

No. 4 Saints demolish Decorah

Written by Randy Krejci

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The prognosticators from the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union figure that Cedar Rapids Xavier may be a team to reckon with as the basketball season gets underway. The Saints, 18-6 a year ago, were ranked No. 4 in Class 4A in the preseason poll released Friday.

It appears Xavier will be a force as the season goes on. The Saints won their home opener 63-12 Tuesday in the season opener for both teams.

It might have been foggy outside, but the Xavier defense was certainly not in a fog as they anticipated, pressed, and ran the floor clearly to take a 21-5 halftime lead.

The Saints expanded their lead and got to utilize the new “mercy rule” for girls basketball instituted this season and scored 42 second half points to explode to the 51-point victory behind the double figure scoring of Kayla Armstrong with 14 and Ashley Stulken with 12.

Ten of the 13 players suited up for Coach Tom Lilly’s Xavier squad got into the scoring column and Lilly commented, “Though I take care of the offensive side of things typically, with Coach Sullivan involved so heavily in the Saints’ football fortunes that caused me to handle more of the defensive effort as we prepared for tonight’s game.

“During the first half we were trying to get some of the nervousness out and since we graduated some of our go-to kids from last year, we need to try and find someone to take over those roles. We tend to look toward seniors for that role, but we need to also bring along our

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young kids.”

The mark of all the great Tom Lilly-coached Xavier Saints teams of the past seemed to show through early in this contest. Tough, aggressive defense (10 total team fouls), forcing turnovers, and a significant press all seemed to bother the Vikings.

The Xavier coaching staff has had a banner year of honors thus far in the 2012-2013 athletic campaign as Tim O'Brien in golf, Barb Sullivan in volleyball, and Duane Schulte in football have all earned Coach of the Year honors in the Mississippi Valley Conference. Lilly may follow suit with how he brings along the 2012-13 edition of the Saints. In fact, it was reminiscent of Xavier's football team under the direction of Schulte, when the Saints shut out Decorah in the second quarter and also limited Decorah to two points in the final stanza.

“I wanted to improve on better offensive fire power and help each other more on defense. We also have to improve on free throw shooting, but we have certainly spent some time on this already this season,” noted Lilly.

Perhaps uncharacteristically as compared to the past, Xavier was 10 of 26 on free throws and only Ashley Stulken was perfect drilling all four of her attempts.

Turnovers were excessive in the first half according to Lilly, but that will give the Saints something to work on as they move toward their second game of the season. He was happy citing Sarah Dickes as a player nabbing several passes made by the Vikings and the anticipation that several Saints demonstrated in causing grief for the Decorah offense.

Five players scored for Decorah -- three players each with three points -- Abby Arend, Kaitlyn Kregel, and Anna Madrigal.

DECORAH (12): Abby Arend 1 1-2 3; Alexis Hove 0 0-0 0; Shelby Stalberger 0 0-0 0; Maria Hoyme 0 0-0 0; Kaitlyn Kregel 1 1-2 3; Anna Madrigal 1 1-2 3; Noreen Gentry 0 1-2 1. Tess Olinger 0 0-0 0; Kayla Ingvalson 1 0-0 2. Totals 4 4-8 12.

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XAVIER (63): Kayla Armstrong 6 0-2 14; Hannah Chute 2 0-0 4; Morgan Breitbach 0 0-4 0; Haley Deutmeyer 0 1-2 1; Sarah Dickes 4 0-0 9; Emma Deignan 1 0-0 2; Abby Watson 0 0-4 0; Maddie Bertsch 3 1-2 7; Lizzy Bailey 3 0-0 8; McKenna Andersen 0 4-6 4; Allison Chorzempa 1 0-0 2; Lisa Boomgarden 0 0-2 0; Ashley Stulken 4 4-4 12. Totals 24 10-26 63.

Halftime - Xavier 21, Decorah 5. 3-point goals - Decorah 0, Xavier 5 (Armstrong 2, Bailey 2, Dickes). Fouls - Xavier 10, Decorah 18. Fouled out - None.