

Saints clip Waterloo West, 58-56

Written by Nick Petaros, Waterloo Courier

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WATERLOO - Waterloo West Coach John Curta had little to fault with the way his team played for all but the final five minutes of Thursday's makeup game with Xavier at Siddens Gymnasium.

West valued the basketball on offense and held Xavier in check on defense as it built a six-point lead early in the fourth quarter. But after turning the ball over just five times in the first three quarters combined, West turned the ball over five times in the final five minutes.

The Saints turned those miscues into points as it outscored West 12-4 down the stretch to secure a hard-fought, 58-56, Mississippi Valley Conference road win.

"We did a really good job the whole game controlling the ball and that was one of our goals," Curta said. "We knew they pressed and we knew they were going to run a zone, but we turned it over there at the very end and that's the difference in the game.

"Offensively we played well. We played real well defensively, we got after the ball and rebounded well and handled their big kids."

On the opposite bench, Xavier Coach Ryan Luehrsmann didn't see the movement he wanted out of his defense until those five minute minutes.

"We were a little flat-footed in both of our zones tonight and to their credit, their kids stepped up and made shots," Lueherschmann said. "I don't think it was necessarily that we were that awful in our zone. I just think it was that West came out and probably played one of their better games offensively. Coach Curta had them ready to go."

Xavier (7-5, 3-4) benefitted from hot shooting early and late in this game. The Saints hit six of their first seven shots to open with a 15-9 lead and midway through the fourth quarter tied the game, 52-52, on back-to-back 3-pointers in the corner from Adam McDermott, who paced his team with 18 points.

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"Adam has the green light for me," Luehrsmann said of McDermott, who finished with four 3-pointers. "I don't care if he misses five in a row, I want him to fire it up the next time he's open. That's the mentality he's got to have. Tonight in the fourth quarter he delivered."

McDermott's steal and layup put the Saints up 54-52 with 3:37 left, but West regained the lead when Dedric Campbell found Solomon Funchess for a layup and a loose ball bounced to Lincoln Conrey for the final bucket of his game-high 20 points.

Xavier went ahead for good, 57-56, one possession later as Andrew Bisenius connected on his team's 10th 3-pointer.

West (3-7, 2-4) had three chances to pull ahead in the final minute, but it wasn't meant to be. The Wahawks were called for a travel, an Alex Landers 3-pointer bounced off the rim twice before missing, and finally with seconds remaining a baseline pass across the lane was intercepted and time expired.

Landers finished with 10 points for West and center Jacob Meyer had nine points to go with his numerous assists from the post.

For West, everything was there but the finishing touch.

"During most of the game we were aggressive, we were driving towards the bucket and then dumping it to someone that was open," Curta said. "Then all of a sudden the last four minutes we didn't do it anymore. We stood outside and let their zone cover us."

Mitchell Burger scored 14 points for Xavier and Calvin Winker had 11.

XAVIER (58): Matt Downey 1-1 0-0 2, Mitchell Burger 3-7 2-2 14, Adam McDermott 7-14 0-0

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18, Joe Welch 0-1 0-0 0, Frank Hill 2-3 0-0 5, Calvin Winker 4-8 3-6 11, Matt Nelson 2-4 1-2 4, Andrew Bisenius 2-4 0-0 6. Totals 21-42 6-10 58.

WATERLOO WEST (56): Elmier Sehic 2-4 0-0 5, Lincoln Conrey 6-10 7-7 20, Jacory Spates 0-0 0-0 0, Alex Landers 4-13 0-0 10, Nermin Samardzic 0-1 0-0 0, Dan Puk 0-3 0-0 0, Dedric Campbell 3-4 0-0 7, Solomon Funchess 2-4 0-0 5, Jacob Meyer 3-7 3-4 9. Totals 20-46 10-11 56.

Halftime - Waterloo West 32, Xavier 30. 3-point goals - Xavier 10 (McDermott 4, Burger 3, Bisenius 2, Hill 1), West 6 (Landers 2, Conrey 1, Campbell 1, Sehic 1, Funchess 1).