

Saints hold off winless Warriors

Written by Tom Fruehling

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The Washington boys' final loss of a winless season Monday night went pretty much the way of their woeful season as a whole.

The Warriors dug themselves a hole early and never seemed to find a rhythm.

But, when things looked hopeless, they somehow bucked up fought with fury right to the finish.

Xavier won the home court Class 4A substate tournament quarterfinal, 59-44, but Saints Coach Matt Jenkins knew all along it wouldn't be a cake walk. "That's not a team that's going to lie down," he said after his team advanced to a Friday showdown at Kennedy against the Cougars. "In my eyes, they're a scary team that can hurt you."

Just last week, for instance, Washington (0-21) trailed 10th-ranked Dubuque Senior 28-8 at halftime but then mounted a 21-4 rally to get back in the game.

"All year, they haven't let the score dictate how they were going to play the game," said Jenkins. "They did almost the exact same thing tonight they did against Senior."

Once the Saints (10-12) got their own somewhat sluggish offense on track Monday night, they

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rolled to a 50-27 lead with four minutes left.



Instead of folding their tents, though, the Warriors roared back.

Senior Cyb Moa knocked down three 3-pointers, all within one minute, then stole a pass and fed Heath Clark for a layup.

Suddenly, it was 10-point game with two minutes to go.

Jenkins called a timeout and once again ordered a full-court press.

Dogged by fouls all night, Washington could do little else the rest of the way. Xavier salted the game away with seven of 10 free throws.

“That’s the way these guys have been all year,” said Washington Coach Brad Metzger. “They keep fighting. They never give up.

“They’ve continued to plug away, no matter what.”

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For all the effort, however, they still lost 21 straight games.

“That’s hard to comprehend,” the coach admitted. “I just don’t know what to make of it.”

The Saints, meanwhile, figure they’ll have to put on a better performance against Kennedy. The Cougars beat them 54-45 in the their regular-season game back in early December on Xavier’s home floor.

“We didn’t play up to our potential tonight,” said mobile 6-foot-8 sophomore center Matt Nelson, who sparked his team off the bench with 13 points on some sweet inside moves.

Added senior guard Ben McDermott, who netted nine points, “We didn’t play our best. We didn’t play horrible. But we didn’t play great, either.”

Jenkins, whose team has been inconsistent all year, said there are some things to work on.

“There were times when we didn’t play smart tonight,” he said. “When we had a lead, we made bad judgments on some shots.

“The good part is, those things can be corrected.

“We just need to keep our composure against Kennedy and not let their defense force us out of our offense. We have to have smart possessions.”