

Xavier boys climb to No. 2 in rankings

Written by Jim Ecker

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These are heady times for the Xavier boys basketball team.

The Saints climbed to No. 2 in the Class 3A rankings by the Associated Press Monday after collecting two more wins last week.

The Saints (11-2) were ranked No. 3 a week ago, but they jumped ahead of Dubuque Wahlert this week after the Golden Eagles lost to Linn-Mar Friday night.

Pella (12-1) is ranked No. 1 in Class 3A and received 15 first-place votes. Xavier and Wahlert both received one vote for first place from the state-wide panel.

Linn-Mar (9-3) jumped two spots to No. 6 in the Class 4A poll on the strength of its big victories last week over Ankeny and Wahlert. All-state guard Jordan Bohannon put on a show in both of those games, netting 37 points in the overtime victory at Ankeny and 35 points against Wahlert.

Xavier enjoyed the best season in school history last year when it finished third at the state tournament with an 18-9 record, but the Saints graduated 76.7 percent of their points and 83.4 percent of their rebounds and expectations were fairly low this season with four new starters.

Coach Ryan Luehrsmann rebuilt the Saints in a hurry and they are one of the best teams in the entire Mississippi Valley Conference, which is comprised primarily of 4A schools. The Saints lead the Mississippi Division in the MVC by two games with a 7-1 record, and they are tied with Linn-Mar and Iowa City West for the best records in the entire league.

Max Techau, a 6-foot-7 transfer from Kennedy, has given Xavier a big boost this year with 15

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points, 7.6 rebounds and 2.5 blocks per game. Mitchell Burger, the only returning starter, is averaging 14.8 points. Matt Mims is contributing 11.6 points per game, followed by Jackson Joens (8.9), Nolan Butkowski (5.8) and Ryan Stulken (5.7).

The Saints have good size, good shooters and good ballhandlers as they seek another trip to the state tournament. Xavier had never won a game at the state tournament until it went 2-1 in Des Moines last March.

Luehrsmann, 38, was named the Class 3A Coach of the Year by the Iowa Basketball Coaches Association last season. He has compiled a 55-32 record in four years with the Saints with marks of 11-12, 15-9, 18-9 and 11-2.

Luehrsmann was an all-state guard at Cedar Rapids Washington in 1995 and 1996 and was a four-year letterman for the Iowa Hawkeyes under Tom Davis and Steve Alford. He scored 1,375 points at Washington to rank No. 6 all-time on the Metro charts.

CLASS 3A RANKINGS

1. Pella (12-1), 2. Xavier (11-2), 3. Wahlert (9-4), 4. Harlan (11-2), 5. Waverly-Shell Rock (11-3), 6. Spirit Lake (12-3), 7. Glenwood (11-3), 8. Mount Vernon (10-3), 9. MOC-Floyd Valley (11-3), 10. Chariton (13-1).

CLASS 4A RANKINGS

1. West Des Moines Valley (13-0), 2. Pleasant Valley (13-0), 3. Iowa City West 910-3), 4. Des Moines Hoover (12-1), 5. Council Bluffs Lincoln (12-1), 6. Linn-Mar (9-3), 7. Dowling Catholic (11-2), 8. Ankeny (11-3), 9. Ames (11-3), 10. Cedar Falls (9-3).