The people who told Matt Bohannon he'll never be as good as his brother Jason could be right.

He might turn out better.

Bohannon popped in 25 points Friday night as No.1 Linn-Mar beat fourth-ranked Kennedy, 66-57, in a choppy Mississippi Valley Conference game before a near-capacity crowd at Linn-Mar.

Jason Bohannon helped Linn-Mar win the Class 4A state title in 2004 and was named Iowa's Mr. Basketball in 2006, then had a solid career at the University of Wisconsin. Matt is five years younger than Jason, but closing ground fast.

Linn-Mar Coach Chris Robertson, who has coached all three Bohannon brothers so far -- Jason, Zach and Matt -- said Matt has been motivated by unfavorable comparisons to his siblings.

"He's worked himself into a very complete basketball player, and it shows on nights like tonight," Robertson said. "He might be a better defender than Jason was in high school. He's tough.

"He's probably not quite the explosive scorer Jason was, but he puts it upon the scoreboard."

Bohannon popped in four 3-pointers, went 5-for-5 at the foul line, collected his share of rebounds, dished out some clever assists and
played strong defense for the Lions (13-0, 8-0). He's stronger than Jason was in high school and might have a better all-around game, all things considered.

"I've heard I'm not as good as Jason, I'm not as good as Zach (a sophomore at Air Force)," said Bohannon, who has signed with Northern Iowa. "At the end of the day I'm Matt. I'm not them,

I'm my own person.

"I want to be better than Jason, at my own game," he said. "I'm not going to try to do the things that he did, I'm going to try to do the things that I can do and control."

Linn-Mar opened a 20-point lead over the error-prone Cougars in the fourth quarter, but Kennedy (10-2, 6-2) ticked off 13 straight points and pulled within 58-51 with 2:53 left before the Lions regained control.

"Too little, too late," said Kennedy guard Jake Misener. "We just came out flat in the first half. They made us pay, like good teams do."

The Cougars committed 19 turnovers, including a half-dozen in the opening minutes as they fell quickly behind.

"I thought we played scared, I thought we played not to lose, and we didn't play as a unit on offense," said Kennedy Coach Bob Fontana, disappointed with his team's performance in the most important game of the year so far.

It was a tough week for Fontana, who slipped on ice last Saturday and tore cartilage in his left knee. He had the knee drained this week and probably will have surgery after the season.

Marcus Paige, a highlight reel in motion for Linn-Mar, turned in the play of the game when he soared for an offensive rebound in the third quarter, cupped the ball in mid-air with his left hand and slammed in through the basket, all in one motion.

"That kind of wowed me for a minute there, too," said Robertson.

The nonchalant Paige liked that one, too. The play began with Bohannon missing a 3-pointer.

"I saw it was coming short and there was no back-side rebounders, so I kind of timed it up a little bit," he said. "I knew if it was coming off my way I could probably get it."

Paige scored 17 points as he and Bohannon combined for 42 of Linn-Mar's 66 markers. "They've got probably the best backcourt in the state with Bohannon and Paige," said Misener.

Paige saluted Bohannon. "When Matt's making shots, we're really hard to beat," he said. "He's just so deadly from behind the arc. He gets everyone going."

"Matt was locked in and Matt played like a senior that wasn't going to lose," said Robertson. "That's what he does. That's what makes him special."

Jacob Manning led Kennedy with 14 points. Kyle Lamaak scored 12 points, but had turnover problems. Misener finished with 10 points.

KENNEDY (57): Manning 6 2-3 14, Misener 5 0-2 10, Lamaak 3 5-8 12, Coleman 3 0-0 7, French 4 1-3 9, Fuller 0 0-0 0, Christians 0 0-0 0, Dixon 0 1-2 1, Heitland 2 0-0 4, Ellsworth 0 0-0 0. Totals 23 9-18 57.

LINN-MAR (66): Benton 0 4-8 8, McBrayer 3 0-0 6, Montague 2 1-2 5, Bohannon 8 5-5 25, Paige 5 6-9 17, Gogg 2 0-0 4, Thul 2 1-2 5, Lassen 0 0-0 0, Krusie 0 0-0 0. Totals 22 17-26 66.

Halftime -- Linn-Mar 28, Kennedy 15. 3-point goals -- Kennedy 2 (Lamaak 1, Coleman 1), Linn-Mar 5 (Bohannon 4, Paige 1).