

Saints end 0-for-29 skid against Lions

Written by Tom Fruehling

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It was long overdue when a bleachers-full of Xavier students started chanting "Just like football" in the waning moments of a 62-57 boys basketball win at Linn-Mar Friday night.

The Saints, no question, have owned the gridiron of late.

But when the basketball boys pulled out their victory on some clutch plays at the end, it marked the first time in school history (going back to 1998) that they've managed to turn the trick against the Lions.

"Zero and 29 before tonight," Saints assistant coach Brad Stovie pointed out as fans mobbed the players. "Yeah, I'd say this was a pretty special night."

The moment wasn't lost on the team.

"Beating them for the first time is a great thing to be a part of," said junior Adam McDermott, who clinched the mild upset with six straight free throws in the final 34 seconds, "especially since they beat us so bad at home (59-35 two weeks ago).

"I wanted the ball at the end, to attack the basket and get to the line. I knew I could knock them down."

While the cool and calm McDermott iced the win from the line, it was fellow junior Cal Winker who snatched glory from impending doom.

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The Lions took their first lead of the game at 42-41 with 5:40 left and were up 55-52 at the two-minute mark. That's when Winker took over.

He drove the lane hard for one basket, snagged a key rebound on the other end and then was fouled as he split defenders on the way to the goal again. His two free throws, swished while the Linn-Mar student body was in full-throated cry, put Xavier ahead for good with less than a minute left at 56-55.

"After we lost the last time, Coach (Ryan Luehrsmann) mentioned all the losses," Winker said. "But he told us to focus on our defense, and I thought we did that tonight.

"And it feels great to get that first win."

The Lions (10-7, 8-4 MVC) opened the game with 10 straight misses and fell behind 10-0 before getting on the board with 2:43 left in the first quarter.

Normally lethal from behind the 3-point arc, they didn't make their first trey until Jordan Bohannon hit his first of four on the night late in the second quarter. For the game, Linn-Mar shot just 6 for 19 from long range and 22 for 63 overall (35 percent).

"We had 20 offensive rebounds, which is a lot for us," said Linn-Mar Coach Chris Robertson. "But we couldn't convert. If we shoot 40 percent we win by seven or eight. It was one of those nights when we didn't shoot well.

"And we had too many fouls at the end. You can't put guys like that (Winker and McDermott) on the line. They just executed better than we did down the stretch."

For his part, Luehrsmann said it was good to get the monkey off the back of his team (now 10-7, 6-6 MVC) against Linn-Mar. But he said he didn't make a huge deal of the losing streak.

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"I just told the kids that we'd played some elite teams this year in a lot of different places. And that got us ready for tonight," he said. "It was a big game for us, and I thought we played with a lot of confidence.

"The defense was the difference. For the most part, we took away their threes. And we played tough when we had to."

Winker poured in 27 points and McDermott finished with 20. Bohannon led Xavier with 18 points.

XAVIER (62): Adam McDermott 5 9-9 20, Mitchell Burger 1 2-2 4, Calvin Winker 10 5-6 27, Matt Nelson, 1 1-4 3, Andrew Bisenius 1 1-2 3, Connor Ramlo 0 1-2 1, Frank Hill 0 0-0 0, Matt Downey 1 2-2 4, A.J. Brems 0 0-0 0. Totals 19 21-27 62.

LINN-MAR (57): Nic Uhler 5 2-3 13, Jordan Bohannon 7 0-0 18, Ben Larson 0 0-0 0, Jon Schlotterback 4 3-5 11, Luke Halupnik 5 1-1 12, Riley Murphy 1 0-0 2, Trevor Noble 0 0-0 0, Griffin Brennecke 0 0-0 0, Ryan Schmidt 0 0-0 0, Jordan Brandt 0 1-2 1. Totals 22 7-11 57.

Halftime – Xavier 21, Linn-Mar 16. 3-point goals – Xavier 3 (Winker 2, McDermott 1), Linn-Mar 6 (Bohannon 4, Uhler 1, Halupnik 1). Fouled out – Brandt.