

Konigsmark, J-Hawks push No.9 Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

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Tyler Konigsmark and the Jefferson J-Hawks could have quit on themselves a long time ago in the midst of a grueling campaign, but they proved Tuesday night against Kennedy that they're alive and kicking.

Unfortunately for the J-Hawks, their best effort of the season was not good enough.

The Kennedy Cougars took Jefferson's best punch and escaped with a 79-69 victory in an entertaining Mississippi Valley Conference game at Kennedy.

Konigsmark poured in 22 points in the first half alone and finished with a career-best 27 points in a sterling performance. The J-Hawks have a dismal 1-and-17 record and have lost 12 games by lopsided scores, but they trailed the No. 9 team in the state by only two points at 62-60 midway through the fourth quarter.

Kennedy scored 12 straight points for a 74-60 lead to put the game away, but it was a terrific effort by the visitors from the southwest side of town.

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"Credit to the boys," said Brandon Horman, in his first year as Jefferson's head coach. "It's been a challenging year for the boys as far as coming back every single day after not receiving the results they would like, night-in and night-out."

"I give them credit for hanging in there. They haven't quit on themselves. They're still hanging in there and they're still fighting hard."

Brendon Manning poured in 25 points to pace Kennedy (13-5, 10-3). Bryton Heisler chipped in with 15 points and Cole Murdock scored 12 as the Cougars finally pulled away.

Konigsmark, a rugged 6-foot-4 senior with a nice touch, was a scoring machine in the first half. His 22 points led Jefferson to a 35-34 edge at intermission. He got only five more points in the second half when Kennedy re-focused its defense, but it was still a night to remember.

"Coach told me to drive the ball," he said. "I haven't been driving the ball lately. I'm not shooting a high percentage like I did last year. It worked out in the first half."

Konigsmark was averaging nine points per game when the night began, but he tripled his average with strong drives to the bucket and three 3-pointers. He's had some big scoring games this season with 19 and 16 twice, but nothing like this against a quality team like Kennedy.

"That's Tyler Konigsmark and what he's capable of doing," said Horman. "He's a guy, when things are going well they're definitely going well for him. He brings great energy. He can score in so many different ways and he can absorb that contact and finish."

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