

No. 8 Saints sail by No. 14 Panthers

Written by Tom Fruehling

Saturday, 21 February 2015 23:06 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 February 2015 17:04



It's the time of year when the Xavier girls seem to be fully in their state tournament frame of mind.

"Rotation, rotation," yelled hardly-ever-satisfied Coach Tom Lilly at the start of the second quarter Saturday night in a Class 4A regional semifinal against visiting Mount Pleasant.

The Saints were up 18-2 at the time.

Junior sharpshooter McKenna Andersen promptly drilled three straight 3-pointers from the same spot in the left corner in a span of just two minutes.

"We just stuck to our game plan," she said afterward. "And my teammates got me the ball in an open spot."

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The Panthers scored their first field goal of the game in the next possession, but by that time the outcome had been determined.

The Saints sailed to an easy 60-23 victory in a contest speeded up by a continuous clock midway through the third quarter.

Xavier (16-6), ranked eighth in Class 4A and winners of 13 of its last 16 games, faces Davenport North (17-5) at DeWitt Tuesday at 8 p.m. with a state tourney berth on the line.

Davenport North, which had been ranked ninth in Class 4A until falling out of the polls last week, squeaked by Keokuk, 46-44, Saturday night.

A combination of apparent nervousness and a stifling man-to-man Xavier defense doomed Mount Pleasant from the start.

The Panthers (18-5) came into the game ranked No. 14 in Class 4A and had won 16 of their last 18 games. So, on paper it didn't seem to be a mismatch.

"When a team is 18-4 you figure they have some girls that can play," a relaxed Lilly said afterward. "But I think they've mostly played against a zone (defense) and haven't seen a lot of man-to-man."

"When they got the ball over halfcourt we were able to get a piece of them. Our kids trapped them, found their passing and got some steals that led to easy baskets."

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The Panthers turned the ball over 14 times in the first half alone (and 20 overall). And they made only seven field goals on 26 tries (27 percent).

The Saints, meanwhile, committed only eight turnovers and shot 57 percent on 26 of 46 attempts.

In a noteworthy display of team play, they recorded 18 assists, led by senior leader Morgan Breitbach with six and sophomore Lexi Noonan with four.

“When Lexi threw that 45-foot pass on the money downcourt for a layup,” noted Lilly, “she looked like Tom Brady. That was the play of the day.”

That, too, said Andersen, was part of the game plan.



“We wanted to run up and down the court. And when we got to the big lead, it really gave us confidence,” she said.

Senior Lizzy Bailey led a balanced scoring attack for Xavier with 13 points, while Breitbach chipped in with 12.

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The Panthers' 6-foot leading scorer Kelsi Phipps, who was averaging 15.7 points, was held scoreless and rarely touched the ball.

"We knew she was the straw that stirs their drink," Lilly explained. "We just surrounded her, and it was tough to get her the basketball."

MOUNT PLEASANT (23): Shelby Allender 1 0-0 3, Kelsi Phipps 0 0-2 0, Natalie Ita 2 4-4 8, Hannah Becker 0 0-0 0, Sarah Moffett 2 0-0 4, Ally Davis 0 0-0 0, Kalynn Batey 2 0-0 6, Brianna Shelman 0 0-0 0, Rylee Amos 00-0 0, Carolyn Lutovksy 0 0-0 0, Bailey Johnson 0 2-2 2, Abbie Liechty 0 0-2 0. Totals 7 6-10 23.

XAVIER (60): Lizzy Bailey 6 1-2 13, McKenna Andersen 3 0-0 9, Morgan Breitbach 6 0-0 12, Amelia Ivester 3 0-0 6, Meghan Joens 1 0-0 2, Brylee Bastian 0 0-0 0, Lexi Noonan 1 0-0 2, Kaitlyn Albert 0 0-0 0, Claire Christianson 1 0-0 2, Jennifer Dickes 1 0-2 3, Madi Nelson 1 0-0 2, Maddie Kadlec 0 0-0 0, Kylie Brown 1 0-0 2, Erin Drahozal 1 2-2 4, Kiana Stanek 1

0-0 3. Totals 26 3-6 60.

Halftime — Xavier 35, Mount Pleasant 10. 3-point goals – Mount Pleasant 3

(Batey 2, Allender 1), Xavier 5 (Andersen 3, Dickes 1, Stanek 1).