

Uthoff is 'Mr. Clutch' in Jefferson's OT win

Written by Jim Ecker

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You'll have to forgive Iowa City West Coach Steve Bergman if he doesn't let the team bus stop in Cedar Rapids anymore.

One of the Metro's top teams and elite players killed him again Friday night with a miracle shot.

Jarrold Uthoff poured in 34 points and turned into "Mr. Clutch" as fifth-ranked Jefferson squeezed past the Trojans in overtime, 67-63, in a Mississippi Valley Conference thriller at the Jefferson gym.

Uthoff hit two 3-pointers in the final 20 seconds of regulation, including an off-balance triple with eight seconds left that tied the game and forced overtime. The 6-foot-8 superstar then scored the first five points of overtime to put the J-Hawks (7-1, 4-1) ahead to stay.

"I thought Jarrod's performance was one of the most competitive performances I've seen in 32 years of coaching," Jefferson Coach Stu Ordman remarked. "I thought he was absolutely sensational. He kind of put us on his back and carried us. I'm very proud of him."

Iowa City West (4-4, 2-4) lost Tuesday night at Washington, 54-52, when Wes Washpun banked in a 3-pointer from about 28 feet at the buzzer. Three nights later, Uthoff sent them home unhappy again.

"It hasn't been a good week, I'll tell you that," Bergman said. "I think we should have (won) one of these two, if not both. But we're young and we don't know how to win."

Jefferson trailed, 57-54, with less than 10 seconds remaining when Uthoff took matters into his own hands. Ironically, he wasn't trying to make the shot that tied the game. He was guarded tightly and was merely looking for contact.

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"I wanted to get him up in the air, because I thought our best chance was me shooting three free throws rather than hitting a contested three," he said. "I wanted to get him in the air and hopefully make him foul me, but it ended up going in and they didn't call a foul. It worked out."

Uthoff was surprised the shot went in. "Quite surprised," he confessed.

Iowa City West was shocked.

"He made a tough, tough, tough, tough shot," Bergman said.

Iowa City West called a timeout with 6.3 seconds left and nearly won the game at the buzzer when Dondre Alexander drove past Uthoff and had an inside look at the basket, but his shot bounced off the rim.

"My heart dropped when he shot it," Uthoff said. "I thought it was going in, I thought the game was over."

It went to overtime instead.

Uthoff made three free throws and a bucket to give Jefferson a 62-57 advantage, but it wasn't over. Alexander drilled a 3-pointer for West, making it 62-60.

Alec Saunders hit two free throws for the J-Hawks, making it 64-60, but Alexander tossed in another 3-pointer to pull the Trojans within 64-63 with 22 seconds to go.

Saunders hit one free throw with 12.8 seconds remaining, making it 65-63. Alexander missed a well-guarded shot and Jefferson got the ball out of bounds with 4.8 seconds left.

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Iowa City West was unable to foul and the J-Hawks found Saunders for an easy layup at the buzzer, ending the instant classic.

"The atmosphere was amazing," Uthoff said. "It was just so exciting and so intense. It was one of the funnest basketball games I've ever been a part of."

Tyler Meiborg played a strong game for Jefferson and finished with 14 points. Sophomore Ky Kramer hit big buckets early in the contest for the J-Hawks and scored seven points. Saunders finished with eight points.

Alexander led Iowa City West with 17 points. Jeremy Morgan scored 11 points, Jacob Gylten 10, Okey Ukah 10 and Leo Franz nine.

Uthoff grabbed 10 rebounds and blocked four shots.

IOWA CITY WEST (63): Morgan 4 0-0 11, Lohaus 1 0-0 2, Alexander 6 3-4 17, Gylten 4 1-3 10, Ukah 4 2-2 10, Seyfer 0 0-0 0, Franz 3 0-0 9, Swank 1 0-0 2, Staten 1 0-0 2. Totals 24 6-9 63.

JEFFERSON (67): Meiborg 5 3-4 14, Kramer 3 0-0 7, Olson 2 0-0 4, Saunders 2 4-6 8, Uthoff 9 13-16 34, Brown 0 0-0 0, Denny 0 0-0 0. Totals 21 20-26 67.

Halftime -- Jefferson 23, Iowa City West 22. Regulation -- Jefferson 57, Iowa City West 57. 3-point goals -- Iowa City West 9 (Morgan 3, Franz 3, Alexander 2, Gylten), Jefferson 5 (Uthoff 3, Meiborg, Kramer). Fouled out -- Morgan.