

## **Wash girls top Xavier; Linn-Mar next**

Written by Jim Ecker

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Washington Coach Frank Howell wanted to enjoy Monday night's 47-37 victory over Xavier before thinking about what's coming up next.

The Warriors host Kiah Stokes and No. 3 Linn-Mar on Thursday, but Howell wasn't ready to peek ahead.

"I'll try not to think about it until tomorrow morning, because I want to try and get some sleep," he said. "And if I think about that too hard, I probably won't be well-rested by Thursday."

The Warriors took care of business Monday to set up Thursday's big showdown for the Mississippi Valley Conference lead. Washington and Linn-Mar are both 7-1 in the Mississippi Division of the MVC, so the winner gets sole possession of the lead.

"We can do it," said Jazz Royster, who led the Warriors with 13 points Monday. "We just have to find a way to keep Kiah from getting the ball."

Kiah is the incomparable Kiah Stokes, the prep All-American who will play for the Connecticut Huskies next season.

"A lot of us are pumped up to go out there and try our best and try to get a win," said Washington senior Tia Dawson, who has been battling Stokes since the seniors were freshmen.

Stokes is 6-foot-3, but Dawson can look her in the eye at 6-foot-2.

"It is nice to have somebody that's close to Kiah's size to contest her shots, and that will be the big thing," Howell said. "I don't think it's going to be so much expecting Tia to put up big numbers. But if we can hold Kiah's numbers down a little bit by having a good post defender in there, hopefully that keeps us close."

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It's a meat-grinder in the Mississippi Valley Conference this season. Des Moines East and Ankeny are undefeated and ranked 1-2, but six straight MVC teams are next with No. 3 Linn-Mar, No. 4 Iowa City West, No. 5 Washington, No. 6 Xavier, No. 7 Iowa City High and No. 8 Waterloo West.

"Murderer's Row," Howell called it.

Xavier Coach Tom Lilly faced Linn-Mar on Friday and Washington on Monday, and those two losses dropped the Saints to 10-3 overall and 6-3 in the conference. Lilly thought his club settled for 3-pointers and did not attack the basket against Washington, but had a theory.

"Maybe when you face Stokes and Dawson back-to-back, maybe you get afraid of playing inside," he said.

Washington (10-1) drubbed Xavier in the rebounding department, 41-25. Dawson grabbed 13 rebounds and blocked four shots.

Alex Saxen led Xavier with 14 points, but none of the other Saints had more than six markers. Alissa Oney scored 12 points for Washington and Dawson had nine.

XAVIER (37): Winker 0 0-0 0, Dale 2 0-0 6, Dickes 1 0-1 2, Saxen 5 3-7 14, Andersen 2 0-0 5, Sampson 1 0-3 2, Walvoord 0 2-4 2, Tow 0 2-2 2, Bartz 2 0-0 4. Totals 13 7-17 37.

WASHINGTON (47): Piper 0 0-0 0, Oney 4 4-5 12, Pilcher 2 1-2 6, Pritchett 1 0-0 2, Kramer 1 0-1 2, Royster 4 4-7 13, Roundtree 0 0-0 0, Beard 0 1-2 1, Herb 0 2-2 2, Dawson 3 3-6 9, Carr 0 0-0 0, Foreman 0 0-0 0, Klaus 0 0-0 0. Totals 15 15-25 47.

Halftime -- Washington 25, Xavier 19. 3-point goals -- Xavier 4 (Dale 2, Saxen, Anderson),

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Washington 2 (Pilcher, Royster). Fouled out -- Dale.