

No.2 Saints survive J-Hawks, 62-61

Written by Carl Gonder

Wednesday, 18 December 2013 00:38

Morgan Breitbach has some pretty good basketball bloodlines. And she's a pretty good player in her own right. It showed Tuesday night.

The junior Xavier point guard made key plays and led her No.2-ranked 4A team to a gritty 62-61 come-from-behind Mississippi Valley Conference win at the Jefferson J-Hawk gym.

The Saints moved to 5-2 overall and 3-2 in the MVC, while Jefferson dropped to 3-5 overall and 2-3 in the league.

Breitbach scored 12 points and had four assists, including a pair of free throws with 28 seconds left that sealed the win.

"We penetrated well and we attacked their pressure and then we got up and put pressure on them," Breitbach said. "We've been working on our free throws and drawing fouls. I think everyone did a pretty good job of hitting those free throws tonight."

Xavier won the game from the foul line, claiming 25-of-35 free throws. The Saints were outscored from the field by four field goals (22-18).

Breitbach is the granddaughter of legendary Hall of Fame coach Dick Breitbach Sr. and the daughter of former Regis all-stater Dick Breitbach Jr.

Breitbach said a 38-31 upset loss at Dubuque Hempstead last Friday night was a motivating factor.

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We always try and put our last game behind us, but we were looking for a win tonight," she said. "We just keep trying to get better and better."

Sophomore sensation Amanda Ollinger had a brilliant game for Jefferson with 29 points, eight rebounds and three blocks while playing all five positions. She hit on 9-of-16 shots from the floor and scored 18 second-half points for the J-Hawks, handling the ball in transition, posting up and scoring from inside and out.

"I'm really trying to train myself into being more of a shooting guard and ballhandler," the 6-foot-2 Ollinger said.

She did not start the game as a result of missing a recent practice to attend a driver's education class.

"It's fair," Ollinger said of Coach Jason Edwards' decision. "That's the deal we made and it's OK with me."

She came off the bench early in the first quarter, scoring six of her team's first seven points, helping the young J-Hawks to a 27-25 halftime lead. Jefferson then outscored the defending Class 4A state champions 17-14 in the third quarter to build a 44-39 lead heading into the final eight minutes of play.

"I think we have a lot of potential," Ollinger said of her J-Hawk squad that starts two freshmen.

Jefferson led 48-41 with 6:27 to play before Breitbach and company made a late charge, ignited by her steal and layup at the 4:25 mark, cutting the lead to 50-48.

"Morgan is a kid that made big free throws in the state tournament last year," Xavier Coach Tom Lilly said. "She is somebody that we need to get double-digits from regularly. I am sure her father has coached her up a bit in terms of being tough. She is a learner and a student of

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the game.”

Jefferson sophomore Erin Kuba had a good night in hitting five of six shots for 11 points. She’s already looking forward to playing Xavier a second time.

“Coach said we get to play them again, so we need to keep our heads up,” Kuba said. “We had some key turnovers that came back to bite us.”

Xavier forced Jefferson into 30 turnovers, a telling stat. The Saints also had 14 offensive rebounds and five players in double figure scoring led by Lizzy Bailey with 15, Hayley Deutmeyer 12, Maddy Bertsch 12, Breitbach 12 and Meghan Joens with 11.

Edwards said Xavier’s pressure defense bothered his young team.

“I thought we played with a lot of good energy,” he said. “Xavier is the type of team that gets you uncomfortable, especially when you have young guards. There were a couple of crucial possessions down the stretch where if we had converted, we would have maintained the lead.”

“Turnovers and offensive rebounding says it all,” Edwards said.

The J-Hawks have every reason to be optimistic about the future.

“When you are playing two freshmen and several sophomores, it is a process and you have to be patient with the process,” Edwards said.

Xavier plays at Iowa City West on Friday night. Jefferson travels to Waterloo West Friday.

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XAVIER (62): Abby Watson 0 3-4 3, Brylee Bastian 0 0-0 0, Claire Christainson 0 0-1 0, Erin Drahazol 0 0-0 0, Hayley Deutmeyer 5 2-5 12, Jenny Dickes 0 0-0 0, Kiana Stanek 0 0-0 0, Kylie Trittle 0 0-0 0, Lizzy Bailey 4 6-7 15, Maddie Bertsch 3 3-4 12, Madi Nelson 0 0-0 0, Meghan Joens 3 5-5 11, Morgan Breitbach 3 6-10 12. Totals 18 25-35 62.

JEFFERSON (61): Autume Sparks 1 0-0 2, Sammy Kitterman 1 1-2 4, Maddy Blietz 1 0-0 2, Cassandra Veglahn 0 0-0 0, Avery Guy 0 3-4 3, Erin Kuba 5 0-0 11, Kieley Brathwaite 0 0-0 0, Kennedy Dighton 5 0-0 10, Amanda Ollinger 9 9-12 29. Totals 22 13-18 61.

Halftime – Jefferson 27, Xavier 25. 3-point goals – Jefferson 4 (Kitterman 1, Kuba 1, Ollinger 2), Xavier 1 (Bailey 1).