

Hayden helps Cougars top Wash in OT

Written by Metro Sports Report

Tuesday, 15 December 2015 23:40 - Last Updated Wednesday, 16 December 2015 00:12



Hitting a big 3-pointer in a clutch situation in a tense basketball game is a lot gentler on the nervous system than being the final shooter in a PK shootout in soccer, even though the outcome is hanging in the balance in both cases.

Just ask Kennedy senior Sydney Hayden.

"The last shooter in a PK shootout is a lot tougher, to be honest with you," said Sydney Hayden, who is an expert in both sports. "It's a little more nerve-wracking."

Hayden kept her cool Tuesday night and drilled a huge 3-pointer with seven seconds left in the fourth quarter to lift the Cougars into a 51-51 tie with Washington and force overtime in the Mississippi Valley Conference game at Washington.

Hayden then began the extra session with another 3-pointer to help steer the seventh-ranked Cougars to a 67-59 victory.

Hayden, who stands only 5-foot-5, hit four triples in the game and led all scorers with 17 points.

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"She's really tough," said Kennedy coach Tony Vis, who was happy to see the ball in Hayden's hands. "Don't let the calm demeanor and her lack of size fool you. Inside of her beats the heart of a huge competitor."

Hayden has a scholarship to play soccer at the University of Northern Iowa, where she might be called upon in a few PK shootouts in the next few years. For the time being, she's doing a terrific job as Kennedy's point guard with the Cougars sailing along at 7-1 overall and 4-0 in the MVC.

Kennedy found a way to win the ballgame despite a sub-par performance by all-star Lela Sellers, who got into foul trouble and finished with 12 points. The Cougars got 17 points from Hayden, 13 from Hailey Dolphin, 11 from Linden Runels and 10 from Carly Langhurst as five players reached double figures.

"I think it just shows that each one of us has a big role on the team and we know we have to step up and do what it takes," Hayden said.



Jessi Puk made two free throws to give Washington a 51-48 lead with 17 seconds left in the fourth period. Kennedy called a timeout to design its next play, knowing it needed a 3-pointer to tie.

The Cougars broke Washington's 1-2-2 zone press and got the ball to Sellers near the basket. Sellers passed the ball to Hayden behind the

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3-point line and Hayden calmly hit her triple to keep the Cougars alive.

"I spotted up and I knew she'd find me," Hayden said. "She's really unselfish."

Washington coach Frank Howell blamed himself for not designing a defense to take away Kennedy's best 3-point shooter.

"I need to do a better job of coaching," he said. "I need to find a way to give better instructions. We should have done something different so she wasn't that wide open."

Vanessa Eniola led Washington (3-4, 2-2) with 14 points. Joniqua Clark had 12 points and Puk scored 11. Clark, Puk and Anne Visser all fouled out for Washington. Sellers fouled out for Kennedy.

Kennedy cashed 28 of 36 free throws in the ballgame, including an 11 of 12 performance by Dolphin.

KENNEDY (67): Langhurst 3 4-5 10, Hamilton 1 2-2 4, Hayden 5 3-4 17, Sellers 4 3-7 12, Hellweg 0 0-0 0, Dolphin 1 11-12 13, Runels 3 5-6 11, Meier 0 0-0 0. Totals 17 28-36 67.

WASHINGTON (59): Clark 4 2-2 12, Carey 1 0-0 2, Visser 0 1-2 1, V.Eniola 4 6-6 14, B.Hoeger 0 0-0 0, O'Donnell 0 0-0 0, M.Hoeger 0 0-0 0, Bruner 3 0-0 8, Puk 4 2-2 11, Riley 1 0-0 3, Mia 0 0-0 0, Johnson 4 0-3 8. Totals 21 11-15 59.

Halftime - Kennedy 21, Washington 20. Regulation - Kennedy 51, Washington 51. 3-point goals - Kennedy 5 (Hayden 4, Sellers 1), Washington 6 (Clark 2, Bruner 2, Puk 1, Riley 1).