

Tom Lilly knows exactly how many times the Xavier girls basketball team had whipped the Washington Warriors by 31 points over the years.

"Zero," he said.

That was before Friday night, however.

The Saints got off to fast starts in both halves and dunked the Warriors, 59-28, in a Mississippi Valley Conference game at Ron Thillen Gymnasium.

"Wash has been a tremendous program and very well coached," said Lilly. "They've been sort of our nemesis."

Not this time.

Lilly has battled Washington for the past 32 years as a head coach, including 13 years at Regis and the past 19 years at Xavier.

He's had his share of victories against the Warriors along the way, but nothing like this one.

The Saints, who are ranked No. 6 in Class 4A, began the game with a 13-0 run and started the second half with an 18-2 spurt, way too much for the visitors to overcome.

Washington (7-10, 4-6) scored only eight points in the second half, with four points in the third quarter and four more in the fourth period.

The Warriors were averaging 65.1 points coming into the ballgame, but they were held to a season-low by the stingy Saints (10-6, 6-3).

"Our kids came out focused and ready to play against a team that has been putting up some pretty impressive offensive numbers," said Lilly.

"Good starts at home are always important things. Maybe you get the other team kind of doubting themselves a little bit."

Washington has topped 80 points in three games this season and has topped 70 in four others, but the Warriors had trouble buying a bucket against the Saints.

Lexi Noonan led a balanced attack for Xavier with 13 points. Kiana Stanek popped in four 3-pointers for 12 points.

Freshman point guard Caitlynn Daniels played a strong all-around game with 11 points, five assists and five rebounds.

Daniels has played well as a rookie, but she committed eight turnovers in a game a few weeks ago and Lilly had a 45-minute meeting with the talented 15-year-old to reaffirm his confidence in her.

"There's always that learning curve," he said. "First of all, you have to learn a new system. It just takes time.

"I think right now she's in a good place," said Lilly. "She's had some peaks and valleys. She's a perfectionist, and probably a little too hard on herself.

"She's that little engine that is pulling that train up that hill. And we're pretty happy she's on our side."

Daniels is averaging six points, five assists, two rebounds and two steals per game. She's become more aggressive on offense, looking for her shot at times instead of always passing the ball.

"It's been a lot of fun and my teammates are great," she said. "The seniors are very helpful and they're always so nice. At the beginning of the season and now, they've always been pushing me."

Daniels played in the college Game Time League in North Liberty this summer when she was just 14 and held her own. Now she's doing the same in one of the toughest high school leagues in the state.

It's a lot different from middle school, however.

"The players in high school are a lot faster and a lot stronger," she said. "They're definitely going to guard the passing lanes and I just have to fake it and go the other way."

The Saints pelted Washington 20-4 in the third quarter to grab a 29-point lead at 53-24. The bulge reached as high as 33 points at 59-26 in the final seconds.

Jayla Pledge-Johnson led Washington with 10 points. The Warriors made only nine field goals in the game.

WASHINGTON (28): Parks 0 0-0 0, Carey 0 2-2 2, Riley 0 2-2 2, Hoeger 1 0-0 3, Altemeier 0 0-0 0, Truemper 2 0-0 6, McBride 0 0-0 0, Powers 0 0-0 0, Mia 2 1-2 5, Pledge-Johnson 4 2-3 10, Moore 0 0-2 0. Totals 9 7-11 28.

XAVIER (59): Arnold 0 0-0 0, Stanek 4 0-0 12, Hoffman 0 0-0 0, Daniels 5 0-0 11, Diebold 0 0-0 0, Marshall 0 0-0 0, Cooling 0 0-0 0, Brown 3 1-2 7, Noonan 6 1-2 13, Steffen 4 0-0 8, Callahan 0 0-0 0, Stovie 0 0-0 0, Ivester 3 0-0 6, Jasper 1 0-0 2. Totals 26 2-4 59.

Halftime - Xavier 33, Washington 20. 3-point goals - Washington 3 (Truemper 2, Hoeger 1), Xavier 5 (Stanek 4, Daniels 1).