

Saints stroll in playoff opener, 45-0

Written by Tom Fruehling

Thursday, 31 October 2013 00:00 -

Xavier kicker Ryan Persick shanked his first punt out of bounds for a two-yard net gain.

Other than that, Saints Coach Duane Schulte was asked Wednesday night after a home field 45-0 shellacking of Clinton, was there anything his team did wrong?

“Well,” the laconic veteran said after a pause, “we did fumble once but we jumped right on it.”

In a Class 4A first-round playoff game that wasn't as close as the score might indicate, sixth-ranked Xavier scored the first six times it had the ball and led 42-0 at halftime.

The Saints (9-1) will host Iowa City High (8-2) in the second round of the playoffs Monday night.

With all the starters and many of the subs rested by halftime, the Saints were stopped on their first possession of the second half. Persick pooched his poor punt, but by that time he'd already punched the ball out of the end zone on seven straight kickoffs. And he kicked all six extra points.

“We came out ready to go,” said big 245-pound defensive lineman Daniel Vega, who led a stifling defensive effort with six solo tackles, three of them for a loss. “Everybody on offense and defense stepped it up, and we all just did our job.”

The River Kings (4-6) simply could not stop the Xavier juggernaut. And they could do little on offense, either, gaining a net total of 17 yards rushing.

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Persick made up for his paltry punt by drilling a booming 31-yard field goal in the fourth quarter.

Vega said the focused Saints were bothered neither by the pressures of playoff play nor the warning by Athletic Director Mike Winker beforehand that fans would be evacuated in case of a storm.

“Nah, nothing was going to stop us,” Vega pointed out.

A perfect storm did hit, beginning with a long march up-field by the Saints and a 3-yard stroll into the end zone by quarterback Quinton Scholer just three minutes into the one-sided contest.

Leading rusher Brendan Miller scored twice, Scholer passed once to Jay Kortemeyer for a touchdown and second-string freshman quarterback Bryce Schulte (the coach's son) tossed a 9-yard TD pass to Bryce Grimm.

With nowhere to run, Clinton went to the air. But that didn't work, either, as Saints defensive back Ben Valentine picked off an errant pass and ran it back untouched from 35 yards for a touchdown.

“I just happened to be at the right place at the right,” said Valentine, who had another interception in the end zone right before halftime. “All the credit tonight goes to our line, offensively and defensively. And everyone came into the game mentally tough. We weren't going to let anything distract us.”

Valentine said it's a broken record, but again the substitute “scout” team had a lot to do with the lopsided rout.

“They're the guys that prepare us for games,” he said. “And I'm really happy so many of them got to play tonight. They work their butts off.”

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In fact, Coach Schulte pointed out, every one of the 87 players on the roster saw action, including four quarterbacks.

“They work hard every day during the week,” he said. “They earned it.”

XAVIER 45, CLINTON 0

CLN CRX

First downs	5	14
Rushes-yards	26-17	40-154
Passing yards	44	80
Comp-att-int	5-17-2	8-9-0
Fumbles-lost	2-0	1-0
Punts-avg	6-32.8	2-25
Penalties-yards	6-55	7-45

Clinton	0	0	0	0	-	0
Xavier	21	21	0	3	-	45

X – Quinton Scholer 3 run (Ryan Persick kick)
X – Brendan Miller 26 run (Persick kick)
X – Miller 1 run (Persick kick)
X – Jay Kortemeyer 7 pass from Scholer (Persick kick)
X – Ben Valentine 35 interception return (Persick kick)
X – Bryce Grimm 9 pass from Bryce Schulte (Persick kick)
X – FG Persick 31

Individual statistics

Rushing

Clinton – Alex Caldwell 15-33, Austin Peters 4-9

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Xavier— Brendan Miller 9-70, Christopher Ball 10-37, Jay Kortemeyer 3-21, Bryce Schulte 3-20, Ryan Williams 2-10.

Passing

Clinton — Eric Maddasion 5-16-44-2, Johnny Sullivan 0-1-0-0.

Xavier— Quinton Scholer 7-7-71-0, Bryce Schulte 1-1-9-0, Sam Tursi 0-1-0-0.

Receiving

Clinton — Alex Caldwell 2-27, Brady Ernst 1-15.

Xavier — Bryce Grimm 3-23, Frank Hill 2-18, Matt Nelson 2-31.