

Lions survive McDermott and Saints

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 27 January 2015 23:41 -



Adam McDermott tried to steal the show Tuesday night for the Xavier Saints, but the stubborn Linn-Mar Lions wouldn't let him get away with it.

McDermott poured in 21 points in the second half during a furious comeback that chopped a 23-point deficit all the way down to just six points, but Linn-Mar made its free throws at the end and escaped Ron Thillen Gymnasium with a 66-57 victory.

McDermott scored only two points in a lackluster first half and the Saints trailed at intermission, 36-15, with their leading scorer under wraps. The Xavier coaches did not think the 6-foot-4 forward was being aggressive enough.

"Adam and I exchanged some words at halftime and that was the tone of the conversation, that he needed to step up and be more aggressive," said Linn-Mar Coach Ryan Luehrsmann. "And he certainly responded."

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Linn-Mar scored the first basket of the second half for a 38-15 lead, but McDermott broke loose for nine points in the third period and the Saints clawed back at 46-34 entering the final stanza.

McDermott was just beginning to heat up and it got exciting in the Mississippi Valley Conference tussle. It also got a little physical and chippy at times as both clubs fought for supremacy.

McDermott drilled a 3-pointer and got fouled on the play by Jordan Bohannon. He hit the free throw for a rare four-point play as the Saints pulled within 56-47 with 1:38 left in the game.

Jordan Brandt missed two free throws for Linn-Mar and McDermott drilled another 3-pointer, pulling Xavier within 56-50 with 1:23 remaining and giving him seven quick points in 15 seconds. The Saints got within six points again at 58-52 and 60-54, but the Lions made enough free throws to pull it out.

It was a terrific performance by McDermott, but it came a little too late.

"I wasn't aggressive enough in the first half," he acknowledged. "We didn't execute our plays as much as we wanted to in the first half. The second half we came out and we executed and my teammates got me the ball."

Luehrsmann thinks McDermott is too unselfish at times. "That's his biggest knock, and that's not necessarily a bad thing," the coach remarked, "but he is too unselfish."

Both teams are ranked in the Associated Press poll. Linn-Mar (11-3, 8-1) is ranked No. 8 in Class 4A, while Xavier (8-6, 4-5) is ranked No. 9 in Class 3A. The Lions were the better team over 32 minutes and got 20 points from Bohannon, 17 from Nic Uhlir and 10 from Lane Halupnik.

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"It was fun," said Bohannon, who matched McDermott with four 3-pointers. "It was a fast-paced game and that's the way we want to play. We want to push the tempo. I feel like we got away from that a little."

Linn-Mar Coach Chris Robertson had a lot more fun in the first half than he did in the second half.

"We knew they were going to fight in the second half. We expected that and they did," said Robertson. "We were hanging on there. It was crazy. It got a little tighter than we wanted to."

The Lions survived at the foul line, cashing 23 of 30 in the game. Uhler was 11 for 13 at the charity stripe.

Calvin Winker carried the Saints early with some impressive one-on-one moves and finished with 14 points, but he fouled out with 2:12 remaining and his club trailing by 15 points. Mitchell Burger scored 12 points for Xavier before fouling out in the final seconds.

"I'm real happy with the team and the energy that we brought in the second half," said Luehrsmann. "The guys dug down deep and kept fighting, and certainly Adam was the catalyst for all that in the second half. He got hot and was awfully hard to guard."

"Anytime you play some competition like Linn-Mar and you show some toughness and grittiness and fight your way back, I think there's something to be taken away from it. We're still really disappointed, because at the end of the day it's all about getting the win."

LINN-MAR (66): Uhler 3 11-13 17, Murphy 1 4-6 7, Noble 4 0-1 8, Bohannon 6 4-4 20,

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Klostermann 0 0-0 0, Tichy 0 0-0 0, Halupnik 4 0-0 10, Schmidt 0 2-2 2, Brandt 0 2-4 2. Totals 18 23-30 66.

XAVIER (57): Mims 0 2-2 2, McDermott 8 3-3 23, Burger 5 2-2 12, Ramlo 3 0-0 6, Welch 0 0-0 0, Downey 0 0-0 0, Winker 6 2-4 14, Stulken 0 0-0 0, Clasen 0 0-0 0. Totals 22 9-11 57.

Halftime - Linn-Mar 36, Xavier 15. 3-point goals - Linn-Mar 7 (Bohannon 4, Halupnik 2, Murphy 1), Xavier 4 (McDermott 4). Fouled out - Winker, Burger.