

## Saints pinch Cougars for trip to UNI-Dome

Written by Jim Ecker  
Saturday, 09 November 2013 00:05 -

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There were no fancy speeches in the Xavier locker room at halftime Friday, no fire-and-brimstone demonstrations and certainly no finger-pointing.

"All we said was, 'Do your job,'" Coach Duane Schulte maintained after the game had a happy ending for his club.

The Saints absorbed Kennedy's best shot in the first half and came out swinging in the third quarter in the quarterfinals of the Class 4A playoffs Friday before a standing-room-only crowd on a crisp, breezy night at Saints Field.

Xavier exploded for 21 points in the third period and blanked the Cougars, 21-0, to earn a trip to the Class 4A semifinals next week.

The Saints (11-1) will meet Bettendorf (10-2) next Friday afternoon at 4:06 in the UNI-Dome in Cedar Falls. West Des Moines Valley (10-2) will face Dowling (12-0) in the other semifinal at 7:06 p.m.

The Class 4A championship game will be played on Friday night, Nov. 22.

Kennedy slapped the Saints around in the first half and looked like a team on a mission. The Cougars took the opening kickoff and kept the ball for 7 minutes, 52 seconds on a 68-yard drive that got all the way to the Xavier 4-yard line, but quarterback Derek Jacobus slipped and fell on a key third-down play and Kennedy missed a field goal.

The Cougars wanted to strike first against their opponent's formidable defense, but their best effort went awry. Kennedy dominated the time of possession in the first half, 16:08 to 7:52, and

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collected more than twice as many yards, 130-61, but it was a scoreless game at intermission.

"We played well the first half," Kennedy Coach Tim Lewis said. "Unfortunately you have to play two halves."

Xavier Coach Duane Schulte had a simple explanation for his team's problems in the first half.

"They're a good team," he said. "The thing that was happening, they (the Cougars) were playing well. It's not easy to move the ball against a good football team. They're a good team."

The Saints knew they got outplayed in the first half, but remained confident. "We just knew we had to come out and do our job," quarterback Quinton Scholer said. "I just think we got things together and did our job the second half."

It happened quickly.

Xavier got the ball to begin the second half and began clicking. Brendan Miller scooted for 13 yards. Scholer ran for 11, then Scholer hit Matt Nelson with a 16-yard pass to the 22. Miller took it from there, making a nice cut in open space and running 22 yards for a touchdown.

That broke the ice.

After moving the ball in the first half, the Cougars ran into a stone wall in the second half and never got untracked. The hammer came with five minutes left in the third quarter and effectively sealed the ballgame.

Jacobus dropped back to pass from his own 26-yard line, but Xavier defensive end Hunter Baldus broke through and gave chase. He caught Jacobus, spun him around and stripped the

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ball, which rolled toward the goal line with both players in hot pursuit.

Nelson ended up recovering the pigskin for Xavier on the 4-yard line and the Cougars were in serious trouble. Wes Gardner scored on the first play for the Saints and Ryan Persick's PAT made it 14-0 with 4:58 left in the third period.

That was bad enough for Kennedy, but then Gardner poured salt on the wound when he scored on a 78-yard punt return with 29 seconds left in the third quarter to make it 21-0 with Persick's PAT. Nelson threw the final block and Gardner flew into the end zone.

"Just great blocking by all those guys setting up a wall," said Gardner.

The Saints displayed all three facets of their game in the third quarter. Their offense set up the first touchdown, their defense set up the second touchdown and their special teams scored the third touchdown.

"I think we got a little bit of a surge going," said Schulte.

Kennedy collected only 17 yards and two first downs in the second half. Kennedy tailback Miles Moa had 50 yards by halftime, but got only eight more in the second half and finished with 58, snapping his streak of six straight 100-yard outings.

The Saints collected their eighth shutout in 12 games this year and their third straight in the playoffs. Xavier has outscored its three playoff opponents, 100-0, with wins over Clinton (45-0), Iowa City High (34-0) and Kennedy (21-0).

"Everybody is doing their job and we're all ready to go," said Gardner, who helped the Saints on offense, defense and special teams.

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Xavier has compiled a flashy 24-2 record the past two years and is hungry for more. The Saints lost to Ankeny in the state finals last season, 23-17, and now they're headed back to the UNI-Dome for the semifinals.

"It's a tribute to not only the kids this year, but to the kids last year and the kids before that," said Schulte of the impressive two-year mark. "This has been a program that's been built from scratch back to 1998."

Miller carried the ball 19 times for 93 yards, according to unofficial statistics. That would give Miller 2,484 yards in his career and snap the school record of 2,483 set by Will Martin in 2005 and 2006.

Xavier defeated Bettendorf, 21-14, in the Class 4A semifinals in 2006 before clipping Southeast Polk, 21-6, for the title that year. Now they'll face Bettendorf in the semifinals again.

The Saints are looking forward to another trip to the UNI-Dome. "It feels great," said Scholer. "There's something pretty special about it."

"I think we're all pretty excited," said Gardner. "We're ready to get back to work."

"It will be fun," said Baldus. "It's always fun."

The Kennedy Cougars (8-4) were an unhappy bunch as they left the field Friday night. They knew they had their chances in the first half.

Moa, who finished the season with 1,494 yards rushing, kept hitting himself on his helmet as he fought tears after the game. Austin Holzer, a mainstay on the offensive and defensive lines, broke down and cried. Jacobus also had tears in his eyes as he left the field.

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"Nobody expected us to get this far," said Jacobus. "I'm really proud of them."

Xavier has collected four straight shutouts against the Cougars the past three years, including a pair of shutouts this season. The Saints beat Kennedy, 24-0, during the regular season.

"We didn't play bad," said Lewis. "They got momentum. We turned ball the ball over - you can't turn the ball over. You can't give them a short field at this level.

"Their defense is stifling," the coach said. "We knew it was going to be one of those deals where it was going to be a battle trying to get the ball in the end zone. We haven't scored on this team for awhile. They're tough defensively."

Kennedy reached the quarterfinals for only the sixth time in school history.

"I'm really, really proud of these seniors," Lewis said. "This has been a great group. I always challenge them to leave their mark, and without question they will put some nice hardware in our trophy case, one that's going to have their name on it for everybody who walks by forever."

XAVIER 21, KENNEDY 0

CRK	CRX	
First downs	8	12
Rushes-yards	39-99	39-167
Passing yards	48	24
Comp-Att-Int	5-14-0	3-6-0
Fumbles-lost	2-2	3-1
Punts-avg	4-34.8	4-30.0
Penalties-yards	3-30	6-31

Kennedy	0	0	0	0 - 0
Xavier	0	0	21	0 - 21

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X - Brendan Miller 22 run (Ryan Persick kick)

X - Wes Gardner 4 run (Persick kick)

X - Gardner 78 punt return (Persick kick)

### Individual statistics

#### Rushing

Kennedy - Moa 21-58, Jacobus 14-34, Blank 2-7, Hall 1-1, Team 1-minus 1.

Xavier - Miller 19-93, Scholer 8-51, Gardner 5-19, Ekland 5-18, Team 2-minus 14.

#### Passing

Kennedy - Jacobus 5-14-0-48.

Xavier - Scholer 3-6-0-24.

#### Receiving

Kennedy - Cook 2-14, Heitland 1-15, Carter 1-10, Blank 1-9.

Xavier - Nelson 1-16, Miller 1-5, Gardner 1-3.