

No. 12 Lions hold off Xavier

Written by Jim Ecker

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Just a few short years ago, Tom Lilly battled against Jamie Printy when she was a star player for the Linn-Mar Lions.

Now Lilly is battling against Jamie (Printy) Brandt in her new role as the young girls basketball coach of the Lions, continuing their rivalry and friendship on a different level.

Brandt and the Lions won their latest confrontation with Lilly and the Xavier Saints, 47-41, in a Mississippi Valley Conference game Friday night at Linn-Mar

When it was over, Lilly congratulated Brandt on a job well done and they both left the floor with smiles.

Lilly has won more than 500 games and four state titles at Xavier, and now he's competing against a new generation of coaches like Brandt, who comes from a successful basketball family.

"She's got a great pedigree, she's played on some great Linn-Mar teams with some great teammates, and she was able to do her thing at the University of Iowa and being coached by Lisa Bluder," he said. "So she's got a lot of knowledge and surrounds herself with assistants who can help her.

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"She made some significant moves and changes tonight," Lilly said. "She should be pretty proud of how she did today, because her kids executed."

Brandt said she's admired Lilly for a long time, first as a player and now as a coach. She said it's an honor to coach against him.

"He's one of the best coaches in the state of Iowa," said Brandt, who is in her second year as Linn-Mar's head coach. "He has a great record and great history.

"I did grow up playing against him. We had a good relationship. Off the court, he's always been so awesome to me. I have a ton of respect for him. It's been a lot of fun.

"I remember when I tore my ACL in high school, he wrote me a letter. He was super-supportive then.



"We both did a radio show together (last season) and I remember how supportive he was. He gave me some advice, just being a nice guy like he is."

Brandt almost sounded sorry to beat Lilly's team Tuesday night.

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"Part of me," she said, smiling, "but then my competitive side comes out."

Linn-Mar won because it has two future Division I players in Amanda Ollinger and Kamryn Finley, who combined for 34 of their team's 47 points, but the underdog Saints had their chances.

Lexi Noonan scored the first seven points of the second half for Xavier to give the Saints a 23-22 lead and they took a 26-22 margin on a 3-pointer by Kiana Stanek, completing a 10-0 run and wiping out a 22-16 deficit.

The Saints were sitting on a 30-29 lead heading into the final minute of the third quarter, but the Lions took advantage of a few Xavier miscues to take a 35-30 lead into the final stanza.

"That was a quick 30 seconds of discombobulation and panic, maybe," Lilly said.

Ollinger made the last basket of the third quarter with a steal, then she made the first bucket of the fourth period to give Linn-Mar a 37-30 advantage. The future Iowa Hawkeye finished with 18 points and 15 rebounds.

"We don't get to see kids like Ollinger in practice," Lilly said. "She's pretty explosive and we can't match that. When you get kids like that in front of the press, that makes a big difference."

Xavier used a box-and-one and sagging defenses to keep Ollinger fairly well in check with the 18 points.

"That wasn't bad," Lilly said. "We talked about a team effort against solid DI kids. Not one kid can stop anybody like that."

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"I thought Finley was probably the answer for them, more than anything else."

Finley, a sophomore who already has Division I offers from Drake and Northern Iowa, contributed 16 points for Linn-Mar.

Lilly was happy with his team's effort and thinks the Saints are making progress as the postseason tournament gets closer.

Brandt was happier with her club in the second half, for the most part, but she benched Ollinger and three other starters after just 72 seconds of the third quarter when she didn't like the way they were playing.

They returned shortly later, but the message was delivered and apparently received.

"Our girls know what I expect of them effort-wise and focus-wise and they weren't doing that," Brandt explained. "So at some point you have to make your point to them.

"They kind of knew what they did wrong right when they came out and they went back out there and played a lot harder. Just trying to push some buttons."

The Saints pulled within 40-39 on a 3-pointer by McKenna Andersen with 2:10 left in the ballgame. Ollinger hit two free throws to make it 42-39, then Brittney Lancial made one foul shot to give Linn-Mar 43-39 edge with 27 seconds remaining.

Meghan Jones pulled the Saints within 43-41 with 15 seconds to go with two free throws, but

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Finley made two foul shots and Ollinger followed with two more for the final margin to give Linn-Mar a 12-4 record.

Joens led Xavier (8-9) with 12 points and Noonan finished with 11.

XAVIER (41): Bastian 0 0-0 0, Stanek 1 0-0 3, Andersen 3 0-0 9, Noonan 4 3-3 11, Dickes 0 0-1 0, Brown 2 0-0 4, Ivester 1 0-1 2, Joens 3 6-6 12.
Totals 14 9-11 41.

LINN-MAR (47): Johnson 0 0-0 0, Noggle 0 0-0 0, Akers 0 0-0 0, Frese 3 0-0 6, Lancial 1 1-2 4, Murphy 1 0-0 3, Spies 0 0-0 0, Finley 6 3-4 16, Larson 0 0-0 0, A.Ollinger 6 5-9 18. Totals 17 9-15 47.

Halftime - Linn-Mar 22, Xavier 16. 3-point goals - Xavier 4 (Andersen 3, Stanek 1), Linn-Mar 4 (Lancial 1, Finley 1, Murphy 1, Ollinger 1).