

Wilson sparkles as Saints tame Lions

Written by Jim Ecker

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You can stop Maliki Wilson for one quarter, you can stop him for two quarters and you might even stop him for three quarters, but nobody can stop Maliki Wilson and his horde of blockers for an entire game.

Linn-Mar tried Friday night and failed.

Wilson put on a dazzling display of running in the fourth quarter with touchdown runs of 71, 97 and 66 yards during a span of 4 minutes, 18 seconds as the Xavier Saints ran by the Lions, 45-17, at Linn-Mar Stadium.

Wilson tied one school record (the 97 yarder) and broke another with 26 points in the ballgame.

Wilson had rushed for only 34 yards heading into the final period and the Saints appeared to be in trouble with Linn-Mar ahead 17-14, but Wilson galloped for 233 yards in that memorable last quarter to shatter the Lions and deflate the large crowd.

Xavier scored 31 straight points in the final 8 minutes, 55 seconds of the game to win convincingly.

"My old high school coach Tom Kopatich used to say, sometimes a bomb goes off and you get on a roll," Xavier boss Duane Schulte remarked. "That's kind of what happened tonight."

Wilson caught a 7-yard touchdown pass from Bryce Schulte in the first quarter Friday, but he

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did not accomplish a great deal again until he broke loose for those three long runs in the fourth period.

Wilson's 71-yard touchdown snapped a 17-17 tie and gave Xavier a 23-17 lead with 6:52 remaining. His 97-yard burst made it 29-17 with 3:58 left and his 2-point conversion made it 31-17. Then his 66-yard touchdown on an option pitch from Bryce Schulte made it 37-17 with 2:34 remaining.

That gave him 20 points in 4 minutes, 18 seconds of elapsed time. And true to form, the Xavier offensive line, fullback and receivers opened a lot of running room for Wilson on all three scores.

"I wasn't really touched on any of them," he noted. "We like to call it getting a 'woom' off the ball. Which means, basically, do your job. Man, they did an amazing job at the end."

The Saints (2-0) jumped off to a quick 14-0 lead in the first quarter and appeared headed for more, but Wilson lost a fumble (he's human) and the tide turned in Linn-Mar's favor.



The Lions (0-2) scored 17 straight points for a 17-14 lead in the third quarter, with the go-ahead score coming on a sensational 68-yard touchdown run by Neme Siaway. Meanwhile, the Saints hurt themselves with a dropped pass that cost them one long touchdown and a holding penalty that negated a sensational 59-yard TD grab by Nolan Butkowski.

With Wilson going nowhere fast, it looked like the Saints were in trouble.

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"We WERE in trouble going into the fourth quarter," said Coach Schulte. "But we finally executed the stuff that we're supposed to execute.

"Give our kids credit. They stuck in there and got after it."

The comeback began after Butkowski intercepted a pass by Linn-Mar quarterback Reese Phillips and returned it 28 yards to the Linn-Mar 37-yard line. The Saints got down to the 7-yard line and Shane Scott kicked a 23-yard field goal to tie the game, 17-17, with 8:55 left.

The Saints forced Linn-Mar to punt and on their second play from scrimmage, Wilson burst through the right side of the line and zoomed 71 yards to make it 23-17.

The Saints forced Linn-Mar to punt again after the Lions had collected a pair of first downs, and this time Linn-Mar punter Kirby Kerr pinned them all the way back at their own 2-yard line with a sensational 49-yard boot.

Bryce Schulte gained one yard on first down, then Wilson took a simple handoff and raced 97 yards down the sideline in front of the Xavier bench to make it 29-17 with 3:58 left. His 2-point conversion made it 31-17.

On Linn-Mar's very first play from scrimmage after that, Quinn Schulte intercepted a pass for the Saints at their own 33-yard line. Wilson gained one yard on first down, then he took an option pitch from Bryce Schulte and was off to the races again for his 66-yard touchdown to make it 37-17 and end the suspense.

Bing, bang, boom.

"It was great execution by Maliki and great execution by his teammates springing him," said

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Duane Schulte. "I can't wait to look at the film and see if everybody, for once, did their job."

