

No. 1 West zones out No. 5 Saints, 52-37

Written by Susan Harman, Iowa City Press-Citizen

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IOWA CITY - Defense did the trick for the Iowa City West High girls basketball team against Xavier Thursday night, but it wasn't the kind of defense you'd expect from the Women of Troy.

Usually what turns the tide is the relentless full-court press employed by West's quick guards, but this night it was a zone that gave West the advantage and the eventual 52-37 victory.

"We actually haven't been running that in forever," West senior forward Mackenzie Piper said. "He just thought of it spur of the moment and we played it through, so that was good."

The victory leaves top-ranked West with a 15-0 record, 12-0 in Mississippi Valley Conference play. Fifth-ranked Xavier is 12-5 overall and 7-5. The loss dropped the Saints out of a tie for third place in the Valley division, which West leads. Prairie is second at 8-3 and Cedar Falls is 7-4.

One thing Xavier learned from the first meeting between the teams, a 56-37 West victory, was it needed to start faster.

"We knew we didn't come out well in the first quarter, and we knew this time we had to really come out and get a jump on them," Xavier guard Sarah Dickes said. "Last time we had too big of a bulge to overcome. We did a good job of coming out strong in the first quarter."

The second quarter belonged to West. The Women of Troy turned to a zone defense and limited the Saints to just two baskets. West increased a 14-11 lead to 30-16 at halftime.

"We went to the zone and it was harder for them to get it into their posts," West senior Shelly Stumpff said. "By packing it in they had to go to their shooters, and their shooters weren't making them today, at least in that quarter."

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"We were playing a lot more tight on defense and there were a lot less back-door cuts in the post," Piper said.

Xavier made just 2-of-13 shots and committed five turnovers in the second period. West Coach B.J. Mayer said the switch to the zone was necessitated by some foul trouble with Stumpff and Piper, West's primary inside defenders.

"We needed to change things up just to protect us a little bit," Mayer said. "They have such good big kids inside that we had to do something to combat them. I thought we were able to give them a look that they probably weren't expecting."

Mayer admitted that the zone, a 1-2-2, was put in over the holiday break, and the team hadn't practiced it much.

"That's not what we want to do, but it's always there and our kids are really smart kids and can figure things out really quick," Mayer said.

Xavier Coach Tom Lilly seemed to think his team should have been ready for a zone, having played against one Tuesday in a 53-30 win over Waterloo West.

"We rushed some shots," he said. "Their length got a lot of our passes. That was a real problem. They tipped a lot of balls. (Ally Disterhoft) especially at the top of the zone. She sat on the foul line and we couldn't find anybody who wanted to step to the top and force her to come and defend. So basically they squeezed the paint and we had a lot of trouble shooting the ball."

"We needed to adjust a little bit better and have more confidence in ourselves," Dickes said. "But overall I think we played well."

Lilly was plainly unhappy with the scheduling, having to play this game with one practice in

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between the Tuesday game and this one.

"One day is not enough to prepare," he said. "We understand it is what it is in terms of scheduling, but that's not fair to our kids. It's not fair to expect any kid to practice for an hour and 20 minutes and get ready to play the No. 1 team on the road. It's just not good."

Xavier made a charge in the third quarter and cut a 16-point deficit to eight, but Stumpff almost single-handedly held off the Saints. She scored 10 of West's 16 points in the third quarter including a period-ending 3-pointer to give the Trojans breathing room with a 42-29 lead.

"We had some plays designed for me to score and they just went in," Stumpff said.

Xavier post Alex Bartz led the Saints with 10 points. But the Saints shot less than 33 percent for the game. West was led by Ally Disterhoft's 15. Stumpff and Piper had 12 apiece.

Piper said West improved its help defense on Xavier's high-low game from the first meeting.

"They have good outside shooters, good inside players," Piper said. "They are a pretty good all-around team. We just had to step up our defense."

West plays at 3A No. 2 Davenport Assumption on Saturday.

XAVIER (37): Annie Dale 2-6 0-0 4, Sarah Dickes 3-6 0-0 8, Katlyn Andersen 2-9 1-2 7, Emily Walvoord 1-7 4-6 6, Alex Bartz 3-5 4-8 10, Nicole Noonan 0-2 0-0 0, Lisa Boomgarden 0-0 0-0 0, Hayley Deutmeyer 0-0 0-0 0, Maddie Bertsch 1-1 0-0 2, Ashley Stulken 0-0 0-0 0, Katelyn Winker 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 12-37 9-16 37.

IOWA CITY WEST (52): Ally Disterhoft 6-10 3-3 15, Briana Sturtz 1-2 0-0 2, Shelly Stumpff 4-6

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4-6 12, Jessica Shull 1-1 0-0 2, Mackenzie Piper 4-12 2-2 12, Tatum Klein 2-4 2-2 6, Shahana Williams 1-5 0-0 2, Kelley Fliehler 0-0 0-0 0, Griffin Reed 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 19-41 11-13 52.

Halftime - West 30, Xavier 16. 3-point goals - Xavier 4-13 (Dale 0-3, Dickes 2-2, Andersen 2-6, Noonan 0-2), West 3-10 (Sturtz 0-1, Stumpff 1-3, Piper 2-3, Klein 0-1, Williams 0-1, Reed 0-1). Total fouls - Xavier 12, West High 14. Fouled out - none.