Saints hang tough, but Linn-Mar prevails Written by Tom Fruehling Saturday, 05 February 2011 01:27 - Last Updated Saturday, 05 February 2011 01:30 It wasn't a real pretty game. Linn-Mar's Lions, the state's top-ranked boys team, weren't as sharp as usual. The gritty Xavier Saints, meanwhile, played tough as always. They tested the visitors in their home gym Friday night but fell to the better team, 52-33. "The thing about Linn-Mar is that they always seem to be in control," said Xavier Coach Matt Jenkins. "Even when they're having an off night like tonight, you never get the feeling that they're going to lose. They're just a great team." Linn-Mar Coach Chris Robertson saw some good things from his squad despite the sub-par overall performance. "Defensively, we played really well," he said. "We were aggressive and made them work for their shots. But we were a little stagnant on offense." Neither team shot well to start the game, and Linn-Mar (16-0, 11-0 Mississippi Valley

Then, in a three-minute stretch in the second guarter, Linn-Mar scored nine straight points to

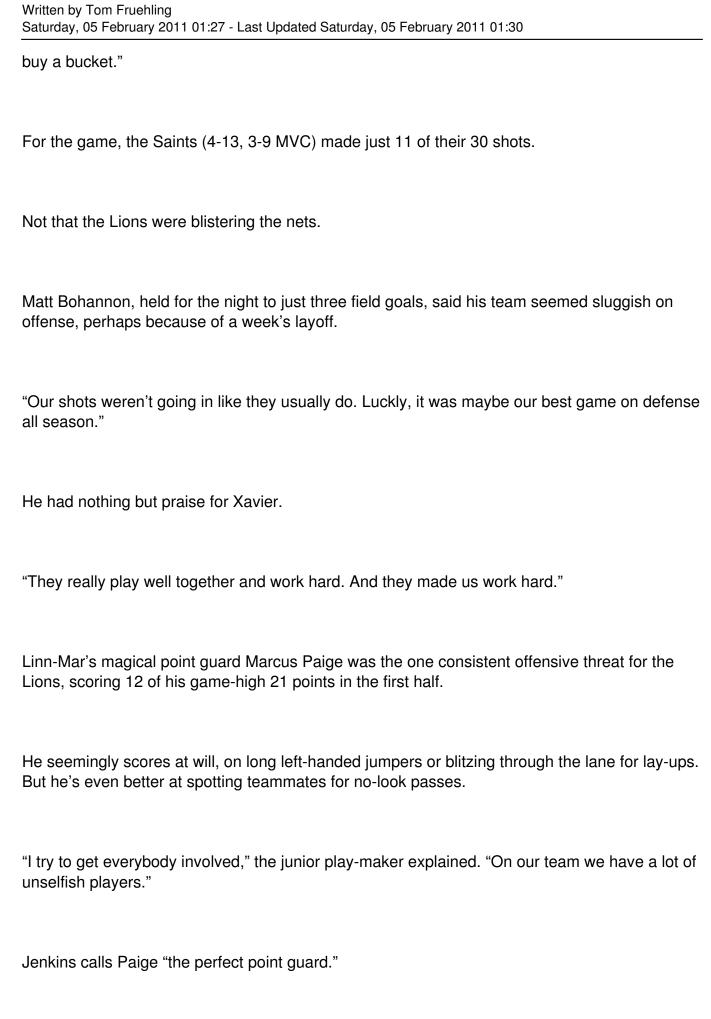
"We had good looks around the basket," Jenkins said. "We just couldn't connect. We couldn't

Conference) led by only 10-5 at the end the first quarter.

stretch its lead to 21-9.

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"We tried to stop him," the Saints coach said. "But he always does exactly what his team needs. And he plays with respect for the game and his opponents."

Xavier's rugged 6-foot-6 senior center Ryan Mains said his team gave it their all in an expected losing effort.

"We know we're not the most skilled team," he said afterward. "But we play hard and feel we can play with anyone.

"Our execution wasn't what it should be, and we're working on that. But our effort is always there."

Xavier won the sophomore game in an upset, 57-43.

LINN-MAR (52) – Shane Benton 0 0-0 0, Marcus Paige 9 1-2 21, Matt Bohannon 3 1-2 8, Ian McBrayer 6 0-0 12, Josh Montague 4 1-1 9, Josh Malone 1 0-0 2, Michael Thul 0 0-0 0, Nick Soyer 0 0-0 0, Matthew Lassen 0 0-0 0, Mason Krusie 0 0-0 0, Nate Johnson 0 0-0 0, Braxton Lancial 0 0-0 0, Nick Gentzler 0 0-0 0, Derik Gogg 0 0-0 0, Jacob Hutchins 0 0-0 0. Totals – 23 3-5 52.

XAVIER (33) – Mitch McLaughlin 0 0-0 0, Ben McDermott 1 1-2 4, Kevin Hosch 0 0-0 0, Alec Clasen 0 0-0 0, Ryan Mains 1 2-4 4, Nolan Dunkirk 1 0-0 2, Carter Valentine 3 2-3 8, Brian Ropp 1 0-0 3, Mark Mattke 4 4-4 12, Peter Kokantis 0 0-0 0. Totals: 11 9-13 33.

Halftime – Linn-Mar 25, Xavier 13. 3-point goals – Linn-Mar 3 (Paige 2, Bohannon), Xavier 2 (McDermott, Ropp). Total fouls – Linn-Mar 13, Xavier 12.