

Suber shoots Rice over Xaverian in CHSAA 'AA' freshman title game

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Xaverian coach Chris Alesi thought his team was in good shape, ready to take a six-point lead into the fourth quarter of the CHSAA Class AA freshmen intersectional championship game. But then Da'Shawn Suber launched a 45-foot shot at the buzzer that found nothing but yet.

The crowd at Holy Cross roared in disbelief at the heave from beyond halfcourt. It was just three points, but it meant so much more to both teams.

"That was a big shot," Rice coach Charles Reid said. "It looked like it was his birthday or something. That was a great shot and it definitely gave us momentum going into the fourth quarter."

The Raiders rode that momentum the rest of the way to claim a 72-60 victory over Xaverian on Sunday.

"We were pretty confident going into the fourth quarter with a six-point lead and then it seemed like the world stopped and Da'Shawn Suber hit a (45)-footer," Alesi said. "We said to ourselves going into the fourth we weren't going to let it break our backs, but unfortunately it did."

Led by Suber (20 points), Jeremy Gregg, who scored a game-high 28 points, and Melvin Johnson (12 points), Rice closed out the game on a 20-4 run, rallying from an 11-point, third-quarter deficit to claim the title.

"I saw 1.1 seconds so I just threw it up and it went in," Suber said. "That boosted us more. Jeremy Gregg and Melvin Johnson stepped up big because I wasn't hitting (shots). They were carrying it until I got my composure back."

Reid calls Suber, Gregg and Johnson his "power three, the best three guards in the league." But first the trio had to get on the same page, which wasn't the case at the beginning of the season.

"We were bumping heads with each other because everybody was for themselves," Suber said. "But Coach Reid sat the three of us down and told us we all have to play together to win a championship."

Xaverian has one of the top freshman guards in the city as well in sharpshooter Brian Bernardi, who had 14 points at the half as the Clippers closed the second quarter on an 18-3 run and had a 38-27 advantage at the break.

Bernardi finished with 25 points, knocking down four 3-pointers. And even though the guard had 11 points in the second half, Bernardi had to earn every one of them because Rice picked up the intensity defensively.

"In the first half, my teammates took bad shots, we were arguing and weren't playing together," Gregg said. "In the second half, we got it together and started playing how Rice Raiders play."

Added Reid: "The 2-2-1 (press) was big for us doing down the stretch. It really rattled them and they didn't get down and run their offense like they wanted to, like they did in the first half. They ran their offense to perfection in the first half."

Alesi was tossed with 16.5 seconds left in the fourth after being hit with his second technical foul. But, by then, the damage was already done.

"These kids are the hardest workers in the school, in terms of the time they put in," Alesi said. "To come up short, it certainly hurts but we had a great season and I'm very proud of that."