

Saints hit jackpot with Dowling, Regina

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 07 March 2014 12:17 -

If anyone thought the Xavier Saints would be ducking stiff competition by dropping to Class 3A football this season, guess again.

Xavier's non-district schedule includes three of the toughest Catholic schools in the state with Class 4A powerhouse Dowling Catholic, Class 1A powerhouse Iowa City Regina and Class 3A power Davenport Assumption.

The only premier Catholic school that's missing from the schedule is the University of Notre Dame.

"It's like playing Notre Dame with those three," said Xavier Coach Duane Schulte, who welcomes the new challenge.

The Iowa High School Athletic Association announced the football schedules Friday morning. All of the Mississippi Valley Conference schools - including Xavier - are switching to district football with the 2014 season and there was keen interest to see who everyone would be playing in their non-district games.

The Saints hit the jackpot.

Xavier opens the 2014 campaign Aug. 29 at Dowling Catholic, which whipped the Saints 44-13 for the Class 4A title in November and finished 14-0.

The Saints play their second game Sept. 5 at Davenport Assumption, which went 9-2 last year and reached the second round of the Class 4A playoffs. The Knights, like the Saints, are dropping from 4A to 3A for their proper enrollment bracket.

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Perhaps the most intriguing game happens Oct. 17, when Iowa City Regina comes to Saints Field for a marquee affair. Regina has won 56 straight games - a state record - and has captured four state titles in a row.

"That's going to be the East game of the year, isn't it?" Schulte remarked. "Obviously they're a huge challenge, too."

Regina is coached by Marv Cook, the former Iowa All-American and NFL all-pro tight end. Cook's son, Drew, is a 6-foot-6 quarterback who has committed to the Hawkeyes. Drew Cook will be a senior at Regina this fall.

Xavier wanted to play local Class 4A schools from the Mississippi Valley Conference, but none of them wanted to play the Saints. The Saints got on the phone and struck deals with Dowling, Assumption and Regina instead.

"Obviously it's unbelievably competitive when you have to play those three teams," said Schulte. "We wanted to play good football teams and actually play people that want to play us."

"Nobody can say that we're still not trying to play good football teams. In fact, we wanted to play 4A teams around here, but nobody would play us."

The Saints will face Dowling, Assumption and Regina again in 2015 as part of a two-year cycle with the new district schedules.

Xavier's six district games are against Solon, DeWitt Central, Maquoketa, Western Dubuque, Dubuque Wahlert and Marion. Only those games count toward making the playoffs.

"To me, it's like playing in the MVC," said Schulte, surveying his entire schedule. "All nine

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games are tough."

Kennedy, Washington, Jefferson, Linn-Mar and Prairie filled their non-district schedules with games against Class 4A teams from the Mississippi Valley Conference and Mississippi Athletic Conference.

Kennedy will play Iowa City West, Washington, North Scott and Pleasant Valley. Washington drew Jefferson, Kennedy, Iowa City West and Linn-Mar. Jefferson will meet Washington, Prairie, Davenport North and Davenport West.

Linn-Mar's non-district games are with Prairie, Pleasant Valley, Clinton and Washington. Prairie will meet Linn-Mar, Jefferson, Dubuque Senior and North Scott.

The Marion Indians will play Mount Vernon, Washington (Iowa) and Cascade in non-district games in Class 3A.

Cedar Valley Christian will face Harmony and Clarksville in non-district games in 8-Player football.

Each school was allowed to list preferred non-district games on their schedule and the IHSAA took it from there.

2014 METRO FOOTBALL SCHEDULES (Non-District Games in Capital Letters)

KENNEDY

Aug. 29 - AT IOWA CITY WEST

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Sept. 4 - WASHINGTON
Sept. 12 - AT NORTH SCOTT
Sept. 19 - PLEASANT VALLEY
Sept. 25 - at Jefferson
Oct. 2 - Linn-Mar
Oct. 10 - at Waterloo East
Oct. 17 - at Cedar Falls
Oct. 24 - Waterloo West

WASHINGTON

Aug. 29 - JEFFERSON
Sept. 4 - AT KENNEDY
Sept. 12 - IOWA CITY WEST
Sept. 19 - AT LINN-MAR
Sept. 26 - Muscatine
Oct. 3 - Ottumwa
Oct. 10 - at Prairie
Oct. 16 - Iowa City High
Oct. 24 - at Burlington

JEFFERSON

Aug. 29 - AT WASHINGTON
Sept. 5 - PRAIRIE
Sept. 12 - AT DAVENPORT NORTH
Sept. 18 - AT DAVENPORT WEST
Sept. 25 - Kennedy
Oct. 3 - at Cedar Falls
Oct. 10 - Waterloo West
Oct. 17 - Waterloo East
Oct. 24 - at Linn-Mar

LINN-MAR

Aug. 29 - AT PRAIRIE
Sept. 5 - PLEASANT VALLEY
Sept. 12 - AT CLINTON
Sept. 19 - WASHINGTON
Sept. 26 - Waterloo East

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Oct. 2 - at Kennedy
Oct. 10 - Cedar Falls
Oct. 17 - at Waterloo West
Oct. 24 - Jefferson

PRAIRIE

Aug. 29 - LINN-MAR
Sept. 5 - AT JEFFERSON
Sept. 12 - AT DUBUQUE SENIOR
Sept. 19 - NORTH SCOTT
Sept. 26 - at Burlington
Oct. 3 - at Iowa City High
Oct. 10 - Washington
Oct. 17 - at Muscatine
Oct. 24 - Ottumwa

XAVIER

Aug. 29 - AT DOWLING CATHOLIC
Sept. 5 - AT DAVENPORT ASSUMPTION
Sept. 12 - Solon
Sept. 19 - at DeWitt Central
Sept. 26 - Maquoketa
Oct. 3 - Western Dubuque
Oct. 10 - at Dubuque Wahlert
Oct. 17 - IOWA CITY REGINA
Oct. 24 - Marion

MARION

Aug. 29 - AT MOUNT VERNON
Sept. 5 - WASHINGTON (IOWA)
Sept. 12 - AT CASCADE
Sept. 19 - at Solon
Sept. 26 - DeWitt Central
Oct. 3 - at Maquoketa
Oct. 10 - Western Dubuque
Oct. 17 - Dubuque Wahlert
Oct. 24 - at Xavier

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CEDAR VALLEY CHRISTIAN

Aug. 29 - AT HARMONY

Sept. 5 - CLARKSVILLE

Sept. 12 - at Central City

Sept. 19 - Central Elkader

Sept. 26 - at Lansing Kee

Oct. 3 - Midland

Oct. 10 - at West Central

Oct. 17 - Turkey Valley

Oct. 24 - Springville