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By JASON EPP

Leader & Times

BEAVER, Okla.—It was the final meeting between two great high school coaches who have combined to win almost 1,200 games during their long careers. In their final meeting Casey Jones and his Lady Dusters got the win over Barry Mellen and his Lady Mustangs, 52-46.

For Beaver it was the play of Kaitlin Kemp in the second quarter and the play of Jacinda Balderrama in the second half that was the difference.

“I was a little worried coming into this game,” Lady Dusters coach Casey Jones said. “I had to play several girls who had to play that don’t normally because we’ve had some sick that had trouble getting their breath. Defensively we were ok, and Jacinda really came to play in the second half. Kaitlin Kemp was big with rebounding and getting to the line. Connor gave us some good points early.”

Beaver went on a 12-0 run that started in the final seconds of the first quarter when Conner Sutton hit a three to put the Lady Dusters up 13-11. Kemp started to drive to the hoop, finishing with baskets or a trip to the line each of the next three possessions as the Lady Dusters built a 22-14 lead.

Heights got back in the game with back-to-back threes from Jackie Loya and a steal and layup by Nayelly LaPoint to cut the Beaver lead down to four (48-44) with 2:38 left in the half.

Kemp scored twice in the final two minutes to give her 10 in the quarter, and the Lady Dusters led 26-20 at the break.

Balderrama began to assert herself at the start of the second half, with three scores to push the lead back to double digits (32-22).

But Heights answered with LaPoint, who scored nine straight for the Lady Mustangs in a 12-4 run that cut the lead back to two by the end of the third, 36-34.

Balderrama and Kemp went back to work again as Beaver went on an 8-0 run to start the fourth. Heights answered again with a 10-4 run that cut the lead back to four, 48-44 with 3:26 left in the game. Beaver looked to be in a tough spot with Balderrama collecting her fourth foul at that point, but the Lady Dusters held Heights without a field goal the rest of the way to preserve the win.

“We ran out of gas,” Lady Mustangs coach Barry Mellen said. “It’s hard to play good teams with no practice. They know how to take advantage of our weaknesses. We had a good job in the first half denying her the ball, but Balderrama is a smart ballplayer and took the small gaps and took advantage of it.”

Beaver’s Jacinda Balderrama finished 9 of 17 from the field for 21 points, including 10 in the fourth quarter. Kaitlin Kemp scored 16 on 5 of 11 shooting from the field and 6 of 9 shooting

from the charity stripe.

Conner Sutton scored eight, including a pair of threes, and Shalyn Farrington added seven.

For Heights it was Nayelly LaPoint with 19 points, 15 coming in the second half, on 8 of 18 shooting. Jackie Loya added 14 on 4 of 12 shooting, including three treys. Each grabbed 9 rebounds.

Beaver (15-7) will host Class 2A No.12 Hooker (17-2) tonight. Heights (8-8) host South Gray Friday.

Jones also spoke of the rivalry with Mellen and Heights.

“It's been an excellent rivalry,” Jones said. “Both of us have been generally good over the past 13 years, and the kids love the rivalry as well. Barry does an excellent job, and it's a shame guys like him ever retire. He's a dandy, and it will be different to play them without him.”

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