

## 'Best friends' spark Warriors past J-Hawks

Written by Carl Gonder

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You might call them the Ying and Yang of Washington Warrior basketball. Danielle Franklin and Aleena Hobbs seem to go together like peanut butter and jelly. Or something like that.

Friday night at the J-Hawk gym the long-time best friends combined for 51 points in a hard-fought 67-59 Warrior win over the up-and-coming Jefferson J-Hawks in Mississippi Valley Conference girls play.

No. 10 Washington moves to 6-2 overall and Jefferson drops to 3-6.

Hobbs, a drive-to-the-basket-slashing forward, had 23 points and eight rebounds. Franklin, a silky-smooth shooter, had 28 points and seven rebounds, despite getting into early foul trouble.

To say they work well together is an understatement. Franklin calls Hobbs her best friend in life.

"I definitely love her. She is my best friend. I love her to death," Franklin said of Hobbs. "I think we play really well together on the court because we do different things and it meshes well when we are out there."

Hobbs said that her chemistry with Franklin began in the fifth grade.

"We have been playing so long together we just know where the other is going to be," Hobbs said. "We can rely on each other."

"It's nice to have that balance where they can complement each other like that," head Warrior coach Frank Howell said of his senior stars. "They've been doing it for a little while now and I think they have a little telepathy with each other."

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Head J-Hawk coach Jason Edwards said he too likes what he sees in the different strengths of Hobbs and Franklin.

“Those two work so well together,” Edwards said. “They are really good basketball players and really good young people too.”

The Hobbs-Franklin show was barely overshadowed by a sensational performance from the Jefferson sophomore-freshman duo of Amanda Ollinger and Kennedy Dighton who scored 27 and 20 points, respectively, in a superb effort.

Ollinger added six rebounds, four assists and four blocks in her impressive stat line. Dighton added six rebounds.

Howell said, “Jefferson did a great job getting the ball inside to (Kennedy) Dighton and (Amanda) Ollinger looked really good tonight. There were some ups and downs, but we found a way to prevail in the end by trying to do the fundamentals and maintain some composure and we held on at the end.”

“I was very pleased with our effort and very pleased with the whole team tonight,” Howell said.

Jefferson led 15-11 after the first quarter and by as many as nine points in the second quarter. The J-Hawks led 27-26 at halftime.

The Warriors won the third quarter 17-14 to stay ahead 45-41 at three-quarter time and then went on an 11-4 run to start the fourth quarter. Washington led by as many as 12 points in the fourth frame and withstood a great J-Hawk comeback.

Second-year boss Edwards says it is still strange playing Washington.

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"We want to beat them, but it is not personal," Edwards said of serving as Howell's assistant for many years at Washington. "He is the reason I am where I am, so I owe him a lot, but I want to beat him. I really want to beat him."

It's a mutual admiration club between the two coaches.

"Obviously I want him to succeed. Anytime Jefferson is playing anybody but us, I am their biggest fan," Howell said.

The two teams play again on February 14 and a lot of people think the rivalry between Jefferson and Washington will only get better.

"I want to be on the other side of these games in the years ahead and that's how they become rivalries," Edwards said.

Franklin tossed in a trio of 3-pointers, while Dighton and Ollinger connected on two each. Freshman Avery Guy led her team with six assists, while Joniqua Clark had three assists for the Warriors.

Washington hosts Xavier next Thursday night and Jefferson plays at Kennedy on Friday.

WASHINGTON (67) Joniqua Clark 0 2-4 2, Aleena Hobbs 7 8-9 23, Jasmyne Jones 0 1-2 1, Lilly Hartman 1 0-0 2, Danielle Franklin 10 5-7 28, MJ Kamin 1 0-0 2, Anne Visser 1 1-2 3, Kandis O'Donnell 3 0-2 6. Totals 19 17-26 67.

JEFFERSON (59) Sammy Kitterman 0 2-4 2, Maddy Blietz 4 0-0 9, Avery Guy 0 1-2 1, Kennedy Dighton 7 4-4 20, Amanda Ollinger 10 5-6 27. Totals 16 12-16 59.

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Halftime – Jefferson 27, Washington 26. 3-point goals – Washington 6 (Hobbs 1, Franklin 3). Jefferson 5 (Bleitz 1, Dighton 2, Ollinger 2).