

Easy victory over Marshalltown sends Xavier to regional final

Written by

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Cedar Rapids Xavier jumped all over Marshalltown from the start Saturday night and quickly erased any drama as to who would be advancing to the regional girls basketball final with a 70-18 victory at Ron Thillen gymnasium.

Xavier (15-7) jumped out to a 15-7 first-quarter lead and never trailed in the game, as its full-court press and pressure defense were just too much for Marshalltown (4-19) to handle.

The Saints forced 34 turnovers in the game and despite their fast pace gave the ball away only eight times.

"We certainly felt that we could put some pressure on them," Coach Tom Lilly said.

"We were aggressive enough that we were able to make them play at a faster pace than maybe they are comfortable with."

The faster pace helped the Saints get other aspects of their game going as well.

"We did really well," said junior forward Alex Bartz. "We ran the floor well. We were doing great on defense. We transitioned well. So I think that we did an awesome job tonight."

Bartz found her way into the record books, tying the single-game blocks record with six. The 6-foot-1-inch Bartz matched the school record previously shared by the Ridge sisters, RyAnne and Shannon.

"I was determined this whole season to get the record for total blocks (in a single season)," Bartz said.

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"I'm still two away from that, but I'm really satisfied with tying the single-game school record."

Lilly said he likes the added dimension that Bartz brings to the team defensively.

"It's the first time we've ever had somebody that someone on the other team might have to worry about. 'Where's that one big tall kid at?'" Lilly said. "She's playing pretty well and that's the production off of the bench that we need to have."

The victory advances the Saints to the regional final where they will meet No. 2 Linn-Mar. The Lions swept Xavier in the regular season, winning by 18 points and 19 points.

"This will be the third time playing them this year," Lilly said. "We've played pretty well in the first half and they have just worn us out."

"It takes a lot of energy in one half of play because that's how strong they are and how strong (forward) Kiah (Stokes) is. So we have to muster up some energy to take them on in the second half and so far we haven't been able to do that."

Those big losses in the regular season still seem to be fresh in Lilly's mind as the Saints start to prepare for the clash.

"I guess we have to find out whether we want to take another butt-kicking or not," Lilly said.

The Lions are led by Stokes, who will be playing for Connecticut next season. Stokes leads the state in scoring, averaging 25 points a game. She is also a beast on the boards and a game changer on defense.

The Saints know they will have to find an answer for Stokes if they want to stay in the game this

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time around.

"We are determined to get her flustered down low to make the game a close one," Bartz said.

If Xavier can slow down Stokes, Lilly said, the team still will have a tough time beating Linn-Mar.

"Realistically, they are going to be a tough defend regardless," Lilly said. "You have to score points, and we have just not been able to do that. They've shut us down. Stokes has taken away our inside game.

"Our perimeter and our posts are going to have to hit 10- to 15-footers. That's how Wash beat them. (Tia) Dawson hit some big triples.

"I don't know if we have kids that can do that, but maybe we do," Lilly added.

"We are going to find out."

MARSHALLTOWN (18): Mazour 3 2-2 9, Peschong 2 1-2 6, Schrempf 1 0-1 2, Keith 0 0-0 0, Hughes 0 0-0 0, Eberline 0 0-0 0, Bellile 0 0-0 0, Bellile Beals 0 0-0 0, Wagner 0 0-0 0, Blagg 0 0-0 0, Fuccio 0 0-0 0, Mattox 0 0-0 0, Oden 0 1-2 1, Sowers 0 0-0 0.

XAVIER (70): Armstrong 2 0-0 4, Winker 1 0-0 2, Dale 2 0-2 5, Saxen 3 0-2 7, Wiltgen 1 0-0 3, Murtha 2 0-0 4, Anderson 5 0-0 12, Sampson 1 0-0 3, Walvoord 5 0-0 10, Boomgarden 1 0-0 2, Tow 3 2-2 8, Bartz 3 4-5 10, Dostal 0 0-0 0, Dickes 0 0-0 0, Noonan 0 0-0 0.

Haltime -- Xavier 36, Marshalltown 11. 3 point goals -- Xavier 6 (Anderson 2, Sampson, Wiltgen, Saxen, Dale), Marshalltown 2 (Peschong, Mazour).