

Saints foiled at buzzer by 3-pointer

Written by Tom Fruehling

Saturday, 04 January 2014 22:44 -

Down 16 points in the third period at home Saturday afternoon to Davenport Assumption, the Xavier boys did everything right the rest of the way to even the score with 14 seconds left in the game.

The gritty come-from-behind effort was all for naught in the end, however, when the Knights' Hunter Grenier swished only his second 3-point attempt of the season as time ran out.

Fitting, perhaps, that the Saints should fall 49-46 on a long-range shot since that's what got them into trouble in the first place. By draining three treys in each of the first two quarters, Assumption (4-4) coasted to a 28-16 halftime lead.

"That was one of the things we had stressed, that we not get beat by the three-ball," said Xavier Coach Ryan Luehrsmann, "that we not give them any uncontested threes.

"Then, in the first half, a kid (Evan Wadsager) who had been shooting only 17 percent for the year makes three out of three."

Up until Grenier's desperation buzzer-beater, the Knights hit just one from behind the arc early in the fourth quarter. "We adjusted and did a much better job in the second half," Luehrsmann said.

Except when it counted.

The story of the game, though, is how the Saints methodically chipped away what looked like an insurmountable deficit to give themselves a chance to win.

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With a tenacious defense and relentless rebounding, they held Assumption scoreless for the last seven minutes of the third quarter. A 13-0 run of their own pulled them to 32-29 going into the final period.

Coming off the bench, speedy 5-foot-10 sophomore point guard Mitchell Burger sparked the Saints by making two steals and scoring four points in less than a minute.

"He's a young kid with excellent quickness," said his coach, himself a one-time star guard for Washington High School and the University of Iowa. "There's nobody quicker on the court, and he's really dynamic in the open floor."

Burger is also a shifty passer who was adept at finessing the ball underneath to big man Matt Nelson. Fresh off an all-state season in football, the burly 6-foot-8 Hawkeye grid recruit poured in 19 points, by far his best outing of the year. A dozen of his points came in the second-half surge by the Saints.

"Matt played a terrific game," Luehrsmann said. "He's just now rounding into basketball shape. He's going to get better and better."

Nelson took a pass down under from Burger for a layup with 43 seconds left to bring Xavier within one at 43-42. Then, with 14 seconds to go, he calmly sank both free throws to knot it up at 46-all.

After that, it was Grenier's time to shine.

"We won one game this year with a halfcourt buzzer beater (by Adam McDermott against Jefferson in December)," said Luehrsmann. "And now we've lost one."

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“Long term, though, we want to get better every game. And I told the kids I thought we played our best half of basketball all season in the second half.”

ASSUMPTION (49): Addam Rouse 4 1-2 12, Hunter Grenier 3 0-0 7, Tim Doyle 1 0-0 2, Evan Wadsager 4 6-10 17, Roman Youngblut 2 0-0 4, Ryan Coughlin 1 0-0 3, Jack Schwirtz 1 0-0 2, Jordan Allen 0 0-0 0, Malik Smith Larson 1 0-0 2. Totals 17 7-12 49.

XAVIER (46): Adam McDermott 3 2-2 8, Connor Ramlo 2 0-0 5, Calvin Winker 1 1-2 3, Matt Nelson 5 9-11 19, Andrew Bisenius 0 2-2 2, Mitchell Burger 2 2-2 7, Frank Hill 1 0-0 2. Totals 14 16-19 46.

Halftime – Assumption 28, Xavier 16. 3-point goals – Assumption 8 (Rouse 3, Wadsager 3, Coughlin 1, Grenier 1), Xavier 2 (Ramlo 1, Burger 1). Total fouls – Assumption 15, Xavier 14. Fouled out – Doyle.