

Saints pinch Cougars for trip to Dome

Written by Jim Ecker

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There were no fancy speeches in the Xavier locker room at halftime Friday, no fire-and-brimstone demonstrations and certainly no finger-pointing.

"All we said was, 'Do your job,'" Coach Duane Schulte maintained after the game had a happy ending for his club.

The Saints absorbed Kennedy's best shot in the first half and came out swinging in the third quarter in the quarterfinals of the Class 4A playoffs Friday before a standing-room-only crowd on a crisp, breezy night at Saints Field.

Xavier exploded for 21 points in the third period and blanked the Cougars, 21-0, to earn a trip to the Class 4A semifinals next week.

The Saints (11-1) will meet Bettendorf (10-2) next Friday afternoon at 4:06 in the UNI-Dome in Cedar Falls. West Des Moines Valley (10-2) will face Dowling (12-0) in the other semifinal at 7:06 p.m.

The Class 4A championship game will be played on Friday night, Nov. 22.

Kennedy slapped the Saints around in the first half and looked like a team on a mission. The

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Cougars took the opening kickoff and kept the ball for 7 minutes, 52 seconds on a 68-yard drive that got all the way to the Xavier 4-yard line, but quarterback Derek Jacobus slipped and fell on a key third-down play and Kennedy missed a field goal.

The Cougars wanted to strike first against their opponent's formidable defense, but their best effort went awry. Kennedy dominated the time of possession in the first half, 16:08 to 7:52, and collected more than twice as many yards, 130-61, but it was a scoreless game at intermission.

"We played well the first half," Kennedy Coach Tim Lewis said. "Unfortunately you have to play two halves."

Xavier Coach Duane Schulte had a simple explanation for his team's problems in the first half.

"They're a good team," he said. "The thing that was happening, they (the Cougars) were playing well. It's not easy to move the ball against a good football team. They're a good team."



The Saints knew they got outplayed in the first half, but remained confident. "We just knew we had to come out and do our job," quarterback Quinton Scholer said. "I just think we got things together and did our job the second half."

It happened quickly.

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Xavier got the ball to begin the second half and began clicking. Brendan Miller scooted for 13 yards. Scholer ran for 11, then Scholer hit Matt Nelson with a 16-yard pass to the 22. Miller took it from there, making a nice cut in open space and running 22 yards for a touchdown.

That broke the ice.

After moving the ball in the first half, the Cougars ran into a stone wall in the second half and never got untracked. The hammer came with five minutes left in the third quarter and effectively sealed the ballgame.

Jacobus dropped back to pass from his own 26-yard line, but Xavier defensive end Hunter Baldus broke through and gave chase. He caught Jacobus, spun him around and stripped the ball, which rolled toward the goal line with both players in hot pursuit.

Nelson ended up recovering the pigskin for Xavier on the 4-yard line and the Cougars were in serious trouble. Wes Gardner scored on the first play for the Saints and Ryan Persick's PAT made it 14-0 with 4:58 left in the third period.

That was bad enough for Kennedy, but then Gardner poured salt on the wound when he scored on a 78-yard punt return with 29 seconds left in the third quarter to make it 21-0 with Persick's PAT. Nelson threw the final block and Gardner flew into the end zone.

"Just great blocking by all those guys setting up a wall," said Gardner.

The Saints displayed all three facets of their game in the third quarter. Their offense set up the first touchdown, their defense set up the second touchdown and their special teams scored the third touchdown.

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Arctostaphylos 10, *Primula* 9, *Claytonia* 6-10, *Diakro* 9, *Samolus* 14.