

Jefferson girls put clamps on Prairie

Written by Tom Fruehling

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Jefferson Coach Jason Edwards speaks so softly that it's barely above a whisper.

But his J-Hawk girls certainly paid attention to what he had to tell them at halftime Tuesday night as they turned a two-point lead into a 24-point blowout over Prairie in the Jeff gym.

"Coach always tells us to aim for three things," said junior sparkplug guard Sam Kitterman following the 51-27 runaway win. "Defend, rebound and run."

Sophomore backcourt running mate Avery Guy repeated the mantra. "He says if we do those three things right, we'll win games," she said.

After a sometimes sloppy first half, Jefferson's girls followed instructions from then on with near perfection. They held Prairie to just five points in the third quarter and kept them from scoring any points at all in the fourth quarter.

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Meanwhile, the J-Hawks (4-2) pushed the ball down the court hard after every missed shot.

“We want to run the floor and score in transition,” Edwards explained. “I didn’t think we started out with enough energy. But in the second half we really picked up the intensity on the defensive end. And we were able to get a lot of run-outs on the other end.

“Our object is to wear down the opponent. And I was pleased that we seemed to get stronger as the game went on.”

On the opposite bench, first-year Prairie Coach Josh Bentley watched his young team implode to start the season at 0-5. “We have to learn to play two halves,” he lamented afterward.

After trailing early 12-4, the Prairie Hawks scored seven straight to end the first quarter and came back from a seven-point deficit in the second quarter to pull within 24-22 at halftime.

“I thought we had great ball movement, moving the ball from side to side,” Bentley said. “But in the second half, we were much more undisciplined. We didn’t pass the ball enough and settled for too many quick shots.”

As to whether his inexperienced squad was worn down by Jefferson’s run-and-gun style, the coach said, “I hope not because we want to play an up and down, up-tempo game.”

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The J-Hawks, who shot 35 percent for the game to Prairie's 22 percent, were led in scoring by their tandem towers of Amanda Ollinger and Kennedy Dighton with 13 and 11 points, respectively.

But it was an off-night shooting for both of them as Dighton missed a number of bunnies underneath and Ollinger clanked all 11 of her 3-point attempts.

"It was just one of those nights," the 6-foot-1 all-stater sighed.

Ollinger more than made up for it, though, with several steals and 20 rebounds that started many a fast-break.



"Amanda is clearly our best player," Edwards pointed out. "But we tell the girls that we expect each one of them to contribute when they're in there. And tonight, I thought every one of them did that."

"They shared the ball and found the open shooters."

Of Jefferson's 22 field goals, 11 of them were made after an assist, which Edwards attributed to

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making an extra pass.

As Jefferson stretched the lead to 18 early in the fourth quarter, for instance, the 5-foot-5 Guy snared a rebound and passed to halfcourt to fellow sophomore Kylie Wise, who then heaved it to Kitterman under the basket for an easy layup.

“That’s what we like to do,” said Kitterman. “We were all over ‘em on defense. We had a lot of hustle and pushed the ball up for some wide-open scores.”

For her part, Guy said it was the J-Hawks’ best game so far.

“Rebounding and running the floor, that was the key tonight,” she said. “We really picked it up and are getting better every game.”

PRAIRIE (27) – Emilie Rotter 3 0-0 6, Olivia Usher 0 1-2 1, Jenna Wagemester 2 0-0 4, Halle Person 3 0-0 8, Makenzie Stoffer 1 0-0 2, Taylor Moenk 2 0-0 4, Lynsey Altenhofen 0 0-0 0, Ranelle Herold 1 0-0 2, Maddie Adams 0 0-0 0, Lauren Kuch 0 0-0 0 27. Totals 12 1-2 27.

JEFFERSON (51) – Sam Kitterman 4 0-0 8, Avery Guy 1 2-2 5, Kylie Wise 3 0-0 8, Kennedy Dighton 5 1-4 11, Amanda Ollinger 6 1-1 13, Emma Rolwes 0 0-0 0, Mariah Robinson 1 0-0 2, Sparkle Melton 2 0-0 4, Cassandra Veglahn 0 0-0 0, Emily O’Brien 0 0-0 0. Totals 22 4-7 51.

Halftime – Jefferson 24, Prairie 22. 3-point goals – Prairie 2 (Person 2), Jefferson 3 (Wise 2, Guy 1)