

Cook's little Regals upend Saints

Written by Jim Ecker

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Marv Cook never backed down from a challenge during his All-American career with the Iowa Hawkeyes, and when the Xavier Saints called last winter he gladly accepted their offer to play even though the Saints are a much bigger school with twice as many players.

Cook and his spirited "little" squad from Iowa City Regina showed Friday night they can compete with anybody on a football field - big, small or anywhere in between.

The Regals knocked off the Saints, 21-7, in an All-Catholic showdown that saw the No. 1 club from Class 1A take care of the No. 5 team from Class 3A in a classic David vs. Goliath confrontation at the Saints Field.

The Regals have won four state titles in a row in the small-school category, but Cook relished a chance to play on a bigger stage against a traditional state power.

"I feel so strongly about this senior class," he said following the post-game celebration. "I've been coaching these guys since the first, second and third grade in flag football. They'd come to my house. I just have a connection with them.

"We wanted to have a platform for them to go out and really play and be challenged," he said. "Xavier gave us some shots and got back in the game, and then we answered the challenge.

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That's what it's all about."

Andrew Cook - the coach's son - is a member of this senior class at Regina that has enjoyed nothing but success. The Regals carried a 56-game winning streak into the season, lost to Class 3A Solon in the opener and have won seven straight since then.

Andrew Cook is a strapping 6-foot-5, 220-pounder who looks remarkably like his father. And like his father, he'll play his college football in Iowa City.

Cook remembers the day his father said they were going to face Xavier, which reached the Class 4A state finals in 2012 and 2013 before dropping to Class 3A this year.

"I think we were all excited," said Cook, who ran for two short touchdowns and ran an offense that collected 318 yards. "I think I can speak for all of us, we all wanted a chance to play a good team. And Xavier is a good team. They gave us fits all over the field.

"But to come here and get a victory means a lot to us," he said.

The Saints tied the game, 7-7, in the fourth quarter on a 25-yard pass play from Bryce Schulte to Joe Welch and the PAT by Dallas Klein. It looked like the Saints might be ready to take control of the game, but Regina tailback Jacob Brinkman broke loose for a 71-yard touchdown on their very next play from scrimmage to give the Regals a 13-7 advantage.

The Saints had to punt with 6 1/2 minutes left in the game and Brinkman raced 39 yards into Xavier territory on his next carry. Cook found Eric Bracken for a 29-yard pass to the 1-yard line, then Cook scored on a quarterback sneak to make it 20-7 with 4:57 left to seal the deal.

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Naylor 1-2, Granger 3, Eschbacher 3, Korte 1, Meyer 2-3, Powell 1, K 1-2, Hicks 1-14, Ekland 1-18, Stark