

Xavier boys fall short at Linn-Mar

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 10 December 2016 08:05 -



The Xavier Saints have miles to go before they can dream about winning the Class 3A basketball title again this season.

The good news? It's still early.

The Saints struggled in the second half Friday night and lost to Linn-Mar, 55-47, in a Mississippi Valley Conference game in the Linn-Mar gym.

Xavier scored only 18 points in the second half and did not get a single point from any of its reserves while falling to 1-2 for the season. The Saints were a polished outfit last March when they claimed the first state title in school history, but this is a new year and a new team.

"I try to tell everybody it's a different year and a work in progress," said Coach Ryan Luehrsmann. "We've got a lot of nice pieces that are back, but it's tough.

"It's tough when the expectations are different. People look at you a little differently, right or wrong. I think we've struggled with it a little bit.

"The good thing is," said Luehrsmann, "it's only three games in."

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Xavier's other loss was to Waverly-Shell Rock, the top-ranked team in 3A, by 22 points in Waverly.

Matthew Mims scored 21 points for the Saints, but the rest of the club combined for only 26 more. Jackson Joens had 10 points, but nobody else reached double figures. Max Techau (six points), Bryce Schulte (five points) and Joens all ran into foul problems, which did not help the cause.

Linn-Mar, coming off a 21-point loss to Kennedy on Tuesday, played a strong game and got contributions from lots of players, with eight Lions denting the scoring column. Trey Hutcheson, a 6-foot-5 sophomore, led the Lions (2-1) with 17 points and Tyler Voves had 10.

"I thought we took a step in the right direction from Tuesday," said Linn-Mar Coach Chris Robertson. "We were close on Tuesday, but we just didn't finish plays and we made turnovers.

"That was the big thing. Our first two games we turned it over a lot. Tonight I think we had seven. I thought we were a little more under control, a little more patient on offense and I think that paid off. And we defended pretty well."

Conversely, Luehrsmann was not entirely happy with his team's work on defense.

"Right now, we're not doing a very good job working together on the defensive end," he said. "We get into the game and we forget about our team defensive rules and try to get a stop on our own instead of collectively as a group."

Luehrsmann is optimistic that the Saints will be playing their best basketball in February and March when it counts.

"We'll find out," he remarked. "I believe in this group, no matter what our record is. I know that they're committed to one another, committed to our coaching staff. Our goals remain high."

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The Saints led for most of the first half, but the Lions grabbed a 30-29 edge at intermission. Techau pulled the Saints within 43-41 early in the fourth quarter, but the game slipped away from there.

Nolan Ruff gave Linn-Mar a 49-43 lead and Hutcheson made it 51-43 with a spinning move to the bucket. The Saints never got closer than six points again.

The Lions don't have any superstars on the team this season - no Bohannon brothers, no Marcus Paige - but they appear to have a scrappy team with good depth.

"It's fun," said Robertson. "I haven't had a group like this in awhile. You've got 10 guys who can play.

"It seems like we've always had a marked man that everybody is out to stop and now it's like they can all play a little bit. It makes it fun."

Hutcheson leads the Lions in scoring at 14.3 points as a 10th grader.

"He's going to be a good one," said Robertson. "Very talented. He's just a complete player. I really like how he plays."

XAVIER (47): Mims 7 7-7 21, Butkowski 2 0-0 5, Joens 3 2-2 10, Dempewolf 0 0-0 0, Q. Schulte 0 0-0 0, Techau 3 0-4 6, Johnson 0 0-0 0, B. Schulte 2 1-2 5. Totals 17 10-15 47.

LINN-MAR (55): Phillips 2 2-2 6, Voves 4 1-2 10, Robertson 1 0-0 3, Hand 0 0-1 0, Martin 1 1-2 3, Ruff 3 1-3 7, Hutcheson 4 9-10 17, McGaffe 0 0-0 0, Gertsen 1 1-2 3, Annis 3 0-0 6. Totals 19 15-22 55.

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Halftime - Linn-Mar 30, Xavier 29. 3-point goals - Xavier 3 (Joens 2, Butkowski 1), Linn-Mar 2 (Voves 1, Robertson 1).