

## Cougars maul Burlington in boys hoops

Written by Tom Fruehling

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For their season opener at home Friday night, the Kennedy boys ran up against the gang that couldn't shoot straight.

Or dribble. Or pass. Or do much of anything right, actually.

At least in the first half.

Facing a woefully undermanned group of Burlington Grayhounds, the Cougars unintentionally rolled up a 47-7 lead at halftime.

With the clock running continuously the rest of the way, the two teams scrimmaged to a somewhat less embarrassing 69-26 conclusion.

If there was anything to be salvaged for the visitors, they did outscore their much more formidable foe 12-10 in the lickety-split fourth quarter.

"There are a lot of worse things going on the world than what happened to you tonight," veteran Burlington Coach Jeff Bloomer reminded his junior-filled team afterward. He said his young guys were beat from the get-go.

"We were unsure of ourselves right at the start," explained Bloomer, whose team opens the year 0-2 after falling to Keokuk earlier this week. "We threw the ball away at an alarming rate.

"The kids would turn the ball over. And to make up for it, they'd rush their shots. And that would only compound the problem."

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In the first half alone, the purple and gray hoopsters turned the ball over 18 times and made just three of 17 shots.

Meanwhile, Kennedy Coach Bob Fontana was running players in and out like a carnival ride operator. He used 14 in the regulation-clock opening half (including two off of the sophomore squad), and the other two on the roster played later on. All of them seemed to steal the ball and score at will.

“It feels good to get off to a really good start in our first game,” Fontana said. “And I liked the energy level of everybody that played. They played with intensity, and they played well together.

“It’s a very unselfish group of kids.”

In a rebuilding year that he’s starting almost from scratch, Fontana had five seniors in the starting line-up. All but two others who suited up Friday are sophomores or juniors.

“I thought the underclassmen did very well,” the longtime coach said.

Although individual statistics are meaningless in a game so lopsided, big Elliott Christians was a dominant force in the post for the Cougars and muscled his way to a team-high 14 points. Fellow seniors Cody Bell, Alex Hayden and Trevor Heitland looked sharp from the outside by each racking-up a pair of 3-pointers. Sophs Anthony Carter and Derek Jacobus brought spark off the bench.

“It’s a typical Bob Fontana-coached team,” said Burlington’s Bloomer. “Strong on defense, very physical and they hit the boards. And they can hit their 3s.

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“We really didn’t give ourselves a chance to compete with them.

“The only positive is that we came out the second half and still worked hard. And we were more sure of ourselves. We’ll use that to make us better.”

For Fontana, the easy win won’t be savored long.

“We’re playing at Oskaloosa Saturday night,” he said. “So we’re starting over.”

BURLINGTON (26): Brandon Mosena 4 0-0 9, Davion Lewis 1 0-0 2, Jobe Ashby 2 0-0 6, Zach Patterson 2 0-0 5, Max Mercer 0 0-0 0, Dilan Bearid 0 0-0 0, Joe Gates 1 0-0 3, George Coursey 0 0-0 0, Derrick Willies 0 0-0 0, Adam Roy 0 0-0 0, Zach Libben 0 0-0 0, Clayton Graham 0 0-0 0, Justin Randall 0 1-4 1. Totals 10 1-4 26.

KENNEDY (69): Alex Hayden 5 0-0 12. Trevor Heitland 2 2-4 8, Josh Jahlas 2 0-0 4, Cody Bell 2 1-2 7, Elliott Christians 5 4-5 14, Riley Fergus 1 3-5 5, Anthony Carter 0 2-2 2, Patrick Martin 2 0-0 4, Ben Struss 0 0-0 0, Taylor Oltmann 2 1-2 5, Blake Murdock 1 0-0 3, Derek Jacobus 1 0-0 2, Andrew Johnson 1 1-2 3, John Koelling 0 0-0 0, Austin Rhoads 0 0-0, David King 0 0-0 0. Totals 24 14-22 69.

Halftime – Kennedy 47, Burlington 7. 3-point goals – Burlington 5 (Ashby 2, Mosena, Patterson, Gates), Kennedy 7 (Hayden 2, Heitland 2, Bell 2, Murdock). Total fouls – Burlington 17, Kennedy 7. Fouled out – none.