

Two of the iconic parochial programs in the state square off Friday in the Class 4A state championship football game.

Xavier meets Dowling Catholic for the first time on the gridiron at the UNI-Dome in Cedar Falls at 7:06 p.m.

Both programs are accustomed to success. Dowling has missed out on the playoffs only six times since they were instituted back in 1972 and has won three state titles. The Maroons' all-time playoff record is 55-32, a .632 winning percentage.

Xavier also has missed but six playoffs, although the school has only been in existence for 16 years. Its predecessors, Regis and LaSalle, made eight appearances apiece and accounted for three state titles. The Saints also won a state title in 2006. Throw them all together and the all-time playoff record for Cedar Rapids parochial schools is 39-21, a .650 winning percentage.

Pretty heady stuff.

As for this game, it appears to come down to one familiar word for Xavier - defense.

The Saints need to contain Dowling dual-threat quarterback Ryan Boyle, who has passed for more than 1,500 yards and run for more than 1,200.

Xavier faced a similar talent in Week 6, when Washington's Reid Snitker threw three TD passes, ran for another and handed the Saints their only loss.

Dowling has had to slug it out with only one foe so far, and the Maroons statistically dominated Waukee in a 14-9 quarterfinal playoff win. Still, it took a 90-yard punt return for a touchdown by Luke DeVenney to provide the winning points.

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It promises to be a good one.

### Friday

### Xavier (12-1) vs. Dowling (13-0)

**Site:** UNI-Dome, Cedar Falls

**Time:** 7:06 p.m.

**Radio:** KGYM (AM-1600/FM-106.3), KMRY (AM-1450/FM-93.1), WMT (AM-600)

**TV:** KCRG 9.2 (Mediacom 109, Imon 709)

**Last meeting:** First meeting

**Playoff appearances (record):** Xavier 10 (17-8), Dowling 36 (55-32)

**State championship appearances (record):** Xavier 2 (1-1), Dowling 10 (3-7)

**State titles (years):** Xavier 1 (2006), Dowling 3 (2000, 2001, 2010)

**Coaches (records):** Xavier - Duane Schulte (111-58 in 16 seasons; Overall 136-72 in 20

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seasons); Dowling - Tom Wilson (90-17 in nine seasons; Overall 183-56 in 22 seasons)

**Line:** Dowling by 2



**Xavier** - The Saints have posted eight shutouts, three in the playoffs, and have outscored their playoff opponents 131-7. Xavier's defense leads the state in fewest points allowed at 5.23 per game. The Saints are averaging 31 points per game on offense. RB Brendan Miller has rushed for 1,428 yards and 17 TDs. QB Quinton Scholer has completed 64.8 percent of his passes (94 of 145) for 1,143 yards and 15 TDs. He also has rushed for 388 yards and 6 TDs. WR Bryce Grimm has 27 receptions for 307 yards and 3 TDs. Frank Hill has 19 receptions for 261 yards. TE Matt Nelson has 12 receptions, but 4 have scored TDs. PK Ryan Persick is 51 of 52 on PAT kicks and 10 of 15 on FGs. Nic Ekland has 53 tackles. Daniel Vega also has 53 tackles, including 19 solos for losses. Nelson has 39 tackles, 12 solos for losses. The defense has forced 19 turnovers. Wes Gardner has 4 interceptions, Ben Valentine 3. Gardner has returned 3 punts for TDs. The Saints reached the Class 4A championship game last season and won the state title in 2006.



**Dowling** - The Maroons allowed 74 points in their first four games, but limited foes to 59 over their final eight. They have outscored their four playoff opponents 132-36. The Maroons are averaging 40.2 points per game with a high output of 63 in their first-round win over Sioux City West. Junior QB Ryan Boyle, who missed most of the 2012 season because of knee surgery, is a dual threat. Boyle has completed 107 of 173 passes (61.8 percent) for 1,546 yards and 19 TDs, and has only been intercepted twice. He also has rushed for a team-high 1,254 yards and 20 TDs. RB Chase Dowell has rushed for 788 yards and 8 TDs, and Nate Christian has 771 yards and 11 TDs. WR Rice Gafford has 31 receptions for 597 yards and 10 TDs. He also has returned a punt and kickoff for TDs. PK Nick McLellan is 68 of 70 on PAT kicks and 7 of 11 on FGs with a long of 37. Eric Austin has 96 tackles. John Swisher has been credited with 29 solo tackles for losses. The defense has forced 22 turnovers. Jason Bowman has two picks and both were returned for TDs. Dowling lost seven times in championship games before it broke through for its first win in 2000. The Maroons have a three-game winning streak in title games.

**Projected score** - Dowling 14, Xavier 12