

Saints fall to Wahlert in semifinals

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - The Late Show with the Xavier Saints had an unhappy ending Thursday night.

Dubuque Wahlert defeated the Saints, 67-54, in the semifinals of the Class 3A boys state basketball tournament in a battle of Mississippi Valley Conference teams at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines.

Wahlert (17-9) will play LeMars (22-4) in the championship game Saturday night, with the Golden Eagles from Dubuque seeking their second state title in a row.

Xavier (17-9) will meet Williamsburg (25-1) in the consolation game for third place Saturday afternoon at 12:05.

Thursday night's game, scheduled to begin at 8:15, did not start until 9 p.m. after LeMars beat Williamsburg in double-overtime in the other semifinal, and the game did not end until 10:30 with the Saints walking unhappily off the court.

Xavier bolted to a 23-11 lead in the first half and appeared to be in good shape with Wahlert star Cordell Pemsl saddled with two early fouls, but

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the Golden Eagles battled back and controlled the second half.

"It couldn't have started any better for us, to be honest with you," said Xavier Coach Ryan Luehrsmann. "But you know with the talent they have and how well-coached they are, they're going to make a run back.

"And certainly they did and we just didn't have an answer down the stretch. And we couldn't buy a basket as well.

"You just have to tip your hats to them," said Luehrsmann. "They're the defending state champs for a reason."

The Saints scorched the nets when they beat Wahlert, 78-74, at Xavier three weeks ago, but this time they shot only 34 percent from the field (17 of 50) and 25 percent on 3-pointers (6 of 24).

Adam McDermott scored 19 points for Xavier and made a strong big for the all-tournament team after netting 24 in the quarterfinals against Pella, but he shot only 5-for-17 from the field and was 2-for-10 on 3-pointers.

Calvin Winker scored 14 points despite mild foul problems, but he was 4-for-12 from the field and 1-for-5 on 3-pointers. Mitchell Burger had 10 points and Michael Mims added nine.

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St. Xavier's basketball team, which has been in the playoffs for the first time in 10 years, fell to St. Ignace in the semifinals of the 2015-16 season. The Saints, who were the defending champions, were defeated 44-34. The game was played on Thursday night at the St. Ignace gymnasium. The Saints' coach, Jim Ecker, said that his team was out of sync and that they were not playing their best basketball. He also said that his team was not able to control the rebound and that they were not able to shoot the ball well. The Saints' players, including guard Mike McDermott, forward Dugan, and forward Maser, were all in foul trouble. McDermott was fouled out in the second quarter. Dugan was fouled out in the third quarter. Maser was fouled out in the fourth quarter. The Saints' coach, Jim Ecker, said that his team was out of sync and that they were not playing their best basketball. He also said that his team was not able to control the rebound and that they were not able to shoot the ball well. The Saints' players, including guard Mike McDermott, forward Dugan, and forward Maser, were all in foul trouble. McDermott was fouled out in the second quarter. Dugan was fouled out in the third quarter. Maser was fouled out in the fourth quarter.