

Mustangs slowed down by Baker

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 03 February 2019 06:35 -



No juice. No joy.

That was the story for the Mount Mercy men's basketball team at the Hennessey Recreation Center Saturday afternoon.

The Mustangs were held to their lowest point total of the season and lost to Baker University, 75-62, in a Heart of America Conference game.

The setback dropped Mount Mercy to 12-11 overall and 7-10 in the conference, leaving the Mustangs in a three-way tie for seventh place in the tight league standings with Baker and Central Methodist.

The Mustangs are only one game out of sixth place in the Heart of America standings, but they're also only one game out of 12th place in the 13-team conference.

Mount Mercy came into the home game with two straight victories over MidAmerica Nazarene and Graceland, but they shot only 38.7 percent from the field and never got rolling. Baker had a 9-and-12 record when the ballgame began, yet was clearly the better team Saturday.

"I thought it was a huge disappointment," said Coach Aaron Jennings. "I thought coming off a couple of tough wins, you'd like to think you've got some momentum.

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"We just didn't have it. We didn't have the legs."

Jennings thought assistant coach Jake Misener summed it up best.

"Like Coach Misener says, 'We didn't have the juice.' We just didn't have that energy and they did. This is a bitter pill to swallow."

Mount Mercy was averaging 85 points in conference games when the day began, but the Mustangs got off to a slow start and scored only 25 points in the first half. Dennis McKinney popped in five 3-pointers and scored 24 points, but the scoring tapered off dramatically from there.

Bailey Basala finished with 11 points and DJ Johnson had 10 off the bench.

Charles Fisher scored 22 points for Baker (10-12, 7-10).

Mount Mercy chopped a 15-point deficit down to just three points at 42-39, but Baker pulled away again to a 12-point advantage. The Mustangs drew within six points at 68-62 with 2:17 left, but got no closer.

Baker hit 20 of 23 free throws and outscored the Mustangs, 20-6, at the foul line.

Mount Mercy played without two key guys. Mychael Brawner-Henley (13.6 points) is still serving a school suspension and Mohammed Albagami (9.0) missed the game due to concussion protocol.

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The top 10 teams in the Heart of America Conference standings will make the league tournament and the top six teams will receive first-round byes. Mount Mercy has seven games left in the regular season.

BAKER (75): Hopson 3 2-2 8, Elifritz 3 0-0 8, Fisher 6 8-9 22, Martin 3 1-2 10, Clifford 2 2-2 7, Patterson 4 2-2 11, Bullock 0 3-4 3, Dukes 2 0-0 4, Brooks 0 2-2 2, Miller 0 0-0 0. Totals 23 20-23 75.

MOUNT MERCY (62): McKinney 8 3-4 24, Evans 1 2-2 5, Basala 4 0-0 11, Strong 1 1-3 3, Reischauer 4 0-0 9, Villagrana 0 0-0 0, Johnson 4 0-1 10, Kehinde 0 0-0 0. Totals 22 6-10 62.

Halftime - Baker 36, Mount Mercy 25. 3-point goals - Baker 9 (Martin 3, Elifritz 2, Fisher 2, Clifford 1, Patterson 1), Mount Mercy 12 (McKinney 5, Basala 3, Johnson 2, Evans 1, Reischauer 1).