

Linn-Mar boys shut down Saints, 59-35

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Xavier Saints have some good weapons on offense with Adam McDermott, Calvin Winker and big Matt Nelson, but not Friday night.

Not against Linn-Mar.

The Lions threw a tight leash on Xavier and held the Saints to their lowest output of the season in a 59-35 ballgame at Xavier.

The Saints shot just 23 percent from the field (12 for 52) and did not have anyone reach double figures. McDermott, Winker and Nelson are normally good for 35.6 points, but this time they scored 22.

Linn-Mar Coach Chris Robertson was happy with his club's defense after losing to Ankeny, 78-77, on the road Tuesday night.

"That was the big focus the last two days," he said. "We dropped a tough game on Tuesday and we didn't defend very well at Ankeny, so we got after them pretty good the last two days.

"It paid off. They were locked in, guys were focused on matchups."

Lane Halupnik and Jordan Brandt chased McDermott all night, holding the 6-foot-3 marksman to eight points - half his average - on 3-for-10 shooting.

"Me and Brandt are two weird kids. We like defense," said Halupnik. "It's always a good

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challenge to guard a good player like McDermott. They set a ton of screens for him. You have to stay in his pocket."

Nelson, a 6-foot-8 senior who will play football at Iowa, missed three chippies in the first 90 seconds and shoved Linn-Mar center Jon Schlotterback in the chest in frustration for a personal foul. Nelson never got rolling and shot 1 for 8, despite a big height advantage over Schlotterback and backup center Ryan Schmidt.

"You have to give credit to the Linn-Mar kids," said Xavier Coach Ryan Luehrsmann. "They were hurt from their loss on Tuesday. They came out and played inspired ball. When they get it going with their guards and dribble penetration and hit 3-point shots, it's tough to defend.

"We got good looks. We got Nelson some inside looks and he just wasn't able to capitalize."

Xavier chopped a 15-point deficit to seven points at 34-27 on a 3-pointer by McDermott midway through the third quarter. Robertson called a timeout and should have taped what he said, because the inspired Lions went on a 19-2 run to take control at 53-29.

Jordan Bohannon, quiet in the first half with only three points, scored nine straight points for Linn-Mar in the final 2 minutes, 10 seconds of the third quarter in the middle of that spurt. He kept his composure and maintained his confidence during the first half, then stuck a dagger in the Saints and finished with 15.

"I was always told to keep your confidence up and don't get down on yourself," said Bohannon, the fourth brother in his family to star for Linn-Mar. "Once you get down on yourself, your shots are never going to start falling. You have to stay up and keep shooting the ball."

The Lions enjoyed an 11-0 spurt in the second quarter on their way to a 28-17 cushion at intermsision. Brandt hit a pair of 3-pointers during the 11-0 run and finished with eight points.

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Nic Uhler, who missed Tuesday's game at Ankeny with a foot injury, scored nine points for Linn-Mar. Halupnik, who scored 28 against Ankeny, had eight against the Saints.

Winker led Xavier with nine points.

The Saints beat Waterloo West, 58-56, Thursday night on the road, but Luehrsmann did not think the back-to-back games were a factor in his team's performance.

"Linn-Mar was the better team tonight. A lot of highly skilled kids," he said. "That's where we want this program to get eventually. We want kids to play year-round, like these kids do and really understand the game and have a good feel for it."

Linn-Mar raised its records to 7-6 overall and 5-3 in the Mississippi Valley Conference. Xavier fell to 7-6 overall and 3-5 in the league.

LINN-MAR (59): Uhler 2 4-7 9, Evans 0 0-0 0, Murphy 1 2-2 5, Vogel 0 0-0 0, Noble 3 0-0 6, Brennecke 1 0-0 2, Bohannon 4 5-6 15, Larson 1 0-0 2, Schlotterback 1 0-0 2, Tichy 0 0-0 0, Halupnik 3 0-0 8, Eby 0 0-0 0, McCrary 0 0-0 0, Schmidt 1 0-2 2, Brandt 2 2-2 8. Totals 19 13-19 59.

XAVIER (35): Downey 1 0-0 3, McDermott 3 0-0 8, Burger 3 1-1 7, Ramlo 0 0-1 0, Welch 0 0-00, Hill 1 0-0 3, Brems 0 0-0 0, Winker 3 3-5 9, Peters 0 0-0 0, Nelson 1 3-4 5, Bisenius 0 0-0 0. Totals 12 7-11 35.

Halftime - Linn-Mar 28, Xavier 17. 3-point goals - Linn-Mar 8 (Bohannon 2, Halupnik 2, Brandt 2, Uhler 1, Murphy 1), Xavier 4 (McDermott 2, Downey 1, Hill 1).