

Sellers shines like an All-American

Written by Tom Fruehling

Tuesday, 12 January 2016 23:35 - Last Updated Wednesday, 13 January 2016 06:09



Lela Sellers remembers as a little girl her mom saying that someday she might be on the McDonald's All-American high school basketball team.

"I thought then, 'Oh, that's only for really good players,'" she said Tuesday night after it was announced to Kennedy fans that she has indeed been nominated for the prestigious national honor.

The smooth and unselfish 6-foot senior turned in an All-American performance on her home court with 30 seemingly effortless points to lead the Class 5A second-ranked Cougars to a 68-49 romp over the young but gritty Prairie Hawks.

"My real dream has always been to play in the WNBA (pro league)," said Sellers, who turned down major Big 10 and SEC schools to play next year at smaller but perennial Division I NCAA tournament qualifier Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

In addition to tying her career-best on 12-of-17 shooting with her future college coach in the crowd, she also led her team with 11 rebounds and four assists.

"Lela's a real team player," said Cougar coach Tony Vis, who admires her attitude as much as her talent. "And she's one of the best players in the

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state.”

Sellers and senior running mate Sydney Hayden carried the Cougars (13-1) in the first half, accounting for 30 of the team’s 39 points as they won their 13th game in a row.

“We started out kind of iffy,” said Hayden, a 5-foot-5 plugger who leads the state in 3-pointers. “But when they were putting their attention on Lela, that opened up some holes for me.”

All 11 of Hayden’s points came before halftime and Sellers notched 19 as Kennedy went from trailing 14-12 to building a 39-24 lead at the intermission.

“Credit Prairie,” Vis said. “They’re a scrappy young team, and they had us on our heels.



“But once we kind of settled in, I thought our offense was very efficient. I know we shot way over 50 percent for the last three quarters.”

For the night, the Cougars were 26 for 45 (58 percent), while the Hawks (now 5-6) were 18 for 43 (42 percent).

Senior Olivia Usher led Prairie with 14 points. Senior Lynsey Altenhofen and sophomore Halle Person had 10.

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Their efforts, though, were not enough to stem the tide once Kennedy got rolling. The Cougars' lead ballooned to 20 early in the third quarter, and they never looked back.

"We played hard the whole way," said Hayden. "We're all very competitive, and we put our hearts into it."

None more so than Sellers, even though her style is so fluid that she seems to glide through the game.

"I'm always trying to work hard and do my best," she noted. "Really I'm trying to do better than my best."

PRAIRIE (49): Moenk 0 0-0 0, Altenhofen 4 0-0 10, Schmitt 12-4 4, Usher 5 2-4 14, Person 5 0-2 10, Shreeves 0 0-0 0, Kuch 3 1-1 8, Sanders 0 0-0 0, Lampe 0 0-0 0, Adams 0 0-0 0, Wagemester 0 2-2 2, Stoffer 0 1-2 1. Totals 18 8-15 49.

KENNEDY (68): Langhurst 2 2-2 7, Hayden 3 4-4 11, Sellers 12 4-5 30, Dolphin 2 0-0 5, Runels 1 0-0 3, Hamilton 1 0-0 2, Hellweg 3 0-1 6, Steele 0 0-0 0, Timmerman 0 0-0 0, Vaske 2 0-1 4, Meier 0 0-0 0, Gallagher 0 0-0 0. Totals 26 10-13 68.

Halftime - Kennedy 39, Prairie 24. 3-point goals – Prairie 5 (Altenhofen 2, Usher 2, Kuch 1), Kennedy 5 (Sellers 2, Langhurst 1, Hayden 1, Runels 1).