

Healthy Cougars boot Saints, 3-0

Written by Jim Ecker

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Kennedy Coach Steve Robertson sat down to list his lineup for Friday's boys soccer match against Xavier and it struck him.

"Today was the first time all season we've had our entire varsity healthy and/or here to play," he said after the match. "I just noticed it today when I was printing out the roster that I didn't gray out anybody who was missing or injured and not able to play."

Healthy and happy, the Cougars kicked Xavier, 3-0, in a Mississippi Valley Conference match at Xavier's Heco Field.

This was another of those Metro games that featured two ranked teams - Kennedy is No.6 in Class 3A and Xavier is No.4 in Class 2A despite a losing record - but this match was dominated by the visiting Cougars after a scoreless first half.

Kennedy (10-4) scored twice early in the second half to take a 2-0 lead on goals by Mark Schulz and Nate Waterhouse and Xavier (6-8) was not able to mount a response.

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"In the first half they were able to keep up, but that's why soccer is an 80-minute game," said Robertson, who is the co-head coach at Kennedy with his brother Mike Robertson. "In the second half we basically took complete control.

"The second goal completely took the fight out of them for the next 15 or 20 minutes."

Kennedy goalkeeper Nathan Althoff had a fairly easy game as the Cougars kept the Saints out of scoring range much of the day.

Sam Hanzelka scored Kennedy's third goal with less than three minutes left in the game.

"We played pretty well, I thought," said Schulz, who leads Kennedy in goals. "We came out kind of slow. We have to start coming out a little faster, because the first halves are killing us in all of our losses."

Schulz enjoyed having the entire team on the field for the first time this season.

"It's been a battle, but it's finally nice to get the whole team playing all together, because it's all about team," he said.

"We thought we should have done better at the beginning of the season, but

now we're actually starting to play well and get our hype up, I guess you can say. We're kind of getting momentum."

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Kennedy and Xavier have drawn opening-round byes in the substate tournament later this month. In fact, all six of the ranked teams from the Metro area have drawn byes with Linn-Mar, Washington, Prairie and Marion also sitting out Round 1 as a reward for strong campaigns.

The Cougars will have to win only two games to make the state tournament in Des Moines. Robertson knows it will be tough, but he's looking forward to putting a full team on the field for the rest of the season.

"It's a good time of year to get healthy and have everything come together," he said.