

Xavier fans deserve share of victory

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 14 October 2012 20:30 - Last Updated Sunday, 14 October 2012 20:41



The Xavier Saints won a big football game against the Cedar Falls Tigers in the UNI-Dome Friday night.

So did their loyal fans.

It's hard to know exactly, but it looked like there were at least 1,500 fans on Xavier's side of the field Friday for the big showdown against Cedar Falls.

Whatever the exact number, it was approximately the same number of fans who were rooting for the Tigers on the other side. Cedar Falls usually has a home-crowd advantage when it plays in the UNI-Dome, but not this time.

Xavier fans made the trek up I-380 in droves and they had plenty to cheer about as the [Saints defeated the Tigers, 24-7](#), with an impressive performance.

Xavier is solid in all facets of the game -- offense, defense and special teams -- and the Saints were clearly the better team. Xavier raised its record to 8-0, while Cedar Falls suffered its first loss and fell to 7-1.

Prior to the game, there were questions about Xavier's ability to win a game outside of Cedar Rapids. This was Xavier's first trip beyond Metro borders and the Saints acted like they were playing in their own back yard.

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Thanks to their terrific fans, it seemed like they were.

By contrast, there were more Xavier fans in the UNI-Dome Friday night than there were Prairie and Washington fans -- combined -- at Kingston Stadium Thursday night for an all-Metro encounter.

True, Xavier fans didn't have to worry about any weather-related issues in the UNI-Dome. And true, Friday's game in the UNI-Dome was a showdown of undefeated clubs whereas Thursday's game at Kingston featured one playoff team (Prairie) and one team that's not going anywhere for the postseason (Washington).

It's also true that Thursday's game was televised by KCRG 9.2 and Friday's game was not, so if you wanted to see the Saints, you had to travel to Cedar Falls.

Given all that, however, you have to give Xavier fans a big round of applause for their strong showing in Cedar Falls. Now that they all know the way, they're probably all hoping for two more trips to the UNI-Dome for the semifinals and finals of the state playoffs next month.

Xavier won the Class 4A state title in 2006 with two memorable postseason victories in the UNI-Dome. Coach Duane Schulte will never let his players look beyond this Friday's home game with Linn-Mar, but fans are allowed to peek.

The Saints are competing with Iowa City West and Pleasant Valley for the No. 1 seed in the 4A playoffs from the Eastern half of the state. All three clubs are 8-0 and are favored to finish the regular season at 9-0 this Friday.

The playoff pairings and seedings will be announced late Friday night, after all the games have been played.

Xavier and Iowa City West have not met this season, even though both teams belong to the

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Mississippi Valley Conference. If they tangle in the playoffs, it would come deep into the tournament and might decide who gets to play somebody from the west for the state title.

You can bet all those loyal Saints fans would be there.