

Lions humble the Saints

Written by Tom Fruehling

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MARION – Belying their one-win season so far, the physical and scrappy Xavier Saints boys team hung tough with the No. 1 team in the state until midway through the third quarter, when the roof caved in.

Ahead by just 31-23 at halftime on their home court Friday night, the Linn-Mar Lions exploded to a 17-point lead on three straight 3-point bombs by Matt Bohannon and lay-up by Josh Montague within two minutes of the third quarter en route to a 69-49 win.

Quiet much of the night, Linn-Mar's Marcus Paige sealed the deal at the start of the fourth quarter with a steal and a dunk, a short jumper, nifty scoring passes to Ian McBrayer and Shane Benton and finally a put-back dunk to run the margin to 22.

The Saints' Ben McDermott was the one bright spot for the visitors during the onslaught by hitting two 3-pointers and two free throws.

"I thought we played phenomenal for most of three quarters," said Xavier Coach Matt Jenkins. "But they've got some experienced big-time players who make big shots.

"Even when we got them to within six, they never lost their composure. It seemed like they always had control of the game."

But he was proud of his overmatched and undersized team's overall performance.

"I was very happy with our effort and intensity," he said. "We missed a lot of easy bunnies under the basket. If we'd made a few of them, who's to say what the outcome might have been."

For his part, Linn-Mar Coach Chris Robertson said he was pleased that his team got off to quick start, taking a 15-6 lead after the first quarter.

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"Then, for some reason, we sort of let up. We were just a step slow on defense. We didn't share the ball like we usually do and settled for jump shots," Robertson said.

"Xavier is a good, well-coached team. And they stayed right with us until we put on a lot of defensive pressure in the third quarter and, I thought, disrupted them."

With five 3-pointers, Bohannon led the Lions (8-0, 5-0 in MVC). Montague had 12 and Paige just 10 on uncharacteristic cold shooting.

For the Saints (1-7, 1-4), McDermott had 12 and Carter Valentine 10.

Linn-Mar won the sophomore game, 47-41, on a fourth-quarter surge.

XAVIER (49): Mitch McLaughlin 1 2-2 5, Mitch St. Andrews 0 0-0 0, Ben McDermott 4 1-2, 12, Kevin Hosch 0 1-2, 1, Nolan Dunkirk 2 1-2 6, Tanner Frazier 1 0-0 3, Carter Valentine 4 2-2 10, Brian Ropp 1 0-0 2, Alex Clasen 2 0-0, 5, Ryan Mains 3 0-0 6, Mack Mattke 0 0-0, 0, Peter Kokontis 0 0-0 0. Totals 18 7-10 49.

LINN-MAR (69): Michael Thul 1 2-2 5, Nick Soyer 0 0-0 0, Matt Lassen 0 0-0 0, Mason Krusie 0 3-4 3, Shane Benton 3 1-2 9, Marcus Paige 5 0-0 10, Matt Bohannon 6 1-2 18, Ian McBrayer 4 0-0 8, Josh Montague 5 2-4 12, Nick Gentzler 0 2-4 2, Derik Gogg 1 0-0 2, Braxton Lancial 0 0-0 0. Totals 25 11-18 69.

Halftime -- Linn-Mar 31, Xavier 23. 3-point goals -- Xavier 6 (McDermott 3, Dunkirk, Frazier, Clasen), Linn-Mar 8 (Bohannon 5, Benton 2, Thul). Total fouls -- Xavier 17, Linn-Mar 14.