POINT LOOKOUT, Mo. - The Mount Mercy men's basketball team fell behind by 16 points in the first half Friday and lost to top-ranked Saint Francis of Indiana, 89-82, in the Sweet 16 of the NAIA Division II tournament.

Mount Mercy reached the Sweet 16 for the second straight year and finished the campaign at 26-8.

The Mustangs pulled within nine points in the second half, but Saint Francis surged back in front by 16 points with a little more than two minutes remaining to secure the victory. The Mustangs hit four 3-pointers in the final 90 seconds, but the seven-point final margin was as close as they got.

"We couldn't catch up," said Mount Mercy coach Aaron Jennings. "They're a good team. They came in with the No. 1 for a reason."

Saint Francis (30-4) will face Keiser (30-4) in the Elite 8 on Saturday.

Alex Houston led Mount Mercy with 22 points. Tre Wagner scored 16 points and Ben Struss had 10.

Kegan Comer and Evan Henry led a balanced attack for Saint Francis with 18 points apiece. Austin Fox finished with 17 points and 12 rebounds. Bryce Lienhoop had 16 points and 11 rebounds. Jordan Hahn added 14 points.

Saint Francis destroyed Mount Mercy on the backboards, 48-26. Jennings referred to Fox and Lienhoop as "monsters on the boards" for the winners.

Jennings became the head coach of the men's basketball team on the eve of the 2015-16 season when Paul Gavin was named the school's new athletic director. Jennings led the Mustangs to a successful season and praised the players for their efforts.

"None of them came to Mount Mercy to play for me," he remarked. "We grew as a team and became a basketball family. It's amazing the run we had."

MOUNT MERCY (82): Strong 1 0-0 2, Houston 8 6-6 22, Wagner 5 4-7 16, Fort 3 3-4 9, Parker 2 0-0 6, Murdock 1 0-0 3, Brawner-Henley 1 0-0 2, Bedford 0 0-0 0, Lamaak 3 0-0 6, Struss 4 0-0 10, Gogg 2 2-2 6. Totals 30 13-16 82.

SAINT FRANCIS (89): Comer 5 7-10 18, Henry 4 6-6 18, Small 0 1-4 1, Doslak 1 0-0 3, Poindexter 1 0-0 2, Lienhoop 4 8-10 16, Hahan 5 0-0 14, Fox 7 3-7 17. Totals 27 25-37 89.

Halftime - Saint Francis 42, Mount Mercy 28. 3-point goals - Mount Mercy 9 (Wagner 4, Struss 2, Parker 2, Murdock 1), Saint Francis 10 (Henry 4, Hahn 4, Comer 1, Doslak 1).