

Saints stun No. 4 Lions, 83-73

Written by Mike Condon

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When Xavier hosted Linn-Mar earlier this season, a slow, sluggish start was too much for the Saints to overcome.

The Lions raced to a 23-point lead before hanging on for a 66-57 win on Jan. 27.

The Saints, led by junior guard Mitchell Burger, weren't about to let it happen again Tuesday night.

Burger knifed through the Lions defense and scored 21 points as Xavier stunned the fourth-ranked Lions, 83-73, before a loud crowd at Linn-Mar.

"We finally got off to a good start," Burger said. "When you come to Linn-Mar it is one of the biggest games of the year. It's a fun environment and we just wanted to come here and get the win."

Burger was not the only offensive star for the Saints (10-8, 6-7). Calvin Winker led the way with

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22 points and Adam McDermott had 19.

"We've been working at trying to get into our offense a little quicker," said Xavier Coach Ryan Luehrsmann. "I thought the guys did a good job moving the ball around, sharing it so we could get better shots."

With Burger starting out hot, the Saints built a 23-16 lead after the first quarter. A 19-6 run to open the second quarter, keyed by 3-point baskets from Michael Mims, McDermott and Burger, pushed the lead to 42-24.

The Lions scored a couple late hoops to cut the margin to 42-28 at halftime.

"We definitely focused on running (Linn-Mar) off the 3-point line," McDermott said. "Mitch Burger did a heck of a job on (Jordan) Bohannon. He had to really work hard to get his points."

Bohannon, the Lions' sharp-shooting guard, did have a monster night, finishing with a game-high 34 points with six 3-point baskets. As McDermott said, Linn-Mar's all-state candidate had to work hard to get his shots off, something that didn't happen in the first meeting.

"We were really disappointed how we guarded the first time around," Luehrsmann said. "We know that Jordan is going to get his points, but we wanted to make him earn every one of them and I think he did outside of a few scramble situations."

Even with the Saints playing solid defense, Linn-Mar made a charge.

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Trailing 50-31 midway through the third period, Linn-Mar turned up the defensive pressure and began cutting into the margin. When Bohannon connected on his final 3-point basket of the night with 2:04 left, the Xavier lead was down to 70-64.

Winker was the focal point of the Xavier offense in the second half. With Linn-Mar forced to use a smaller lineup in an effort to trap the ball, the Saints looked for the 6-foot-6 forward in the post and he delivered, scoring 16 points after halftime.



His basket with 1:40 remaining pushed the lead back to eight and the Lions would get no closer.

"I knew I had a mismatch down low," Winker said. "I just told my teammates to get me the ball down low and if they double-team me I'll just kick it back out. Props to my teammates because they knew I had the mismatch and they got me the ball."

Linn-Mar (14-4, 11-2) got 15 points from Nic Uhlir and 12 from Lane Halupnik.

"Any win you can get against a real quality team like Linn-Mar hopefully builds confidence for our guys and lets them know they are capable of beating anyone," Luehrsmann said. "Now we have to carry it forward to

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the next game."

XAVIER (83): Mims 3 0-0 8, McDermott 4 9-10 19, Burger 6 7-7 21, Ramlo 3 2-2 8, Otting 1 0-0 2, Downey 0 3-4 3, Winker 9 4-4 22, Welch 0 0-0 0.
Totals: 27 23-25 83.

LINN-MAR (73): Uhlir 4 5-6 15, Murphy 1 0-0 2, Noble 0 0-0 0, Bohannon 12 4-5 34, Klostermann 0 1-2 1, Halupnik 4 4-6 12, Schmidt 0 0-0 0, Brandt 3 3-3 9. Totals: 24 17-22 73.

Halftime - Xavier 42, Linn-Mar 28. 3-point goals - Xavier 6 (McDermott 2, Mims 2, Burger 2). Linn-Mar 8 (Bohannon 6, Uhlir 2). Total fouls: Xavier 19, Linn-Mar 22. Fouled out: Winker, Brandt. Technical fouls: none.