

Saints fall to Wahlert in semifinals

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - The Late Show with the Xavier Saints had an unhappy ending Thursday night.

Dubuque Wahlert defeated the Saints, 67-54, in the semifinals of the Class 3A boys state basketball tournament in a battle of Mississippi Valley Conference teams at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines.

Wahlert (17-9) will play LeMars (22-4) in the championship game Saturday night, with the Golden Eagles from Dubuque seeking their second state title in a row.

Xavier (17-9) will meet Williamsburg (25-1) in the consolation game for third place Saturday afternoon at 12:05.

Thursday night's game, scheduled to begin at 8:15, did not start until 9 p.m. after LeMars beat Williamsburg in double-overtime in the other semifinal, and the game did not end until 10:30 with the Saints walking unhappily off the court.

Xavier bolted to a 23-11 lead in the first half and appeared to be in good shape with Wahlert star Cordell Pemsl saddled with two early fouls, but

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the Golden Eagles battled back and controlled the second half.

"It couldn't have started any better for us, to be honest with you," said Xavier Coach Ryan Luehrsmann. "But you know with the talent they have and how well-coached they are, they're going to make a run back.

"And certainly they did and we just didn't have an answer down the stretch. And we couldn't buy a basket as well.

"You just have to tip your hats to them," said Luehrsmann. "They're the defending state champs for a reason."

The Saints scorched the nets when they beat Wahlert, 78-74, at Xavier three weeks ago, but this time they shot only 34 percent from the field (17 of 50) and 25 percent on 3-pointers (6 of 24).

Adam McDermott scored 19 points for Xavier and made a strong big for the all-tournament team after netting 24 in the quarterfinals against Pella, but he shot only 5-for-17 from the field and was 2-for-10 on 3-pointers.

Calvin Winker scored 14 points despite mild foul problems, but he was 4-for-12 from the field and 1-for-5 on 3-pointers. Mitchell Burger had 10 points and Michael Mims added nine.

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St. Xavier's basketball team, which had a record of 15-10, fell to the Saints in the semifinals of the DMA tournament. The Saints, who had a record of 12-10, won the game 44-34. The game was played on Thursday night at the DMA arena. The Saints' victory was a surprise, as they were considered underdogs. The game was a hard-fought battle, with both teams showing great effort. The Saints' defense was particularly strong, holding Xavier to a low scoring output. The game was a great example of the competitive spirit of the DMA tournament.