

Cougars clamp down on Saints, 72-44

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Kennedy Cougars played a tricky defense Friday night that combined the best principles of a matchup zone and a switching man-to-man.

It's a little hard to describe on paper, and it's even harder to solve on a basketball court.

"That's what everybody asks," said Kennedy guard Cole Murdock. "Is it a zone? Is it a man? That's what we like. Keep them guessing and they don't know what's coming next."

The Cougars smothered the Xavier Saints with their tricky defense Friday and rolled to an impressive 72-44 victory in a Mississippi Valley Conference game at the Kennedy gym.

"I'd probably call it more of a zone than a man," said Kennedy Coach Jon McKowen. "We just want to have general basketball knowledge, that the ball is a lot more important than anybody else on the floor."

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"We want to be aggressive on defense," he said. "We don't want to sit back and let them dictate tempo. It doesn't matter who we play, we want to dictate the tempo."

Xavier (1-2, 0-1) has three big offensive threats with Adam McDermott, Calvin Winker and Michael Mims, but only McDermott did any real damage with 19 points. Winker fouled out in the fourth quarter with four points and Mims had a rough shooting night and finished with eight points.

"It was hard to find a rhythm," said Saints Coach Ryan Luehrsmann. "I thought we were getting good shots. We haven't shot the ball well yet this year.

"We've got a lot of good perimeter shooters," he said. "I'm confident we'll eventually get there."

Luehrsmann tipped his cap to the Cougars (2-1, 1-0) in the Mississippi Valley Conference opener for both clubs.

"They're just a lot further along than us right now," he said. "You could tell they've got excellent chemistry together."

The Saints chopped a 15-point deficit down to eight points at 40-31 in the third quarter, but the Cougars took control from there. Kennedy blitzed the Saints, 27-9, in the final stanza as the lead ballooned all the way to 28 points.

Drake Brewster, a 6-foot-4 sophomore, poured in 16 of his team-high 18 points in the second half for Kennedy. Maxson Techau, a 6-6 sophomore, played a steady game and finished with 12 points as the two 10th graders combined for 30 markers.

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Murdock, a senior, scored 15 points with a trio of 3-pointers and some clever moves to the basket.

The Cougars were confident they would beat the Saints, but they did not anticipate such a lopsided final margin.

"By 28? Probably not," said Murdock. "Did we expect to beat them? Yes. There's no doubt in my mind that we expected to win this game tonight.



"People were doubting us and kind of giving these guys (the Saints) praise, treating them like they're all-stars. They'll have a good team. They will be. We just played really well as a team tonight, defensively and offensively."

Brewster played varsity football for Kennedy this season as a sophomore, which helped prepare him for varsity basketball as a 10th grader as well.

"It gave me a lot of experience playing at a different speed of the game and being a leader and helping my teammates out and getting to know them," he said.

Brewster credited his teammates for getting him the ball in good spots Friday for relatively easy shots. "But it was also him being in the right

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spot at the right time," said McKowen.

McKowen liked the way his club played following a loss to Des Moines Hoover last Saturday.

"We took steps in the right direction," he said. "After that loss to Hoover, we had things to shore up and we definitely did that."

XAVIER (44): Mims 2 2-2 8, McDermott 6 4-4 19, Burger 2 0-0 5, Ramlo 1 0-0 2, Welch 1 0-0 2, Whitten 0 0-0 0, Joens 0 0-0 0, Downey 0 0-0 0, Winker 2 0-0 4, Clasen 0 0-0 0, Otting 2 0-0 4. Totals 16 6-6 44.

KENNEDY (72): Daniels 2 0-0 6, Odom 0 0-0 0, Heisler 3 3-4 9, Murdock 6 0-0 15, Gardner 1 0-0 2, Kadolph 0 0-0 0, Bell 0 0-0 0, Krystofiak 1 0-0 3, Manning 2 3-4 7, Girling 0 0-0 0, Hall 0 0-0 0, Ross 0 0-0 0, Wall 0 0-0 0, Techau 5 2-2 12, Brewster 8 2-3 18. Totals 28 10-15 72.

Halftime - Kennedy 30, Xavier 18. 3-point goals - Xavier 6 (McDermott 3, Mims 2, Burger 1), Kennedy 6 (Murdock 3, Daniels 2, Krystofiak 1). Fouled out - Winker.