

Cougars fall short at Cedar Falls

Written by Rod Payne, Waterloo Courier
Saturday, 27 February 2016 00:29 -

CEDAR FALLS - The fire has been burning inside the Cedar Falls boys basketball camp and with every win, the flames seem to reach higher.

Friday night it took a little while for the sparks to flare up, but once the Tigers got hot, they burned visiting Cedar Rapids Kennedy, 70-53, in Class 4A substate semifinal action.

Kennedy (11-12) started the night strong on a pair of buckets from Drake Brewster and Matt Berst, giving them a 5-2 lead.

Cedar Falls (18-4) quickly caught fire with an 8-0 run, then ran the floor fast and furious over the next 12 minutes to take a 29-18 lead into the locker room at the half.

"I thought overall we came out more ready to play than the first time we met," Cedar Falls coach Ryan Schultz said, referring to his team's 73-66 win over Kennedy in late January. "We both came out and traded a few punches early on, and our guys were able to withstand that and stay calm.

"Sometimes we come out a little too psyched up and it is tough to settle them down at first. Tonight I think the guys came out with the right type of energy."

The Tigers won the second quarter with quick hands on defense and finishing the turnover on the other end. Kennedy struggled to gain ground as its shots inside didn't fall.

"We just couldn't finish around the rim and we missed a few easy shots," Kennedy coach Jon McKowen said. "We eventually started to play well until they went on that third quarter run, and we sort of went into scramble

Cougars fall short at Cedar Falls

Written by Rod Payne, Waterloo Courier
Saturday, 27 February 2016 00:29 -

mode.

"We had been playing good ball when the month changed to February, and we lost some really tough games. We came in here winning six in a row (including an overtime tournament victory over Waterloo West) and our confidence was pretty high. This is a crazy game."

The Cougars made a run midway through the third quarter, cutting their deficit from 13 points to seven, but would get no closer. Cedar Falls began to spread the margin on the strength of senior Taylen Alexander's outside shooting.

"He was phenomenal tonight," Schultz said. "That is what's nice about this team. We have multiple threats out there, and if you concentrate on stopping AJ (Green), Isaiah (Johnson) or Tra'Von (Fagan) then guys like Taylen and Trey (LaBeaux) will step up and hit the shots. Tonight Taylen was hitting."

Alexander remained pretty quiet throughout the first 16 minutes, knocking down a modest seven points going into the break. He picked up an additional five points in the third, then shot lights-out in the final eight minutes as he hit seven consecutive fourth-quarter field goals en route to his 25-point game.

"I thought this was a high intensity game tonight and I was having fun," Alexander said. "We don't care who scores on this team as long as we get the win."

"We are a very confident group and know that anyone can get hot at any time. I hit one and then the crowd just went wild and I could really feel the crowd and that kept me going."

Cougars fall short at Cedar Falls

Written by Rod Payne, Waterloo Courier
Saturday, 27 February 2016 00:29 -

Cedar Falls will travel to the U.S. Cellular Center in Cedar Rapids on Tuesday night for a showdown against Linn-Mar in the substate finals.

"It is not a problem getting these guys psyched up for a big game," Schultz said. "We will be ready down there."

The Tigers will look to even the score against the Lions, who defeated them, 69-61, on their home court in January.

Kennedy will try to reload after losing six seniors from this squad.

"We will be losing some great leadership from this senior class," McKowen said. "They are hard-working on and off the court and they will be tough to replace. They are just good all-around guys and an unbelievable group to work with. They will be missed."

Drake Brewster led the Cougars with 13 points.

KENNEDY (53): Derick Diggins 3 2-2 8, Drake Brewster 3 5-5 13, Michael Bisenius 1 4-4 6, Matt Berst 2 0-1 5, Shaun Beyer 2 0-0 4, Jake Olejniczak 0 0-0 0, Derek Girling 3 1-2 10, Adam Wall 1 0-1 2, Malik Haynes 0 2-2 2, Ryan King 1 0-0 3, Kollin Wiebel 0 0-0 0, Nick Duehr 0 0-0 0, Isaiah Harris 0 0-0 0, Carter Krall 0 0-0 0. Totals 16 14-17 53.

CEDAR FALLS (70): Tra'Von Fagan 5 4-4 14, A.J. Green 4 3-4 14, Isaiah Johnson 0 3-4 3, Ben Gerdes 1 0-0 2, Logan Mozena 0 0-0 0, Nolan Nickerson 0 0-0 0, Luke Loecher 0 0-0 0, Kameron Watts 1 0-0 2, Denison Harrington 0 1-2 1, Trey LaBeaux 3 3-3 9, Taylen Alexander 10 0-2 25, Jacob Leisinger 0 0-0 0, Mitchell Bower 0 0-0 0. Totals 24 14-19 70.

Cougars fall short at Cedar Falls

Written by Rod Payne, Waterloo Courier
Saturday, 27 February 2016 00:29 -

Halftime - Cedar Falls 29, Kennedy 18. 3-point goals - Kennedy 7 (Girling 3, Brewster 2, King, Berst), Cedar Falls 8 (Alexander 5, Green 3).