

Saints top Pella for historic win

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - Adam McDermott had a great time watching his cousin Doug McDermott help Ames High School win the state basketball title in 2010 at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines.

Now he'd like to help Xavier High School do the same thing.

McDermott cashed 15 of 16 free throws and scored 24 points Tuesday night as the Saints held off Pella, 65-61, in the opening round of the Class 3A tournament.

It was the first victory at the boys state basketball tournament in school history for Xavier, which opened its doors in 1998 and lost in the first round here in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

Xavier (17-8) will play Dubuque Wahlert (16-9) in the semifinals Thursday night at 8:15.

The Saints built a 40-21 lead midway through the third quarter, but Pella stormed back and pulled within one point on three separate occasions in the fourth quarter before the Saints salted it away in the final minute.

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"Defense. We quit playing defense," said McDermott. "We quit rebounding, quit pushing the ball on them, we quit getting to the free throw line at that time, so that didn't help."

Adam McDermott was in the seventh grade when Doug McDermott, now with the Chicago Bulls after an All-American career at Creighton, helped Ames win the 2010 state title.

"I think the first round I sat in the cheap seats with my friends, but then I was sitting down there with his family," McDermott recalled. "So that was a good time."

McDermott was a phenomenal free throw shooter during the regular season for Xavier at 89.9 percent, but he actually raised that figure to 90.4 percent Tuesday night with his 15 for 16 showing.

His two free throws with 2:01 left gave the Saints a 59-56 lead. He made two more for a 64-58 edge with 38.6 seconds left. He made his first foul shot with 16.6 seconds remaining to make it 65-58 before finally misfiring after making 15 in a row.

Pella (21-3) outscored Xavier 18-4 in the last five minutes of the third quarter, slicing a 40-21 deficit all the way down to 44-39. The Little Dutch scored the first two points of the fourth quarter to make it 44-41 and the Saints were in trouble.

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