

## **Persick gets his kicks (and tackles)**

Written by Jim Ecker

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CEDAR FALLS - Ryan Persick is not one of those kickers who ducks for cover after he boots the ball.

He's willing to sacrifice his body when the situation occurs, just like everybody else who plays football for the Xavier Saints.

Persick had a big night for the Saints Friday as they topped Bettendorf, 31-7, in the semifinals of the Class 4A playoffs.

Persick drilled a 37-yard field goal, went 4-for-4 on PATs, punted nine times for a 42.2-yard average, executed a perfect coffin-corner kick that bounced out of bounds at the 1-yard line, and belted a pair of kickoffs into the end zone for touchbacks.

As if that wasn't enough, Persick also made two tackles on special teams to prevent possible touchdowns. One of his tackles ended a 48-yard punt return and the other stopped a 39-yard kickoff return before they could do further damage.

Persick is strictly a kicker these days, but he was also a defensive back on the sophomore team two years ago and distinguished himself on defense as well.

"He's a pretty athletic kid," Xavier Coach Duane Schulte remarked. "He lifts and runs and does the same things as everybody else."

Persick had only tackle prior to Friday's game, but he had a pair of big stops in the biggest game of the year so far.

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Persick, an all-state placekicker last year, had punts that traveled 54, 48, 46, 43, 42 and 41 yards to help the Saints with field position. "Yeah, they came off my foot pretty well," he said.

Persick and the Saints played another strong game, but even the kicker was not satisfied.

"We have things to improve on," he said. "We're going to enjoy it tonight and get back to work tomorrow."

Xavier lost to Ankeny, 23-17, in the state finals last year. The Saints have used that disappointment as motivation for an entire year.

"We all have it in the back of our minds," Persick said, "but we just take it one day at a time."

The Saints will meet Dowling for the Class 4A title.

"It's going to be a lot of fun," said the kicker who also knows how to tackle the other guys.