

Uthoff leads J-Hawks past Prairie

Written by

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Jarrold Uthoff scored 25 points, grabbed 14 rebounds and blocked five shots to lead No. 10 Jefferson past stubborn Prairie, 50-41, Thursday night in the J-Hawks' regular season finale at Prairie.

The final score was much closer than anticipated, although the J-Hawks (15-5, 11-5 MVC) were coming into the game off a hard-fought loss to No. 1 Linn-Mar on Tuesday. Meanwhile, Prairie was trying to end a 10-game losing streak. The Hawks (3-17, 2-13) get another chance to snap the skid Friday night when they host Dubuque Hempstead in a makeup game to end the regular season.

Despite not scoring until the 4:20 mark of the first quarter, Prairie hung tough with Jefferson in the first half. The first quarter ended with Jefferson holding an 8-6 lead and the J-Hawks' margin was 23-17 at halftime.

Uthoff, the state's leading scorer with a 26 point average, was held scoreless in the opening frame, attempting but one shot.

Talking about the way they came out, Prairie junior Jacob Aune said, "We definitely executed our game plan. We knew Jarrod was going to get his points. What we didn't execute on were the turnovers towards the end of the game. The goal is to value every possession and make every possession count."

Uthoff scored 10 points in the second quarter.

"We started to pound the ball inside with the height advantage. We ran more of our sets to look inside" said Uthoff.

Jefferson pounded the ball to Uthoff to start the second half, building a 29-17 lead. Even though he was being double- and triple-teamed, Uthoff was still able to battle for 11 points in the third quarter.

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Prairie was able to connect from the outside to keep the game close, but in the end Jefferson was able to control the ball to hold on for the win.

Alec Saunders added 10 points for Jefferson and sophomore Ky Kramer had seven. Junior point guard Taylor Olson added four assists and appears to be regaining his strength and high level of play that he exhibited prior to a back injury that sidelined him for several weeks.

Aune led Prairie with 13 points. The Hawks' leading scorer, Matt MacDougall, was held to two points.

Jefferson has a week off before it plays either Western Dubuque or Waterloo East in a substate semifinal. Those two play Monday at Epworth. Jefferson's game is Feb. 25 at 7 p.m.

When asked about his team's performance against Prairie and the tournament matchup next week Jefferson Coach Stu Ordman commented, "I think the game Tuesday drained us emotionally some, but we were able to put together several good possessions in the third quarter and come together offensively and defensively to set the tone for the rest of the game. We'll get back to the fundamentals and hopefully have everyone up to full speed."

Prairie plays its first round substate game Monday night at Waterloo West. The teams played back on Dec. 14 and West won, 85-58. The winner of that game plays at No. 8 Cedar Falls on Feb. 25.

When asked about their one remaining MVC game and postseason matchup Aune commented, "We definitely want to get a win (tomorrow) and get some momentum going into Saturday and Sunday's practice to get us ready for Waterloo West."

JEFFERSON (50): Olson 1 1-2 3, Meiborg 0 1-2 1, Kramer 3 0-0 7, Saunders, Uthoff 9 7-11 25, Robinson 0 0-0 0, Hemphill 1 0-1 2, Denny 1 0-0 2, Larson 0 0-0 0, Rooney 0 0-0 0. Totals 19 11-19 50.

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PRAIRIE (41): Eilers 0 0-0 0, Bradford 1 0-0 3, Boots 0 4-4 4, Hilgenkamp 1 0-0 0, Lafferty 1 2-2 4, Jantzen 2 0-0 5, Adams 0 0-0 0, Aune 5 2-2 13, Kehoe 1 0-1 3, Frazier 1 0-0 2, Mouglin 1 0-0 0, MacDougall 1 0-0 2, Bradford 1 0-0 3. Totals 14 8-9 41.

Halftime—Jefferson 23. Prairie 17. 3-point goals—Jefferson 1 (Kramer), Prairie 5 (Bradford, Hilgenkamp, Jantzen, Aune, Kehoe).