

How does JCHS spell 'relief'?

A-N-D-R-E-W W-I-L-L-I-A-M-S

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When the Kansas City Royals need instant relief, they go to their bullpen ace, Dan Quisenberry.

When Junction City High School basketball coach Joe Beck needs some quick firepower, he turns to 5-11 guard Andrew Williams.

So far this year, the Blue Jay senior has come off the bench to score in double figures six times. Perhaps his biggest game came at Manhattan, when he poured in 12 fourth-quarter points, as JCHS came from behind, to post its first victory of the season.

"He doesn't get as nervous, coming off the bench," Beck said. "He's a streak shooter. When he's hot, he's hot. He's not a physical player. I don't know if he could play a whole game.

"Coming off the bench gives him a better chance to watch the game and pick his spots. I think he knows he's playing behind some good players."

For JCHS, which is suffering through a 5-12 season now, Williams has been "Mr. Instant Offense." It is a role he would just as soon not have. But, he will take whatever he can get.

"I don't really like that role," the 18-year-old Williams said. "I try to do my best when I can. I realize I can't do it all by myself, so I just try and help us come back as a team.

"I feel it doesn't matter how much I play, as long as the team does well and I do well when I'm in."

The youngest of John and Yuson Williams' six children, Andrew remembers playing basketball

since about the second grade, when he was a student at Washington Elementary School. As he progressed through the grades, the wiry youth took on the challenge of playing against older competition.

In junior high, he and friends would go to Fort Riley and play the taller, more mature soldiers at King Field House.

Standing only about 5-7 in his early high school days, Williams has been waiting in line to see playing time for three years. After a summer of play in the Junction City-Manhattan league, his confidence has grown, and his body developed to where he stands just a hair under 6 feet.

"I didn't start growing until last summer," he said. "I used to be real conscious about my height. Now, it doesn't bother me."

Beck has seen the results of Williams' hard work and effort the last three years. The summer league has developed him into a player to be reckoned with whenever he steps on the floor.

During the vacation-time league, Williams averaged approximately 14 points a contest. His performance against players from around the area had onlookers scratching their heads and asking, "Who is this Williams kid, anyway?"

Most importantly, Williams began to get confidence in both himself and his shot. His quickness allows him to blow past players, while his outside shooting touch keeps defenders honest.

"I like Andrew because he's really quick and has a tremendous attitude," Beck said.

"He's really one of the nicest kids I ever coached."

But, life is not all hardwood and roundball for Williams. He also is a good student. Williams has a grade point average of 3.5, ranking him 27th in a class of 360 — and not just in easy subjects, either. He has taken all the math possible at the senior high and is interested in physics and chemistry.

All this heavy work in the classroom is leading Williams toward his goal of going to the University of Kansas in Lawrence and majoring in electronic engineering or possibly premedicine.

He will not be playing intercollegiate basketball, however. He does not even want to try.

"I think basketball is too competitive," he said. "Just a small percentage of the people playing makes it to the pro.

"I just think getting the best college education I can have is more important than becoming a pro player."

Obviously, Williams is a student first, and an athlete second. His goals on the court almost always have to do with the team and not himself. In fact, he is hard-pressed to admit any personal goals he has.

The main thing for Williams is being a part of a team that is successful, whatever role he must assume. So, the next time the Blue Jays are down by five and seem to slipping out of a game, look for Williams to come off the bench, raring to go. Junction City meets Topeka West tonight in I-70 League action, so he, along with all the other seniors, will get a chance to shine in his last regular season game on the home court.