

Wrong call helps Saints top Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

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Kennedy Coach Tony Vis and Hailey Dolphin studied the replay of her final shot against Xavier Tuesday night and came to the same forlorn conclusion.

Dolphin's 3-pointer in the final second of the game should have counted and forced overtime against the Saints, but there was absolutely nothing they could do about it.

Xavier trimmed the young Cougars, 58-55, in their Mississippi Valley Conference game at Ron Thillen Gymnasium and that's the way it will go into the record books.

Dolphin's 3-pointer hit the rim, bounced high over the basket and came down through the net, but the officials ruled the ball hit the strap that's used to hoist the backboard to the ceiling when the gym is used for other events.

[\(CLICK HERE TO SEE VIDEO OF SHOT\)](#)

Once the ball hits the strap it's a dead ball and the shot does not count, but the replay on Kennedy's iPad clearly showed that the ball missed the strap by a few inches.

"I just wish they would have let the kids decide it," Vis said calmly. "I don't think the officials, on purpose, hosed anybody.

"I think they thought they saw what they saw, but obviously they didn't. They don't have the

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opportunity to look at it on video like we do.

"I just wish he would have been 100 percent sure than trying to guess what happened when it didn't hit the strap," said Vis.

It was an unfortunate finish to a terrific ballgame that saw Dolphin pour in 27 points for Kennedy and Lexi Noonan counter with 26 points for Xavier. Dolphin scored 20 points in the first half and Noonan poured in 22 points in the second half.

It came down to that ill-fated final shot by Dolphin.

"That's the way they called it," Xavier Coach Tom Lilly remarked, "and maybe that's why they don't have instant replay in high school basketball."

The Saints, who are ranked No. 6 in Class 4A, raised their record to 14-6 with their seventh straight victory. The Cougars, with only one senior on the roster, fell to 5-15 despite a good effort.



Dolphin, a 5-foot-7 junior, was remarkable in the first half with nine field goals, including a pair

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of 3-pointers. She scored seven more points in the third quarter, but the Saints finally clamped down on defense and shut her out in the fourth stanza.

"In the first half we were so far away from her, it was just like being in the gym on Saturday morning all by yourself," said Lilly. "She was pretty spectacular in the first half."

Dolphin began the game with a 16.2 scoring average. Noonan, a 5-10 senior, began the night with a 13.8 mark. They normally combined for 30 points in a game, but this time they combined for 53.

"The Dolphin kid was special for them in the first, and we thought Noonan was special for us in the second half," said Lilly.

The visiting Cougars led 30-26 at halftime on a buzzer-beater by Dolphin, but Noonan threw in 13 points in the third quarter to give the Saints a 46-41 edge entering the final stanza.

Noonan missed a few shots early in the game and made only one field goal in the first half, but she was unstoppable in the second half with 10 baskets from every spot on the floor, including a pair of triples.

Lilly encouraged Noonan to keep firing despite the slow start.

"He just told me to not worry about it and keep shooting," she said. "So once I got that first shot (in the second half) I was like, 'I'm fine.'"

Kennedy rallied and tied the game at 53-53 and 55-55 coming down the stretch. Freshman Caitlynn Daniels hit a layup to give the Saints a 57-55 edge with 39 seconds left.

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Dolphin missed a shot, Daniels grabbed the rebound and the Saints played keep-away until Daniels was fouled with 11.5 seconds to go. Daniels made one free throw for a 58-55 lead and Kennedy ended up calling a timeout with 3.3 seconds left.

Dolphin got free at the top of the key and launched her shot to tie the game, but you know the rest.

Auddie Alepra scored 13 points for Kennedy. Daniels finished with 12 points for Xavier and Amelia Ivester had 10.

KENNEDY (55): Vaske 0 0-0 0, Dolphin 10 4-4 27, Friauf 1 0-0 2, Powell 0 0-0 0, Steffen 2 0-1 4, Hellweg 1 0-2 2, Vis 3 0-0 7, Alepra 5 3-3 13. Totals 22 7-10 55.

XAVIER (58): Stanek 2 0-0 5, Daniels 4 1-2 12, Brown 2 0-0 4, Noonan 11 1-2 26, Steffen 0 1-2 1, Callahan 0 0-0 0, Stovie 0 0-0 0, Ivester 5 0-0 10, Jasper 0 0-0 0. Totals 24 3-6 58.

Halftime - Kennedy 30, Xavier 26. 3-point goals - Kennedy 4 (Dolphin 3, Vis 1), Xavier 7 (Daniels 3, Noonan 3, Stanek 1).