

Xavier girls fall to another ranked foe

Written by Jim Ecker

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A possible concussion. A sprained finger. Another painful loss.

That was the story Thursday for the 14th-ranked Xavier girls basketball team, which lost a tight game to a ranked opponent for the third time in six days.

Iowa City West clinched the Valley Division title in the Mississippi Valley Conference with a 49-45 victory over the 14th-ranked Saints at Ron Thillen Gymnasium.

The third-ranked Trojans won their first conference title since 1979, snapping a drought that lasted 32 years. "We're ecstatic," West Coach B.J. Mayer remarked.

Ecstasy for Iowa City West, agony for Xavier.

The Saints lost to 11th-ranked Dowling Catholic, 38-37, Saturday on a long 3-pointer in the final seconds, then lost to fourth-ranked Waterloo West, 32-29, on Tuesday.

"It was deja vu all over again," said Coach Tom Lilly.

Annie Dale suffered an apparent concussion in the fourth quarter and had to be helped to the Xavier locker room, but she appeared bright-eyed after the game and did not require further medical care. Alex Bartz sprained a finger, and neither player was on the floor at the end.

Iowa City West led, 47-45, in the final minute and had the ball, but Shelly Stumpff missed the front end of a one-and-one with 29.5 seconds left to give Xavier a chance.

The Saints called a timeout with 14.2 seconds remaining to plot their final strategy. Krissi Tow

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had already scored 15 points with post moves, so Lilly figured West would design its defense to stop the 6-foot senior from scoring inside.

"They weren't going to let Krissi beat them," he said. "That put the onus on our perimeter kids to take the shot."

None of them did, and Tow got the ball near the basket with just a few seconds remaining. She turned and looked for a shot, but Ally Disterhoft stripped the ball away.

Tow said she wasn't sure if she had a clear path to the basket or not, but there wasn't time for anything else. "I turned and went up with it," she said.

Iowa City West grabbed the loose ball and the Saints fouled Jessica Shull with 2.1 seconds left. Shull made both free throws to secure the victory and clinch the Valley title.

"That was one of our goals," said Mayer, who captured the crown in his fourth year as West's head coach. "To do it over here is an even bigger feat, because Xavier has been a really good program for a long time."

Disterhoft and Shull paced Iowa City West (15-1, 12-1) with 11 points apiece. Tow led Xavier (12-6, 8-5) with her 15 markers.

The Trojans lead the second-place Saints by four games in the Valley Division with three games remaining, so nobody can catch them now.

There's a tight race in the Mississippi Division of the MVC with Linn-Mar (11-1), Washington (10-2) and Waterloo West (10-2) all in contention with four games left.

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Xavier made only three field goals in 16 minutes in the first half, then made three baskets in the first 63 seconds of the second half. The Saints trailed, 19-14, at intermission, but scored 21 points in the third quarter to grab a 35-32 advantage.

Iowa City West rode an 11-1 surge into a 43-36 lead and Xavier could not catch up.

IOWA CITY WEST (49): Disterhoft 3 4-4 11, Sturtz 1 0-0 3, Stumpff 1 3-4 5, Shull 3 5-5 11, Piper 3 0-0 6, Klein 0 0-0 0, Williams 2 1-2 5, Yoder 3 0-0 8, Fliehler 0 0-0 0. Totals 16 13-15 49.

XAVIER (45): Dale 1 0-0 2, Saxen 3 3-4 9, Sampson 0 2-4 2, Walvoord 1 2-4 4, Tow 5 5-8 15, Bartz 2 0-0 4, Andersen 2 0-0 6, Dickes 1 0-0 3, Boomgarden 0 0-0 0. Totals 15 12-20 45.

Halftime -- Iowa City West 19, Xavier 14. 3-point goals -- Iowa City West 4 (Yoder 2, Disterhoft 1, Sturtz 1), Xavier 3 (Anderson 2, Dickes 1).