

Saints handle Charles City in playoffs

Written by Tom Fruehling

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Xavier co-captains Jay Kortemeyer and Nic Ekland have been waiting for a night like this for a long time.

“The two of them have been pals in the weight room together since the sixth grade,” Saints Coach Duane Schulte noted Wednesday night after his team dispatched Charles City, 35-6, in the opening round of the Class 3A playoffs.

“They have been preparing ever since for their high school football career.”

Xavier will host Waverly-Shell Rock in the second round Monday night.

Kortemeyer, used mostly as a blocking back last year who didn't touch the ball much, reached the coveted 1,000-yard rushing milestone for the season on his second carry Wednesday.

And Ekland, the tough-as-nails linebacker who serves as Kortemeyer's battering ram blocker, notched a daily double with a 53-yard pass reception for one touchdown and a 97-yard run from scrimmage for another.

The second score broke the Xavier school record for the longest touchdown set by Eddie Davis III with 85 yards in 2005.

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“I have to first give all glory to God,” said the mild-mannered Ekland. “And the offensive line was getting a great push off the ball and making great blocks. I just ran through a big hole.”

His third-quarter gallop made the score 35-0, but the game was actually settled in the opening quarter when Xavier completely dominated play.

“Like every game,” said Schulte, “we just told the kids to come out and execute and do their jobs. And they got it done.”

They didn’t score on their first possession but twice tackled Charles City runners behind the line of scrimmage the first time the Comets had the ball. Then with Coach Schulte’s savvy sophomore son Bryce running the offense, the Saints efficiently moved downfield with a mix of short passes and runs.

Schulte hit Joe Welch from 23 yards for the first touchdown, followed up three minutes later with the bomb to Ekland and came back right after the second quarter started with a six-yard TD pass to Noah Clasen.



For good measure, Schulte scored himself on an 11-yard scamper in the third quarter to put his team ahead 28-0.

“Bryce did a good job tonight,” said his coach. “It’s tough to be a sophomore, and it’s tough to

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be the coach's son.

"But he's taken a cue from the juniors and seniors. He's had a lot of support from the other players and coaches."

Kortemeyer, too, said the success he's enjoyed this year has been a team effort.

"All the credit goes to the offensive line," he said after his 86-yard rushing night gave him 1,065 for the season so far. "The defense gave us good field position. And Nic (Ekland), he's been my lead blocker all year."

The first Saints football player to start at both linebacker and fullback since current assistant coach Eric Gilmour did it in 2006 and 2007, Ekland is a proven warhorse.

He led the team in tackles last year and has scored five touchdowns.

"It's hard to play both positions," said Coach Schulte. "But Nic and Jay (Kortemeyer), the two of them have been working hard for a lot of years. It's been fun watching them grow up."

XAVIER 35, CHARLES CITY 6

CC XAV

First downs	16	14
Rushes-yards	35-108	32-229
Passing yards	249	135

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Comp-att-int	13-31-2	8-20-1
Fumbles-lost	2-2	0-0
Punts-avg.	3-34	4-40
Penalties-yards	4-20	7-61

Charles City	0	0	6	0	- 6
Xavier	14	7	14	0	- 35

Scoring plays

XAV – Joe Welch 22 pass from Bryce Schulte (Dallas Klein kick).

XAV – Nic Ekland 53 pass from Schulte (Klein kick).

XAV – Noah Clasen 6 pass from Schulte (Klein kick).

XAV – Schulte 11 run (Klein kick).

XAV – Ekland 97 run (Klein kick).

CC – Dallas Nehls 47 pass from Levi Blaine (Pass failed).

Individual statistics

Rushing

Charles City – Bryce Foxen 8-24.

Xavier – Jay Kortemeyer 20-86, Nic Ekland 5-111.

Passing

Charles City – Blaine 12-30-2, 226 yards; Nehls 1-1-0, 23 yards.

Xavier – Bryce Schulte 8-20-1, 135 yards.

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Receiving

Charles City – Shane Fuller 5-73.

Xavier – Ekland 3-77.