

Late FT dooms No. 3 Cougars

Written by

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IOWA CITY – “Gone in 65 seconds.”

If Tuesday night’s game between Kennedy and Iowa City West were to get a Hollywood movie treatment that would be the working title.

The host Trojans, ranked ninth in Class 4A, used a pair of defensive stops and a trip to the free throw line in the closing minute-plus of action to upset No. 3 Kennedy, 45-44.

Josiah Coleman knotted the score at 44 when the Kennedy junior pulled up and knocked down a jumper with 1 minute 33 seconds left to play. After Iowa City West’s Leo Franz missed a triple the Cougars called time out with a minute five remaining to set up their first attempt at a possible game-winning play. The resulting set never came to fruition however as West ratcheted up its defensive pressure and Jeremy Morgan coaxed a 5 second call after bird-dogging Kennedy guard Jacob Misener.

“I’d like to see a tape of that,” Kennedy Coach Bob Fontana said.

West Coach Steve Bergman said Morgan’s defensive stop was the play of game, even bigger than his back-to-back 3-point shots in the waning moments of the third quarter that erased a six-point Kennedy lead.

Morgan’s stop was the beginning of the end for the Cougars, who fell to 14-3 on the year and 9-3 in MVC action.

Christian French, who laid numerous hits for the Cougars on the football field during the fall, delivered an ill-timed blow to West’s Dondre Alexander as the 6-foot-2 guard was attempting a layup. Alexander stepped to the free throw line with 9.9 seconds left and promptly clanked his first attempt off the rim.

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The second fell and the race was on.

Kennedy inbounded the ball and hurried across center court before calling time out. Fontana looked up at the clock and saw 6.1 seconds remaining.

"I told them exactly what we wanted," he said, noting the Cougars had both an inside and outside option on the game's final possession.

The Cougars could have looked to Coleman, who led all scorers with 13, on the outside or opt to go down low to either Kyle Lamaak or Jacob Manning. They chose to look under the basket but Misener's pass was batted away by, of all players, Morgan.

"It should have never come down to that last play," Fontana said. "Give [West] credit, we could have executed and they stopped us."

The flurry of action in the game's final minute was an odd way to end a contest that seemed to bog down at times due to lack of execution and missed opportunities by both teams. And that's where Fontana appeared to have the biggest problem with his team Tuesday night.

"I wasn't pleased with our offense at all," he said.

In Fontana's words, the team made some "stupid offensive decisions" against the Trojans. They also suffered from a bit of bad luck. Midway through the third quarter Kennedy appeared to be pulling away when Lamaak missed a layup that would have given the Cougars a 10 point advantage.

"That could have happened to anyone, but still," a clearly frustrated Fontana said. "Then (Morgan) hit those threes and it was a two-point game."

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Three-point shooting helped keep the Trojans in the game as five West players all connected from beyond the arc in Tuesday night's win. Kennedy hit just one 3-point attempt, an off balance heave by Coleman as time expired in the second quarter that sent the Cougars to the locker room with a 24-21 lead.

The night wasn't a total loss for the Kennedy program. Benjamin Struss sank a free throw to force the sophomore game in to overtime and Johnathon Koelling hit a game-winning layup with nine seconds left in the bonus period as the Cougars earned a 48-46 victory over the Trojans in the evening's opening contest.

KENNEDY (44): Josiah Coleman 5 2-3 13, Jacob Misener 3 5-5 11, Jacob Manning 4 2-3 10, Kyle Lamaak 2 3-4 7, Darius Fuller 1 0-0 2, Christian French 0 1-2 1, Elliott Christians 0 0-0 0, Herschel Dixon 0 0-0 0, Trevor Heitland 0 0-0 0. Totals 15 13-17 44.

IOWA CITY WEST (45): Ronald Okey Ukah 4 2-2 10, Jeremy Morgan 3 2-2 10, Dondre Alexander 3 1-3 8, Jacob Gylten 3 0-0 7, Leo Franz 2 0-0 5, Austin Swank 2 0-0 5, Wyatt Lohaus 0 0-0 0, John Seyfer 0 0-0 0, Corey Staten 0 0-0 0. Totals 17 5-7 45.

Halftime – Cougars 24, Trojans 21. 3-point goals -- Cougars 1 (Coleman), Trojans 6 (Morgan 2, Alexander, Gylten, Franz, Swank).