

Dowling too strong for Saints, 44-13

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 22 November 2013 23:53 - Last Updated Saturday, 23 November 2013 00:28



CEDAR FALLS - Years from now, or perhaps sooner, the Xavier Saints will truly appreciate what they accomplished the past two years with a 25-3 record and two straight trips to the Class 4A championship game.

Right now, however, the emotions are a little raw, the sting a little too sharp.

Dowling quarterback Ryan Boyle picked the Saints apart Friday night with one of the most sensational performances in championship game history as the top-ranked Maroons rolled to a 44-13 victory before about 10,000 fans in the UNI-Dome.

Boyle ran for four touchdowns, passed for two touchdowns and accounted for 365 yards of total offense against the top-rated defense in the entire state.

"He's a great player. Dowling has a bunch of great players," said Xavier defensive end Matt Nelson, whose next football game will be for the Iowa Hawkeyes. "They just have athletes all over the board. Every position, they're good. You can't really match up with everybody."

The Saints (12-2) gave it their best shot early and owned a 10-7 lead after quarterback Quinton Scholer broke through Dowling's defense on an option keeper and raced 72 yards for a touchdown, escaping a tackle at the 5-yard line.

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It went downhill from there in the first half, however. Scholer missed an open receiver in the end zone, Ryan Persick missed a 32-yard field goal and offensive lineman Tim Otting left the game with a leg injury.

Meanwhile, Dowling and its fabulous quarterback did not miss a thing en route to a commanding 27-10 lead at intermission. Nobody had scored that many points against the Saints in an entire game this season, let alone a half.

"I thought the first half we missed a couple of big plays there. It might have been a different game," said Xavier Coach Duane Schulte. "The momentum seemed to turn a little bit. We missed a few opportunities, and sometimes that can change a game."

Boyle was impeccable in the first half. He went 9-for-9 in the passing game for 239 yards and an 83-yard TD strike to Zach Steenblock on a quick slant, and he carried the ball 15 times for 61 yards and three short touchdowns.

"A very good quarterback. Very athletic. Slithery," said Schulte. "He's hard to get a hold of."

Boyle tacked on another short TD on a quarterback sneak in the third quarter and found Grant Palmer for a 15-yard touchdown pass when he spun away from a Xavier defender and fired a strike into the end zone for six points.

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Boyle, a 6-foot-1 junior, displayed a rifle arm and quick feet while accounting for six touchdowns against a stingy defense in a state championship game. He couldn't remember ever having six TDs in a game before.

"Maybe in flag football," he said. "I'm so happy this team could end it this way. It's amazing. I'm at a loss for words. Everybody just made plays."

Scholer missed Nic Ekland in the end zone on a pass from the Dowling 25-yard line in the first quarter. Persick wound up booting a 45-yard field goal for a 3-0 lead, but the Saints regretted that missed opportunity.



"I think during the game I was pretty tough on myself after that TD to Ekland," Scholer remarked. "I guess I'll look back and say I could have done this, I could have done that. But in the grand scheme of things, I'm just proud of the guys."

Scholer was duly impressed with the Maroons.

"They're big and fast," he said. "We knew we had to make plays. It was hard, but I thought our boys played hard. Just credit Dowling. They're a great team, but that's not to say I'm not proud of our team and what we did."

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Dowling (14-0) finished with 422 yards of total offense and 44 points against a team that was allowing about 140 yards and 5 points per game. The Saints finished with 258 yards.

The Maroons came astonishingly close to igniting a continuous clock when they grabbed a 44-10 lead in the fourth quarter, but it never happened.

"Give credit to them. They executed when they were supposed to," said Schulte. "Their kids did their job. We didn't execute. It came back to bite us."

The Saints were naturally disappointed with the outcome, but proud of the journey this year.

"I told them at halftime: We loved them and no matter what happens in the second half, we're going to love you after the game, too," said Schulte.



"An incredibly great group of kids to work with," he said. "How do you match back-to-back state championship games against 4A teams, when you're a 3A school? I don't know if it will ever be done again in the history of Iowa football."

Nelson said he's proud of what the Saints accomplished the last two seasons.

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"Just the great memories you get playing with all these seniors and juniors and the class last year," he said, reflecting. "It's just incredible. It's something I'll never forget."

"I wouldn't trade this team for anything," said receiver Bryce Grimm, who caught three passes for 60 yards and carried the ball four times for 28 yards. "It was a great opportunity to come back here two times. We came up short, but I wouldn't trade it for anything."

"It's been amazing," Grimm said. "Not many kids or teams get to play in two state championships. It's been a blessing. We came up short twice, but I wouldn't trade this team and all the experiences I've had for anything."

Scholer completed 7 of 19 passes for 95 yards and finished with 70 yards of net rushing.

DOWLING 44, XAVIER 13

CRX	DOWL	
First downs	15	17
Rushes-yards	36-156	43-139
Passing yards	102	283
Comp-Att-Int	8-21-1	12-14-1
Fumbles-lost	2-0	1-0
Punts-avg	5-39.2	1-27.0
Penalties-yards	4-32	8-80

Xavier	10	0	0	3 - 13
Dowling	14	13	14	3 - 44

X - FG Ryan Persick 45

D - Zach Steenblock 83 pass from Ryan Boyle (Nick McLellan kick)

X - Quinton Scholer 72 run (Persick kick)

D - Boyle 3 run (McLellan kick)

D - Boyle 1 run (kick failed)

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D - Grant Palmer 15 pass from Boyle (McLellan kick)

D - FG McLellan 39

X - FG Persick 40

Individual statistics

Rushing

Xavier - Scholer 12-70, Miller 12-35, Grimm 4-28, Ball 6-17.

Dowling - Boyle 21-82, Dowell 11-25, Treinan 5-20, Christian 6-12.

Passing

Xavier - Scholer 7-19-1-95, Tursi 1-2-0-7.

Dowling - Boyle 12-14-1-283.

Receiving

Xavier - Grimm 3-60, Ekland 1-12, Nelson 1-10, Miller 1-9.

Dowling - Gafford 4-73, Steenblock 3-153, Palmer 3-28, Christian 1-18.