

Young coaches boost Xavier football

Written by Jim Ecker

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Duane Schulte jokingly refers to some of his assistant football coaches at Xavier High School as the "YCA."



That stands for "Young Coaches Association" and refers to former Xavier football players who have joined the staff over the years and contributed to one of the top programs in the state.

The "YCA" has blended with the "OCA" at Xavier - the veterans in the "Old Coaches Association" - to help the Saints reach the semifinals of the Class 3A playoffs against top-ranked Pella Thursday night in the UNI-Dome.

The Young Coaches Association features Michael Freeman, Dan Halter, Eric Gilmour, Nick Garland, Ben Slezak, Ben Helms and Reggie Schulte on Duane Schulte's staff. Freeman was a senior for the Saints in 2000, Halter in 2001, Gilmour in 2007, Garland in 2009, Slezak in 2010, Helms in 2012 and Reggie Schulte in 2012.

Reggie Schulte, the head coach's son, is actually an honorary member of the "YCA" and helps whenever he can break away from his duties as a quarterback at the University of Northern Iowa.

Brad Stovie, who played at Regis High School and was a senior there in 1983, is the group coordinator and honorary member of the "YCA," along with his many other duties with the coaching staff.

Duane Schulte considers the "YCA" as a critical part of his coaching staff. The members of the "OCA" thought calling them the "YCA" was funny and it stuck.

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"All those guys played for us and they all know what Xavier football is about. That's the cool thing," said Schulte, who has been the head coach since the school opened in 1998.

"They get it," he said. "We don't have to explain a bunch of stuff to them. They've become really good X's and O's scheme coaches, in addition to the chemistry aspect of football and what the Xavier football mentality is.

"I'm just really happy and proud to have them around," he said. "They've turned into really good football coaches, not just former players that are helping us coach."

For the record, the "OCA" consists of Schulte, Jim O'Connell, Craig Jelinek, Tom Ekland, Stu Ballinger, Dave Schreck and Stovie.

The "OCA" and the "YCA" have spelled success for the Saints.