

Warriors hold off Saints, 69-63

Written by Tom Fruehling

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Washington Coach Adam Sanchez called the 69-63 nail-biter over Xavier Friday night the biggest win in his three years with the team.

It came awfully close, however, to the biggest letdown since the Warriors squandered a 20-point lead at halftime over Dubuque Hempstead earlier this season and lost by 10.

Parlaying dead-eye shooting and a stifling defense, Washington played to near perfection in building a 31-14 homecourt lead at halftime against the Saints. An 11-0 run to start the fourth quarter upped the margin to 56-33.

“I think at that point we started playing not to lose,” said Sanchez.

In a span of just four minutes, Xavier suddenly caught fire and went on a 25-6 spurt of its own to pull within four points with 1:20 still left to go.

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“Fortunately,” the winning coach continued, “we held our composure. And we made just enough free throws at the end.”

They hit only seven of 12 in the last 70 seconds, but that was sufficient to stave off Xavier’s colossal comeback. Once again, it was too little and too late for the Saints.

In a 66-57 loss to Linn-Mar on Tuesday night they spotted the Lions a 36-15 advantage at halftime before making a furious but futile second-half charge.

“Two nights in a row,” bemoaned Xavier Coach Ryan Luehrsmann. “Once again we were a step slow on defense in the first half.

“And Washington played terrific basketball. They were sharp offensively and hit all their shots.”

Junior Jared Printy, in particular, had a hot half for the Warriors, hitting all four of his 3-point attempt.

“He’s a scorer,” said Sanchez. “That’s what he does for us.”

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Warriors coach Steve Nouri said his team's defense was the key to their victory. "We held them to 10 points in the second half," he said. "That's what we needed to do." The Warriors' defense was led by guard J. J. Barea, who had a career-high 12 steals. Barea's defense was a key factor in the Warriors' victory. The Warriors' offense was led by forward J. J. Barea, who had a career-high 12 points. Barea's offense was a key factor in the Warriors' victory. The Warriors' defense was led by guard J. J. Barea, who had a career-high 12 steals. Barea's defense was a key factor in the Warriors' victory. The Warriors' offense was led by forward J. J. Barea, who had a career-high 12 points. Barea's offense was a key factor in the Warriors' victory.