CULVER-STOCKTON (91):** Smith 5 3-5 13, Fischer 1 1-2 3, Vires 12 6-8 32, Johnson 4 0-2 8, Newby 4 6-6 15, Fernandez 1 0-0 3, Mitchell 1 0-0 3, Scoggin 2 0-0 5, Beasley 1 4-4 7, Cosby 0 0-0 0, March 1 1-3 3. Totals 32 21-30 91.

**MOUNT MERCY (115):** McKinney 5 9-15 19, Brawner-Henley 8 4-7 23, Evans 6 1-2 13, Strong 3 7-9 13, Villagrana 4 0-0 11, Hehmann 0 0-0 0, Albagami 4 0-0 10, Reischauer 2 2-2 7, Johnson 2 0-0 4, Kehinde 0 1-2 1, Basala 6 0-0 14. Totals 40 24-37 115.

Halftime - Mount Mercy 63, Culver-Stockton 49. 3-point goals - Culver-Stockton 6 (Vires 2, Newby 1, Mitchell 1, Scoggin 1, Beasley 1), Mount Mercy 11 (Brawner-Henley 3, Villagrana 3,

Albagami 2, Basala  2, Reischauer 1).