

Mulvane Girls Crumble In First Round At Circle

Pressure defense. It's something that has plagued Mulvane High School girls basketball teams in recent years and it's something new head coach Kelly Dennis wanted to work on.

Monday night, Dec. 4, in the opening round of the Circle Thunderbird Girls Classic, the Wildcats found out they still needed work on it as No. 1 seeded Andover blitzed the Cats, 81-44, in the first game of the tourney.

The loss dropped Mulvane's gals into the consolation bracket, where they will tangle with El Dorado at 8 p.m. tonight (Dec. 7). Other first-round games found Circle beating El Dorado, 51-46, Arkansas City sliding past Chanute, 70-44, and Independence holding off Wellington, 43-37.

"I was pleasantly surprised," said Dennis of her first game at the helm. "The score was pretty misleading. I thought we did some good things. Of course, I thought we did some bad things, too, which is why we lost. The girls played hard and but they need to keep working."

Dennis said she wants to get her girls to the point where they get excited when teams try to pressure the Cats...but we're not there yet. Andover took advantage of numerous Mulvane miscues against its pressure defense and pulled away.

The Trojans were up, 22-8, after one quarter and it was essentially over by the halftime with Andover ahead, 53-19.

"They came out pressuring us and I thought we handled it pretty good in the first four minutes of the game," said Dennis. "We made good decisions passing early in the game but then, mentally, we seemed to break down. That could be the best pressure we see all year long and we need to be prepared for it. After the first few minutes, we got in a hurry and made bad decisions, which is just what Andover wanted us to do.

"We had a lot of turnovers, but we had a lot of them which were unforced, simple things that Andover didn't put on us. I think we're going to have to get better. I'm excited about the fact that we can learn how to handle it. I know our girls can learn how to handle it. And I also know they had better because everybody's going to pressure us until we do."

Circle Thunderbird Girls Classic

FIRST ROUND

Mulvane 8 11 12 13-44
Andover 22 31 15 13-81

Mulvane—Lee Cates 2, Lindsay Kendrick 7, NiChelle Bruce 4, Melissa Buchanan 5, Anna Wenke 6, Dannelle Hughes 19, Valerie Larson 1. FG 18 (1), FT 7-19, F 18.

Andover—Susan Woolf 36, Beth Woodman 5, Jana Lee 12, Linda Bryan 3, Cassie Blair 11, Karla Sanders 2, Codie Knott 10, Tricia Kincaid 2. FG 33 (3), FT 12-33; F 12.

Circle 51, El Dorado 46
Arkansas City 70, Chanute 44
Independence 43, Wellington 37

There were a number of good things that caught Dennis' eye. "The girls never gave up and that was good, they kept fighting," said Dennis. I always liked what I saw from Dannelle Hughes, who was our biggest spark on offense. She scored 19 points. Freshman guard Lindsay Kendrick was next-high with seven points. Anna Wenke scored six points, Melissa Buchanan had five points and NiChelle Bruce had four.

"Defensively, we did okay but we're not where I want to be," said Dennis. "Our whole defense was not a help defense.

Everybody was too concerned about their own man than they were about helping out. I want the girls to help on defense."

The new Wildcat chief was most pleased about the Cat rebounding even though Janelle Wenke, who was expected to be a ringleader under the boards, was out with an ankle injury. She'll be out until after the holidays.

"We really rebounded well," said Dennis. "We had a lot of people going aggressively to the boards and that's good. Melissa Buchanan pulled down a lot of boards and so did Hughes. Anna Wenke also had some good rebounds."