

Xavier football team is winner already

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Xavier Saints have made a bold statement by agreeing to play Dowling Catholic, Davenport Assumption and Iowa City Regina in football the next two years.

Despite being shunned by the Class 4A Metro schools, the Saints have put together a very attractive schedule of non-district games that sets an example for the entire state.

Xavier could have played it safe and sought games against softer Class 3A competition, but instead the Saints struck deals with three of the best teams in Iowa. Dowling and Iowa City Regina won state titles last fall and Assumption figures to be a state power at the Class 3A level, along with the Saints themselves.

Xavier and Dowling finished the 2013 season as opponents in the Class 4A state championship game in Cedar Falls, and now they'll meet in the opening game of the 2014 campaign at Dowling in a "rematch" of that contest. That's almost like Super Bowl teams meeting in the first game of the NFL season the following year.

Iowa City Regina plays at the Class 1A level - two full classes below the Saints - but the Regals are no ordinary 1A club, with 56 straight wins and four straight state crowns.

Regina Coach Marv Cook should be applauded for playing the Saints. It might put their winning streak in jeopardy, but it should be great fun at Saints Field on Oct. 17 as they battle near the end of the regular season.

Xavier was the only Metro football team that reached outside the box and found a game against somebody from the western part of the state with Dowling Catholic. And the Saints are the only

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Metro team that will be playing games against teams from other classes - 4A in Dowling's case and 1A in Regina's case.

It might have been easier for Xavier to arrange these games against fellow Catholic schools in Dowling, Assumption and Regina, but that does not diminish the credit they deserve for putting the schedule together.

Kennedy, Washington, Jefferson, Linn-Mar and Prairie all put similar non-district schedules together with games against Mississippi Valley Conference and Mississippi Athletic Conference opponents. Nobody got too creative, but maybe they had few options.

In any case, some of the best matchups during the 2014 season will involve the Xavier Saints with their attractive non-district schedule and with some of their district games, especially a district encounter against Solon on Sept. 12 and the first meeting with Marion on Oct. 24.

At one point, it looked like the Saints might have a rather dull schedule this fall as they made the move from Class 4A to Class 3A. But as it turned out, the Saints have a schedule that's filled with intriguing matchups that should be fun for the team and the fans.

The season is still more than five months away, but the Saints are winners already.