

No.1 Saints stuff Prairie, 23-0

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 13 September 2013 23:09 -

The Xavier Saints like to keep things simple on defense.

Simply outstanding. Simply impressive. And simply suffocating.

The top-ranked Saints held Prairie to 92 yards of total offense Friday night and squashed the Hawks, 23-0, in a Mississippi Valley Conference game at Xavier.

The Saints needed a top-notch effort from their defense, because their offense sputtered in the first half and they led only 2-0 at intermission.

Xavier Coach Duane Schulte is usually not a great orator, but he passed along a simple and effective message to his guys during the break.

"We told them at halftime: If they don't score we're going to win," he said. "That was kind of our philosophy."

That's pretty much the philosophy every week.

"Oh, man," said Xavier quarterback Quinton Scholer, who played on the defensive side of the ball last year when the Saints went 13-1. "I don't want to boast about them, but they're pretty good. They've got some good guys out there. We can really depend on the defense."

Prairie quarterback Trey Beckman, pestered all game, misfired on his first seven passes and finished 5 for 15 for 47 yards and a sore left wrist, thanks to an errant Xavier helmet.

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"There's a reason they're No.1," said Beckman. "It all starts up front with their defense. They tricked me a lot. They took us out of rhythm. It took us a long time to get going."

Prairie (1-2, 0-1) drove from its own 11-yard line to the Xavier 30-yard line in the fourth quarter for its best march of the night, but it was too little and way too late against the Saints.

"They're very good. They were very good last year," said Prairie Coach Mike Morrissey. "You know what you're getting from them a lot of times as far as how they line up and different things they do, but really sometimes it doesn't matter."

"Physically up front, they just took over the game," he said.

The Saints (3-0, 1-0) held Dubuque Hempstead to 137 yards in a 35-7 victory in Week 1, held Jefferson to 103 yards in a 44-0 conquest in Week 2 and limited Prairie to 92 yards in the 23-0 shutout in Week 3.

That means the Saints are allowing an average of 111 yards and 2.3 points per game. It's hard to lose with defensive performances like that.

Schulte was surprised to learn his club had limited Prairie to 92 yards. Surprised and delighted.

"They're an explosive team," he said. "To keep them under 100 is a big, big credit to our defense."

The Saints needed their defense to pitch a shutout, because the Xavier offense did not produce any points of its own in the first half. Xavier owned a 2-0 lead at intermission thanks to a safety, when Prairie punter JoJo Simpson went to his knee in the end zone to field a low snap from center.

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Penalties and turnovers plagued the Saints in the first half. They have a high-powered offense, but they kept stalling and making mistakes. Prairie showed in the first half it has a good defense, too, but the Saints were their own worst enemy.

"Just one of those nights," said Schulte. "One of those weird nights."

Xavier scored three touchdowns in the second half to make things comfortable for their fans on a crisp fall-like evening, but it was dicey for the top-ranked team in the state during the first 24 minutes.

"I just don't think we found any rhythm," said Scholer. "We kind of found some rhythm in the second half, but nothing up to our standards. I think we really need to work on just finding a rhythm."

"It was a very humbling experience," he said. "I think we have a lot to learn."

Scholer finished 8 of 13 for 106 yards, with the highlight a pretty 30-yard touchdown pass to Bryce Grimm in the third quarter for the first TD of the night.

Tailback Brendan Miller got untracked in the second half and scored a pair of touchdowns on short runs. He carried the ball 21 times for 112 yards in the game.

Xavier finished with 324 yards of total offense, which is decent but not great.

"I thought defensively we played well enough to win," said Morrissey. "We gave our offense chances all over the place. Obviously we just couldn't get things clicking."

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Prairie began the game with a successful on-side kick and moved speedy wide receiver Jesse Vizzini to quarterback in wildcat formations, but it was a futile night for the visitors.

Beckman thinks Xavier's defense is better this year than it was in 2012, when it was pretty darned good.

"I truly believe they're the best around here," he said. "They showed that tonight. To shut out a team like us, that's pretty good."

Both clubs were plagued by penalties. The Saints were flagged 12 times for 100 yards, and the Hawks got nabbed 10 times for 82 yards. Xavier also committed three turnovers, contributing to its problems on offense.

XAVIER 23, PRAIRIE 0

CRP	CRX	
First downs	8	17
Rushes-yards	34-45	40-218
Passing yards	47	106
Comp-Att-Int	5-17-0	8-13-1
Fumbles-lost	3-1	3-2
Punts-avg.	5-37.4	3-32.7
Penalties-yards	10-82	12-100

Prairie 0 0 0 0 - 0
Xavier 0 2 14 7 - 23

Scoring plays

X - Safety

X - Bryce Grimm 30 pass from Quinton Scholer (Ryan Persick kick)

X - Brendan Miller 2 run (Persick kick)

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X - Miller 1 run (Persick kick)

Individual Statistics

Rushing

Prairie - Christensen 17-54, Simpson 1-4, Beckman 7-1, Vizzini 3-1, Pinter 2-0, Team 1-minus 7, Kuchemann 3-minus 8.

Xavier - Miller 21-112, Scholer 11-53, Kortemeyer 6-46, Gardner 2-7.

Passing

Prairie - Beckman 5-15-0-47, Kuchemann 0-1-0-0, Vizzini 0-1-0-0.

Xavier - Scholer 8-13-1-106.

Receiving

Prairie - Vizzini 4-32, Dellamuth 1-7.

Xavier - O'Connell 4-34, Grimm 3-54, Gardner 1-18, Nelson 1-0.