

No.1 Saints blank Cougars again, 24-0

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 27 September 2013 23:14 -

Maybe they should change the name of that stretch of 42nd Street that runs between Xavier and Kennedy on the northeast side of town, because it tilts heavily to Xavier's end of the block these days.

During the high school football season, they could call it "The Avenue of the Saints" because all of signs point in Xavier's direction.

The stingy top-ranked Saints blanked Kennedy for the third straight year Friday night, 24-0, for their sixth straight regular-season victory over the Cougars since 2008.

Xavier (5-0) held Kennedy (3-2) to just 76 yards of total offense. The Cougars punted the ball 10 times out of 11 possessions, collected only four first downs and crossed midfield only once.

Nonetheless, the Saints were not satisfied with another defensive masterpiece.

"Not yet," said defensive tackle Daniel Vega. "A big 'zero' would have been nice, but that's hard to do against a great Kennedy team that tries to smash it down your throat every time."

Vega did not mean a big "zero" on the scoreboard, because they got that. He meant a "zero" in terms of net yards, and one day they might get there.

Xavier features a strong defensive line, outstanding linebackers and talented defensive backs who stick to receivers like glue. Kennedy tried to loosen things up with a few long passes, but the Saints had an answer each time.

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"That's one of the best defenses we've seen in awhile," said Kennedy Coach Tim Lewis. "Tough defense."

Xavier was not an offensive juggernaut with 281 yards and 15 first downs, but the Saints did enough to keep the Cougars at bay. Tailback Brendan Miller carried the ball 27 times for 150 yards and quarterback Quinton Scholer hit 8 of 12 passes for 92 yards.

Miller scored on a 24-yard run in the fourth quarter to make it 16-0 and break it open. Scholer found 6-foot-8 tight end Matt Nelson for a 29-yard touchdown pass in the first quarter, and Scholer finished the scoring with a 2-yard keeper in the fourth period.

Ryan Persick kicked a 29-yard field goal for the Saints and made all three of his PATs.

Kennedy got the break it needed in the third quarter when Scholer fumbled and Killian Magee returned the ball 19 yards to the Xavier 46-yard line. A pass interference call on Xavier defensive back Miles Sullivan moved the ball to the 31.

The score was only 10-0 at the time, so a touchdown or field goal would have been huge for the Cougars.

Kennedy quarterback Derek Jacobus scrambled for a first down on 4th-and-7, but he landed a yard short after trying to vaulting into the Xavier defense. It was Kennedy's only possession on the enemy side of the 50-yard line all night.

The Saints enjoyed superior field position the entire game and maintained it with strong performances by their special teams, including long punt returns by Wesley Gardner and Bryce Grimm.

Nelson broke free on his 29-yard touchdown catch in the first quarter. For some reason, the Cougars lost track of the 6-foot-8 future Hawkeye and left him all alone for the reception.

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"It was just a great pass by Quinton," said Nelson. "I just ran a route and he got me the ball. So hats off to him and the offensive line on that one."

The Saints made it 10-0 with 8:47 left in the second quarter on the 29-yard field goal by Persick.

Kennedy had the ball six times in the first half and punted each time. The Cougars began those six possessions at their own 20, 20, 11, 21, 20 and 11 and went nowhere. Meanwhile, Xavier began two of its first-half drives on the Kennedy side of the 50-yard line and had two others that began near mid-field.

It's a credit to Kennedy's defense that it was still a 10-0 ballgame in the fourth quarter.

"Overall I'm pleased with the fight," said Lewis. "That's what we talked about all week long: Fight, fight, fight. Don't back down, just keep fighting. I think we did that."

"I don't think the score indicates the game," he said. "There's no question that they have a great defense and we struggled moving the ball. But it was 10-zero with 9 minutes left."

Jacobus, under pressure, hit only 2 of 13 passes for 19 yards for Kennedy. The Cougars tried a few long balls to loosen things up, to no avail.

Miles Moa gained 41 yards on 17 carries to account for more than half of Kennedy's output.

The Saints keep saying they can get even better on defense, which is frightening for the remaining teams on their schedule. They have allowed only seven points all season, and their defensive yield of 92 yards entering Friday's contest is now even lower at 88.8 yards per game.

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"We definitely got better," said linebacker Logan Clarahan.

"We can still get even better," said Nelson, a star defensive end. "We always have a lot of stuff to work on."

"We're trying to get better every week," said Vega. "I don't think we're at our full potential yet. Hopefully we'll get there."

Through it all, Xavier Coach Duane Schulte keeps a poker face and looks to the future.

"I don't know what to say," he remarked. "We're trying to do our job and get after it. We're just going to enjoy this tonight and get ready for Washington."

Xavier hosts Washington next Friday night. Kennedy meets Jefferson next Friday at Kingston Stadium.

Xavier blanked Kennedy 28-0 in 2011 and 35-0 in 2012. The latest shutout makes the composite score 87-0 for the last three games.

XAVIER 24, KENNEDY 0

CRX	CRK	
First downs	15	4
Rushes-yards	42-189	28-57
Passing yards	92	19
Comp-Att-Int	8-12-0	2-13-0
Fumbles-lost	2-2	0-0
Punts-avg.	4-38.3	10-36.6
Penalties-yards	8-75	7-61

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Xavier 7 3 0 14 - 24

Kennedy 0 0 0 0 - 0

X - Matt Nelson 29 pass from Quinton Scholer (Ryan Persick kick)

X - FG Persick 29

X - Brendan Miller 24 run (Persick kick)

X - Scholer 2 run (Persick kick)

Individual Statistics

Rushing

Xavier - Miller 27-150, Scholer 10-42, Kortemeyer 3-3, Team 2-minus 6.

Kennedy - Moa 17-41, Jacobus 4-12, Wedo 4-3, Hall 3-1.

Passing

Xavier - Scholer 8-12-0-92.

Kennedy - Jacobus 2-13-0-19.

Receiving

Xavier - Hill 4-45, Nelson 1-29, Miller 1-11, Grimm 1-7, Kortemeyer 1-2.

Kennedy - Hall 1-8, Heitland 1-7.