

Mims sets record as Saints roll

Written by Jim Ecker

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Matt Mims is a talented point guard who has the rare ability to score a lot of points or collect a lot of assists, whichever the Xavier Saints might need him to do on a particular night.

A lot of times he does both in the same game.

Mims scored 16 points and dished out nine assists as the Saints rolled by Dubuque Wahlert, 71-52, in a Mississippi Valley Conference game at Ron Thillen Gymnasium to square their record at 10-10.

Mims, a 5-foot-10 junior, established a new school record with 202 assists in his career, snapping the old mark of 200 assists set by Kevin Andrews from 2003-2006.

Mims still has a full year left in his high school career and could finish with more than 300 assists at the rate he's going. He's averaging a healthy 15.4 points and 5.3 assists, a testament to his ability to score and find his teammates for baskets.

"Matt is, by instinct, a true point guard and a distributor," said Xavier Coach Ryan Luehrsmann. "We've asked him to score a little bit more this year."

"I really like where he's at right now. He's in a good spot. He's making the play that's called upon at a given moment. And when he does that, he's pretty special."

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Mims shot well from the field, hitting 4-of-5 attempts from 3-point range and finishing 6-of-10 overall. And several of his assists were truly special, finding teammates at the right time for easy buckets.

Mims averaged 12.1 points and 4.1 assists last year as a sophomore when the Saints won the Class 3A state title and he's raised those numbers this season as his game continues to evolve.

Mims is proud of setting the career record for assists, especially as a junior.

"I think it's really cool," he said. "A lot of credit goes to my teammates for knocking down shots."

The Saints were languishing with a 4-and-9 record three weeks ago, with some tight losses to stiff competition, but now they've won six of their last seven games and appear to be peaking heading into the postseason tournament next week.

"I just like the positive energy that's there," said Luehrsmann. "The guys have put individual agendas aside, they have a common goal that they want to try and reach. And they're just playing the game the right way."

"They're making the extra pass, they're talking more on defense," he said. "They're just doing all the little things that great teams do, but we're not a great team yet."

"We kind of figured out stuff like this last year at a similar time."

Mims said the Saints did a good job of sticking together during the tough times this season.

"It was frustrating at times," he said, "but we just looked at each other every day in practice and

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we were like, 'We've got to get better, we're going to do this.' We kept encouraging each other."

The Saints had a players-only meeting a few weeks ago, where everybody had a chance to speak their mind.

"That really helped clear things up," said Mims. "I think that's when we started to get going."

Dubuque Wahlert, a power in recent years with a pair of state titles, suffered heavy graduation losses after last season. In addition, the Golden Eagles were missing three injured starters Tuesday game with Peter Timmerman (11.3 ppg), Alexander Timp (9.5) and Matthew Bandy (6.9) all sidelined.

Xavier led 38-18 at halftime and opened a pair of 26-point leads in the second half at 48-22 and 54-28.

Luehrsmann started all five of his seniors in their final home game with Spencer Dempewolf, Max Johnson and Bryce Schulte joining regular starters Nolan Butkowski and Max Techau.

Techau finished with 13 points and eight rebounds. Butkowski scored 11 points, Dempewolf had eight points and Gabe Lux had seven.

Jackson Joens, a normal starter, bumped his head late in the first quarter and did not return to action, but he passed the concussion protocol and said he felt fine after the game.

Craig Collins and Austin Savary scored 14 points apiece for Wahlert.

Xavier will finish the regular season at Class 4A top-ranked Iowa City West Thursday night before facing DeWitt Central in the Class 3A district opener Monday night at Mount Vernon at

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6:30.

WAHLERT (52): Hutchinson 0 0-0 0, Ripley 0 0-0 0, Bohr 1 0-0 2, Collins 6 0-0 14, Becker 1 0-0 2, Funke 1 1-1 3, Savary 5 3-5 14, Sigwarth 0 1-2 1, Leytem 0 0-1 0, Jaeger 3 2-3 8, Onyeukwu 0 0-0 0, Rusch 0 0-0 0, Herrig 1 3-4 6, Gruhl 1 0-0 2. Totals 20 10-16 52.

XAVIER (71): Keating 0 0-0 0, Ropp 0 0-0 0, Lux 1 5-5 7, Mims 6 0-0 16, Scott 1 0-0 2, Butkowski 4 2-2 11, Van Berkum 0 0-0 0, Joens 1 0-0 3, Dempewolf 2 3-4 8, Q.Schulte 2 0-0 4, Bartels 0 0-0 0, Hines 1 0-0 2, Moeder 0 0-0 0, Techau 4 5-7 13, Johnson 0 1-2 1, B.Schulte 2 0-0 4, Angstman 0 0-0 0. Totals 24 16-20 71.

Halftime - Xavier 38, Wahlert 18. 3-point goals - Wahlert 3 (Collins 2, Herrig 1), Xavier 7 (Mims 4, Butkowski 1, Joens 1, Dempewolf 1)