

Saints double the score on Vinton

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Xavier Saints enjoyed their initial foray into the Class 3A district basketball tournament Monday night with an easy 64-32 victory over Vinton-Shellsburg.

The Saints competed at the Class 4A level in recent years and played mostly a 4A schedule this season in the Mississippi Valley Conference, but their enrollment put them in Class 3A this year for the postseason.

So far, so good, but the Saints (14-8) suspect it will get tougher Thursday night when they meet the scrappy Marion Indians (10-12) at the Linn-Mar gym.

Thursday's winner will likely face top-ranked Dubuque Wahlert in the substate finals Monday for a trip to the state tournament.

"I really don't get caught up in Class 3A or Class 4A," said Xavier Coach Ryan Luehrsmann. "We know this time of year, you're going to play good teams the further you advance."

Calvin Winker led Xavier with 16 points, Adam McDermott scored 15 and Andrew Bisenius tossed in 11. The Saints led at halftime, 35-18, and Luehrsmann was able to rest his starters with six minutes left in the game.

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The Saints think facing a steady diet of Class 4A teams like Dubuque Senior, Iowa City West, Kennedy and Linn-Mar helped them prepare for the Class 3A tournament.

"Oh, it definitely helped," said Winker. "Faster, better athletes. Stronger guys. Overall, on offense and defense, it helps us."

Luehrsmann said the stiff competition got his club ready for the tournament.

"It's definitely good preparation for the end of the year," he said. "Anybody can throw anything at us and we should not flinch."

Xavier had a .500 record at 5-5 after it lost at Dubuque Wahlert, 69-60, on Jan. 17. The Saints have compiled a 9-3 mark since then to pick up steam.

"Defense," said McDermott, citing a big factor in the surge. "We picked up our defense a lot more and just focused on defense."

"That's the area we've been challenging them the last three or four weeks," said Luehrsmann. "We've become a lot more consistent on that end."

"We're starting to see the potential this group has," he said. "I just hope that we're good enough on Thursday to keep it going."

Nolan Sagan scored 15 points for Vinton-Shellsburg (6-15).

VINTON-SHELLSBURG (32): Bohnsack 1 0-0 3, Dinderman 3 0-0 6, Overton 1 0-0 2, Meyer 0 0-0 0, Rippel 0 0-0 0, Williams 0 0-0 0, Hyland 0 0-0 0, Spies 1 2-2 4, Moen 0 0-0 0, Sagan 5 5-7 15, Freeman 1 0-0 2. Totals 12 7-12 32.

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XAVIER (64): Downey 1 0-0 2, McDermott 6 3-4 15, Burger 2 1-2 6, Klostermann 0 0-0 0, Welch 1 0-0 2, Hill 1 0-0 2, Hasley 0 0-0 0, Brems 1 0-0 2, Winker 5 6-7 16, Peters 0 2-2 2, Clasen 0 0-0 0, Nelson 1 0-0 2, Bisenius 4 0-0 11, Biermann 0 0-0 0. Totals 24 12-15 64.

Halftime - Xavier 35, Vinton-Shellsburg 18. 3-point goals - Vinton-Shellsburg 1 (Bohnsack 1), Xavier 4 (Bisenius 3, Burger 1).