He suspects they did.

Wilson's 97-yard touchdown jaunt tied Nic Ekland for the longest running play in school history. Ekland broke loose for his 97-yarder against Charles City in the Class 3A playoffs in 2014.

Wilson's 26 points broke the old school mark of 24 points held by Brendan Miller, Pat Chizek, Will Martin and Wilson himself. Martin scored 24 points in three different games.

Last week, Wilson broke the single-game rushing mark with 291 yards against Iowa City Regina, giving him three major school records in two games.

"Well, records were made to be broken," he said modestly. "Somebody will have to break it after me. I just do my job.

"I don't really care if I run one yard, if I don't score at all, if I score on 80-yard touchdowns. I don't really care, as long as we win."

So far, Wilson's three school records have played instrumental roles in two straight victories.

"Those records are nice," said Duane Schulte, "and it's really fun to look back on those things when the year is over and your coaching career is over. It's a neat thing for him, but I think it's also a neat thing for the whole offensive line and the whole team. Credit goes to everybody."

Wilson has rushed for 558 yards and scored seven touchdowns in two games.

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"He's just a really explosive back," said Max Johnson, who is the right tackle on Xavier's offensive line. "Linn-Mar is a great opponent and he's just able to do what he does."

"Linn-Mar did a great job all night stopping us. We just were able to break a couple at the end."

Xavier finished with 463 yards of total offense and committed only one turnover. By contrast, Linn-Mar finished with 339 yards of total offense and committed five costly turnovers.

Bryce Schulte, Quinn Schulte and Butkowski had the interceptions for the Saints, while John Rocca and Lucas Miller recovered fumbles.

Bryce Schulte looked sharp throwing the ball for the Saints. He finished 13 of 20 for 149 yards, with one touchdown pass and no interceptions. He could have finished with 285 yards and three TDs with a little luck on his accurate bombs, but the Saints managed to overcome their mistakes.

Quinn Schulte caught five passes from his older brother for 58 yards, including a beauty that set up the tying field goal. Butkowski made three fine grabs for 73 yards.

Siaway carried the ball 18 times for 165 yards for Linn-Mar and enjoyed runs of 20, 20, 26 and 68 yards. Phillips threw some nice passes, but finished 7 of 23 for 166 yards with three interceptions.

Xavier, which is ranked No. 1 in Class 3A by the Associated Press, visits Benton Community in the district opener next Friday. Linn-Mar visits Jefferson.

XAVIER 45, LINN-MAR 17

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CRX LM

First Downs	13	14
Rushing	34-314	35-173
Passing Yards	149	166
Comp-Att-Int	13-20-0	7-23-3
Punts	5-33.6	5-37.4
Penalties	6-49	5-50
Fumbles/Lost	3/1	2/2

Xavier 14 0 0 31 - 45

Linn-Mar 0 10 7 0 - 17

Scoring Plays

X - Maliki Wilson 7 pass from Bryce Schulte (Shane Scott kick)

X - Erik Rodriguez 1 run (Scott kick)

LM - Austin Cochrane 22 FG

LM - Brennan McGaffe 3 run (Cochrane kick)

LM - Neme Siaway 68 run (Cochrane kick)

X - Scott 23 FG

X - Wilson 71 run (kick failed)

X - Wilson 97 run (Wilson conversion run)

X - Wilson 66 run (Scott kick)

X - Brian Lang 17 run (Scott kick)

Individual Statistics

Rushing

Xavier: Wilson 17-267, Lang 3-21, B.Schulte 9-17, Rodriguez 5-9.

Linn-Mar: Siaway 18-165, Phillips 6-7, Cevan Walton 1-2, McGaffe 10-minus 1.

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Passing

Xavier: B.Schulte 13-20-0, 149.

Linn-Mar: Phillips 7-23-3, 166.

Receiving

Xavier: Q.Schulte 5-58, Butkowski 3-73, Wilson 3-2, Rodriguez 2-17.

Linn-Mar: Gassmann 3-47, Pistulka 1-67, Hilsenbeck 1-34, Kerr 1-10, Siaway 1-8.

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