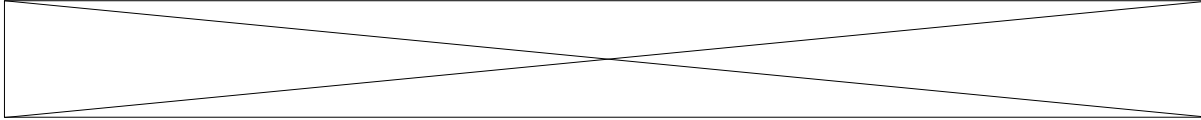


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Maurice Wingate
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On Saturday, the freshman CHSAA championship game at Holy Cross High School in Flushing, NY had all the fervor of a varsity game as the Rice Raiders were up against the Xaverian Clippers.



Jermaine Sanders scores a game high 33pts.

The only difference was that star players like [Kemba Walker](#) and [Chris Fouch](#) were in the stands rooting their underclassmen on.

In what may be a premonition of things to come on the varsity level, the Raiders would come from behind to defeat the Clippers 73 - 67 and a new force to be reckoned with would seem to be emerging.

Big man **Mohammed Abass** would get Xaverian off to a 4 - 0 start but Rice would counter as **DeVaughn Reid** would knot it up quickly.

Jermaine Sanders would take 4 unsuccessful attempts at the basket before getting hot but when he did he showed signs of potential dominance as he snaked his way to multiple hoops.

Xaverian point guard **Vincent Dacunto** would hold the ball a bit too much but did a good job managing the offense and captured a steal off a lazy pass by Sanders which resulted in an outlet and score by **Greg Civietti**.

The quarter would end with a basket at the buzzer by **Richard Council, Jr.** and put Rice up by eight.

In the second quarter, Xaverian **Coach Chris Alesi** put in a completely different unit to make a point but switched back to his starters after a quick minute. The strategy worked as Kevin Alesi would then score and the Clippers would become more aggressive cutting the Raider lead to 5

The Rice offense spread the floor as Sanders scored 5 of the Raiders 10 points. **Jameek Jones** would score a deuce followed by a trey and put Rice up by 9 with 2:19 left in the 1st half.

The 6'3" and burly Sanders would score again on inside as Reid handled the point. Xaverian's go-to-guy, **Travis Gill** was quiet offensively but did lead a charge with two good assists to pull Xaverian within 2 with 3:08 left in the half.

Dacunto would feed Abass on the inside pulling the Clippers to within one and with 50 second left in the half, **Elvin Soto** would give Xaverian the lead which was then punctuated by **Immanuel Thomas** off a steal and a lay-up. The Frosh phenom, Jermaine Sanders would not let Rice go out like that, tying the score at 25 at the buzzer off a three-ball.

The Clippers would strike first in the second half and Thomas would nail back-to-back three-pointers and put Xaverian up by seven early in the third.

Sanders would end the Raider cold spell, scoring underneath but the lanky Thomas was bothersome on offense and Rice couldn't put a dent in the lead.. Dacunto would stretch the Rice lead to 11 off back-to-back pushes to the hole.

Sanders would be Rice's primary offensive weapon as the Clippers kept the intensity up.

As Rice tried to push the issue, they committed offensive fouls and had to scramble on defense.

DeVaughn Reid would provide firepower for Rice but Elvin Soto baskets would somewhat hold off the Raider charge but soon the lead was down to 6. Sanders would nail two free throws followed by Reid scoring off an inbound steal. Immanuel Thomas hit an important basket to put the score at 45 - 39 ending the 3rd. The coast to coast by Thomas put a temporary damper on the Raiders surge for the moment.

With Xaverian playing a traditional 2-3 zone Sanders would score much of his points off the line because of overreaching by Xaverian.

Rice was inching closer as Sanders and Reid attacked the zone. Rice pulled to within 4 until Thomas nailed yet another three from the top of the key followed by a three from the right side pushing the Clipper lead back to 10 and forcing a Rice timeout with 5:48 left in the game.

Rice came out the timeout initiating their patented full court pressure along with frontal attacks on the offensive end. Back to back buckets by Sanders would tie the game at 53 with 4:20 left in the game and stun the Clippers. A subsequent technical by Xaverian gave Rice the lead at the line.

Down by 3, the Clippers would seemingly self-destruct. An Alesi foul and a Sanders rebound and put back would push the Rice lead to 8 until Alesi would hit a 3 from the corner.

The Clippers did manage to regroup but with a minute left in the game and down by five catching up would be a daunting task.

Kevin Alesi would nail a three and give a quick foul with 27 seconds and down by 5. Alesi would hit another three ball and it was suddenly 69-67 with 19.7 seconds left.

Jermaine Sanders would go to the line off a quick Xaverian foul and hit two and the Clippers. In the end the Clippers would lose by six..

Jermaine Sanders had a game high 33 points while Immanuel Thomas was high scorer for Xaverian with 23 points.

Coach Charles Reid attributed the win to not being rattled in the fourth quarter. A habit that he said often occurred. Coach Reid would go on to say, "My big three stepped up for me Jermaine Sanders, my son DeVaughn and Jahmeek Jones"



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Immanuel Thomas