

MAJOR MILESTONE

First boys playoff win in 13 years also No. 100 for Fuentes

When the boys basketball team took the court in Pflugerville on Feb. 20 for its first-round playoff game against Manor, Daniel Fuentes did not know that he was sitting at 99 career wins as the head coach of the Knights.

"I had no idea until Coach Shaw brought out the ball and presented it to me for my 100th win," Fuentes said. "It was great that it turned out to be our playoff win, but I had no idea."

Before the Knights pulled off the upset over the Manor Mustangs, it had been since the 2007-2008 season that the Knights had won a playoff game. It was originally reported that Mac last won a playoff boys basketball game in 2006, but Fuentes said, and the 2008 *Knight* confirms, that the 2008 team advanced to the second round.

"We've been knocking on the door," he said. "We've been one and out, one and out and finally this group was the one to knock the door down and to do it against a heck of a team like Manor."

After years of going to the playoffs and getting knocked out in the first round, the team pulled

through and beat the Manor Mustangs, 56-39.

"It is frustrating to get to the first round and not get the win," Fuentes said, "but you work hard and get to the playoffs, and you work hard to get that W, and there's all of these challenges, but I'm glad our guys were able to get the win this year."

Fuentes has nothing but praise and admiration for his seniors, after getting to know them over the past four years and seeing the way they handled the tough situation with COVID.

"This group of seniors, I got to know them at a different level," Fuentes said. "You get to see their quirky selves in practice, and this year was a little bit better. We played more music, and we just let loose a little bit this year. I'm definitely gonna miss them, and I never took for granted what they brought to the table, and it's a bond that will last for a long time."

When the season started, McCallum and Anderson were the only two schools that wore masks during games. Fuentes wanted to make it through the season without the teams getting quarantined, so he followed Coach G's advice.

"I talked to Coach Gammerding, and when they were quarantined, he told me to keep my teams separated, and from that point on, I kept every team separated," Fuentes said. "Varsity was always by themselves, so was JV, and so were the freshmen."

Having made history in an already historic year, Fuentes did have one parting message for his seniors.

"I told them that this is their home and they're always welcome to come back home and not to stay away for too long."

Story by Lindsey Plotkin



Coach Fuentes



ORDER ON THE COURT: Junior Noah Arnold (No. 5) drives to the basket in the playoff win over the Manor Mustangs. With 14 points, Arnold was the second highest scorer behind senior co-captain Rob Wade's 15. After trailing by one point at half, the Knights pulled away from the Mustangs in the fourth quarter. "We started out slow, but our experience helped us win this game," Arnold said. "We didn't turn the ball over, and we had a few guys in double digits."

NOT FOR A LACK OF EFFORT: Senior co-captain Rob Wade (No. 10) shoots in the paint during the Knights' 48-37 second-round playoff loss to Kingwood Park in College Station on Feb. 24. According to Wade, the Knights kept their energy up the whole game, but after falling behind by 14 points in the first quarter, the Knights could not make up the deficit. "We played hard, but I missed too many shots," Wade said. "We were fighting an uphill battle the whole game."

TRIPLE THREAT: Senior Hudson Spradling (No. 14) surveys the court during the Knights' 56-39 bi-district playoff win against the Manor Mustangs in Pflugerville. "It's my first playoff win," Spradling said. "It's a great feeling. My team and I worked hard, and it reflected in the score of the game." *Photos by Kennedy Weatherby*

THE MANOR EVENT: Before the season began, the pundits did not predict that the Knights would be celebrating their first playoff victory in 13 years in 2021, but that's exactly what happened. Moments after presenting their coach with a signed basketball to celebrate his 100th career victory as the boys varsity basketball coach, the varsity Knights demonstrate quite literally in the postgame huddle that they are indeed brothers in arms. *Photo by Kennedy Weatherby*

