On paper, anyway, their seasons are going in the opposite directions.

The Cedar Rapids Jefferson boys are 10-2 (6-2 in the Mississippi Valley Conference) and ranked eight in the state. Xavier is 2-10 (2-6 in the MVC) and nowhere in the polls.

On Friday night in the Saints gym, however, both teams shot the lights out and fought tooth-and-nail on defense from start to finish. In the end, though, Xavier could hardly help but foul and Jefferson could hardly miss free throws.

Hitting 28 of 30 from the line, the J-Hawks prevailed 78-67 after building up a 22-point lead in the third quarter.

Besides near-perfection from the charity stripe, Jefferson made 23 of 33 from the field (including four 3-pointers) for a 69 percent performance.

The Saints made more field goals (28 of 49, with five threes) on 57 percent shooting, but they had just six free throws.

The J-Hawks cleaned off the boards, too, pulling down 25 rebounds to just 10 for Xavier.

"I thought we had good shot selection," said Jefferson Coach Stu Ordman. "We were able to move the ball, and we were able to penetrate."

Taking a page from Kennedy's playbook when it bottled up J-Hawk star Jarrod Uthoff last week, Xavier ganged up on the big center in the middle.

So, he merely popped outside and hit three long 3-pointers in the first quarter. After that, he found open teammates for a lot of layups.

“What we wanted to do,” Xavier Coach Matt Jenks explained, “was to hold Uthoff below his average and try to keep the other guys at bay.

“We wanted to be physical, and we put a lot of fresh bodies on Uthoff. But, unfortunately, they handled it pretty well.”

After falling behind 19-11 after the first quarter, the Saints muscled their way back to a two-point deficit with two minutes to go in the half.

But Jefferson closed out the period on a 10-0 run, with six points coming from slick Taylor Olson and four from Uthoff on free throws and a rim-rattling dunk.

The Saints were doomed by a six-minute dry spell in the third quarter.

Still, Jenkins said, “Our subs came in, and I really liked the fact that they didn’t let up the intensity. They closed the gap a little bit. Overall, there were a lot of positives.”

Guard Ben McDermott knocked down three 3-pointers, and forward Kevin Hosch led his team’s scoring with 13.

For Jefferson, Uthoff had 21 points with six rebounds and three blocks, while Olson had 14 points and eight assists. Alec Saunders scored 15. Sparkplug guard Tyler Meiborg snagged seven rebounds to go with his eight points.

“We ran our offense pretty well tonight,” he said. “That helped us get balanced scoring.”

Jefferson won the sophomore game  46-34.

JEFFERSON (78): Tyler Meiborg 2 4-4 8, Ky Kramer 2 4-4 9, Taylor Olson 4 6-8 14, Alec Saunders 5 5-5 15, Jarrod Uthoff 6 6-6 21, Alec Brown 1 0-0 2, Alex Denny 3 0-0 6, Mike Rooney 0 0-0 0, Tyler Hemphill 0 3-3 3, Joe Kelly 0 0-0 0, Taylor Steckler 0 0-0 0, Taylor Mueller 0 0-0 0, Alex Larson 0 0-0 0, Alex Heying 0 0-0 0, Ryan Eivins 0 0-0 0. Totals: 23 28-30 78.

XAVIER (67): Mitch McLaughlin 3 0-0 6, Ben McDermott 3 0-0 9, Kevin Hosch 5 2-3 13, Alec Clasen 3 1-2 8, Ryan Mains 3 0-0 6, Nolan Dunkirk 1 0-0 2, Tanner Frazier 0 0-0 0, Carter Valentine 4 1-3 9, Brian Ropp 1 2-2 4, Mack Mattke 5 0-0 10, Peter Kokantis 0 0-0 0. Totals: 28 6-10 67.

Halftime – Jefferson 42, Xavier 30. 3-point goals – Jefferson 4 (Uthoff 3, Kramer 1), Xavier 5 (McDermott 3, Hosch, Clasen). Total fouls – Jefferson 12, Xavier 27. Rebounds – Jefferson 25, Xavier 10. Turnovers – Jefferson 16, Xavier 11.