

Xavier girls make Tigers dizzy

Written by Tom Fruehling

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What might seem to be a helter-skelter style of play by the Xavier girls is fully by design.

“We’re going to get a lot of kids in, and we’re going to get them in early,” said veteran Saints Coach Tom Lilly after his team blew past Cedar Falls, 48-36, Tuesday night on their home floor.

“We want to play an aggressive pressure defense and an up-tempo offense. The goal is by the fourth quarter the other team won’t have much left.”

To play that way for a full 32 minutes means Lilly is shuttling girls in and out (often three and four at a time) every whistle. They pass a baton to each other on each substitution to keep track.

“We work on subbing practice,” said senior guard Lizzy Bailey, who led all scorers with 15 points. “So we all know what we’re doing when we’re out there.”

All 11 Xavier girls who played Tuesday saw action in the first quarter, and 10 of them were

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in every quarter after that. It was like a revolving door.

“We do use a lot of bench players,” acknowledged senior playmaker Morgan Breitbach, who chipped in with 11 points. “Everybody stays fresh. We can keep up the tempo that way.

“And tonight, I thought, we kind of ran them (Cedar Falls) into the ground.”

The frenzied style also caused some sloppy play by the Tigers. Xavier recorded 20 steals, with Breitbach leading the way with four.

For their part, the Saints made only five turnovers in the first half but ended up with 18 of them due mostly to a rash of miscues in the fourth quarter while they were trying to protect a comfortable lead.

“We made too many mistakes in the last four minutes,” Lilly pointed out. “We should have just waited for them to foul us instead of throwing the ball away.”

He also thought his team was too tentative at the very start of the game as the Tigers took a 5-0 lead after two full minutes of play.

“I think we were a little nervous at the start,” Lilly said. “But after that I thought we played well.”

With wholesale substitutions under way, the Saints soon kicked it into high gear.

Slick junior wing player McKenna Andersen, back in full force (albeit with a knee brace) after missing last season with a torn ACL, started the contagion with two free throws. And in a span of 20 seconds, Xavier scored

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eight more points on a putback of a missed shot by Meghan Joens, a steal and a layup from Erin Drahozal, two more free throws by Andersen and another steal and layup by Breitbach.

Bailey continued the suddenly fast-paced stretch with a 3-pointer, and stringbean 6-foot-2 freshman Amelia Ivester dropped in a sweet turnaround jump shot to give Xavier a 15-7 lead that they never relinquished.

“Those steals we got really sparked us,” Bailey pointed out.

For the game, Xavier (2-1) shot 41 percent from the field while the Tigers (1-1) shot 31 percent.

The Saints led in rebounding 31-25, with Joens grabbing nine and Breitbach six. “And we still had fresh legs at the end,” Bailey said.

CEDAR FALLS (36) – Jamie Becker 2 0-0 4, Emma Gerdes 3 2-2 11, Addison Long 2 3-4 8, Ally Conrad 0 2-2 2, Adrienne Boettger 2 1-2 5, Lauryn Kramer 0 0-0 0, Kiana Barney 2 1-1 6, Ellie Burken 0 0-0 0. Totals 11 9-11 36.

XAVIER (48) – Lizzy Bailey 5 4-4 15, McKenna Andersen 1 4-4 7, Morgan Breitbach 4 3-5 11, Amelia Ivester 1 1-2 3, Meghan Joens 1 0-0 2, Erin Drahozal 2 0-0 4, Brylee Bastian 0 0-0 0, Lexi Noonan 1 2-2 4, Claire Christianson 1 0-0 2, Jennifer Dickes 0 0-0 0, Madi Nelson 0 0-0 0. Totals 16 14-18 48.

Halftime – Xavier 30, Cedar Falls 22. 3-point goals – Cedar Falls 5 (Gerdes 3, Long 1, Barney 1), Xavier 2 (Bailey 1, Andersen 1).