

## Mustangs top Peru State for clutch win

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Mount Mercy Mustangs won a crucial game for their absent head coach Saturday. Of more importance, they won a crucial game for themselves.

The Mustangs, scrambling for a spot in the Heart of America Conference playoffs, bumped off Peru State, 89-85, Saturday with their backs against the wall.

Coach Aaron Jennings and starting guard Streeter McIlravy missed the game with the flu and Dennis McKinney, their leading scorer, got hit in the head in the second half and did not return to the game as a precautionary measure against a possible concussion.

The Mustangs found a way to win anyway against one of the top teams in the league.

"I'm just really proud of the guys," said assistant coach Martez Creighton, who subbed for Jennings. "They worked hard the last couple of days in practice.

"It's not ideal when your head coach is out, obviously. They came out and executed, just like we wanted them to

The top eight teams in the Heart of America Conference standings will make the league tournament. Mount Mercy is currently two games out of eighth place with two games left in the regular season, including a daunting trip to seventh-ranked William Penn on Wednesday.

Tyler Kelley, averaging 4.7 points when the day began, tossed in a career-best 23 points with 7-for-7 shooting from the floor, including 3-for-3 on 3-pointers, and was 6-for-7 at the foul line. He was proud of the way the Mustangs responded to adversity.

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"That just feels awesome," Kelley said after the clutch victory. "Down a few players and we rose up for the occasion and got it done."

"I knew we were missing a few key players. I knew someone had to step up. The first one that left my hand felt good, so I just took off from there."

Kelley, a 6-foot-4 sophomore from Manchester, played 32 minutes and did not commit a single turnover.

"Super-impressed with Kelley," said Creighton. "We've been trying to get him to open up more, come out of his shell a little bit. I thought today he was really aggressive and did some really good things on both ends."

Davion Watson hit a free throw with seven seconds left to give the Mustangs their four-point lead at 89-85, effectively sealing the victory. He finished with 14 points, six rebounds and four assists.

Bailey Basala scored 20 points for Mount Mercy. RoyShawn Webb collected 15 points, five rebounds and five assists while playing all 40 minutes at point guard. McKinney scored 13 points in 16 minutes.

Henry Tanksley scored 26 points for Peru State and Devon Colley netted 20. Peru State stands in third place in the conference at 14-8 and is 15-13 overall.

Mount Mercy squared its overall record at 14-14.

**PERU STATE (85):** Isaac Simpson 2-3 0-0 5, Devon Colley 8-19 2-4 20, Henry Tanksley 8-17 7-12 26, Deonte McReynolds 2-5 1-2 7, Nick Brannon 7-9 0-1 15, O'Nandi Brooks 2-3 2-4 6, Drew Switzer 0-2 0-0 0, Cade Connell 0-00-0 0, Noah Vasa 3-6 0-0 6. Totals 32-64 12-23 85.

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**MOUNT MERCY (89):** Tyler Kelley 7-7 6-7 23, Dennis McKinney 4-10 3-4 13, Davion Watson 4-10 4-8 14, Bailey Basala 6-12 6-8 20, RoyShawn Webb 6-11 0-3 15, Davarea Loggins 0-3 0-0 0, Christian Reischauer 1-1 0-0 2, DJ Johnson 1-3 0-0 2. Totals 29-57 19-30 89.

Halftime - Mount Mercy 43, Peru State 36. 3-point goals - Peru State 9-24 (Simpson 1-2, Colley 2-6, Tanksley 3-6 McReynolds 2-5, Brannon 1-1, Switzer 0-2, Vasa 0-2), Mount Mercy 12-27 (Kelley 3-3, McKinney 2-5, Watson 2-5, Basala 2-5, Webb 3-4, Loggins 0-3, Johnson 0-2).