

## No.4 Saints trimmed by Assumption

Written by Tom Fruehling

Saturday, 04 January 2014 21:01 - Last Updated Saturday, 04 January 2014 21:01

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Facing a Murderer's Row of top-ranked Class 5A teams over the next 14 days, the Xavier girls were hoping to gain a little confidence by playing someone their own size Saturday afternoon at home.

And if the Class 4A fourth-ranked Saints had played sixth-ranked Assumption the whole game the way they played the final four minutes, their self-esteem would be sky high.

Down 36-23 with 4:14 to go, Xavier cut the lead to four and had the ball under its own basket with 34 seconds left. An inbound pass sailed away, however, and the visiting Knights squeaked out a 42-38 victory.

"This is a game we needed to win," said Xavier Coach Tom Lilly. "Because I told the girls that the teams we're going to play in the next two weeks are just going to come out and pound you."

Besides a seemingly even matchup with Class 4A Dubuque Wahlert, the Saints' next games are against Waterloo West, Cedar Rapids Washington, West Des Moines Valley, Cedar Rapids Kennedy and West Des Moines Dowling. All five of the upper schools are in the Top 10, and three of them are in the Top 5.

"If we played perfectly and they play badly," Lilly predicted, "we might win by one."

If they perform as aimlessly as they did for much of the day on Saturday, though, Lilly said each may turn into a tsunami. "It is what it is," he explained.

Even with two starters on the bench with injuries, Assumption (6-3) pretty much had its way with Xavier (6-3) the whole way. The Saints led only once, at 11-10 early in the second quarter.

Although play was mostly sluggish and ragged on both sides, Xavier was the least careful with

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the ball and committed 25 turnovers.

“It seemed like 45 to me,” said Lilly. “We made way too many bad passes.”

They scored only three points in the third quarter as the Knights built a 31-21 cushion and tried to nurse the lead the rest of the way. But things turned fast and furious at the four-minute mark.

The Saints either stole the ball or fouled. And when the Knights missed free throws, Xavier suddenly began converting on the other end. While the Saints scored just 21 points in the first three quarters, they scored 17 in the fourth.

And all 11 Assumption points in the fourth quarter came from the free throw line.

“With the lead, their offensive strategy kind of changed and they became more conservative,” Lilly said. “We were hunting them, and they started to play a little differently.”

Meanwhile, the Saints were charging the rim and drawing fouls of their own.

“Our only chance to catch up,” the coach added, “was to take the ball to the basket or get free throws and score with the clock stopped.”

It worked, too, until they simply ran out of time.

“We played hard the fourth quarter,” Lilly summed up. “Now we're going to have to dig deep and find some confidence just to survive.”

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Morgan Breitbach and Hayley Deutmeyer led Xavier with 10 points apiece.

ASSUMPTION (42): Alyssa Sikkema 0 4-8 4, Christine Rohlf 1 3-4 5, Kennedy King 2 3-6 9, Shannon Leon 2 1-6 6, Jamie White 2 4-4 8, Jasmine Harris 0 0-0 0, Sarah Matson 4 0-0 8, Makinzie Roman 1 0-0 2. Totals 12 15-28 42.

XAVIER (38): Morgan Breitbach 3 4-6 10, Lizzy Bailey 2 3-4 9, Hayley Deutmeyer 4 2-4 10, Abby Watson 1 0-2 2, Maddie Bertsch 0 2-2 2, Jenny Dickes 1 0-2 2, Meghan Joens 1 0-0 2, Erin Drahozal 0 1-2 1, Brylee Bastian 0 0-0 0, Madi Nelson 0 0-0 0. Totals 12 12-22 38.

Halftime – Assumption 22, Xavier 18. 3-point goals – Assumption 3 (King 2, Leon 1), Xavier 2 (Bailey 2). Total fouls – Assumption 21, Xavier 22. Fouled out – Matson.