

Schulte pays tribute to his late father

Written by Jim Ecker

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Xavier Coach Duane Schulte rarely shows any emotion on a football field. He's humble, low-key, devout in his religious beliefs, a strong family man and quick to credit others.

In many ways, he sounds like his father.

Greg Schulte died this past summer at 82. He and his wife, Jean, were married for 60 years and had nine children. "They were rock-solid together," Schulte said this week.

Greg Schulte, a farmer for many years, never went to high school. His formal schooling ended after the eighth grade, but his knowledge extended well beyond any classroom.

"I tell all my economics classes that he's the smartest man I know," Schulte said. "He's one of those guys who could fix anything, figure things out. How do you raise eight or nine kids without a high school education? I think it's just a wonderful story.

"And he always stayed behind the scenes," the coach said. "Very humble. Never boastful. But he always prayed for his family. And I know he's proud of his kids."

Greg and Jean's oldest child, Reggie, died when he was just 7 years old.

"That was really hard on them," said Duane, who was too young to remember his older brother. "I have pictures of him holding me."

In tribute to his brother, Duane and his wife, Sherry, named their oldest son Reggie, who became an all-state quarterback and led Xavier to the championship game of the Class 4A playoffs last year.

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The Saints will be back in the Class 4A finals again Friday night against Dowling. Duane Schulte's second son, Bryce, was promoted to the varsity this year as a freshman and probably will be the starting quarterback next year.

Greg Schulte is not here anymore to cheer for his son and grandsons, but Duane Schulte is thankful the family had his guiding hand for so long. Greg Schulte was diagnosed with a brain tumor when he was about 48 years old and needed surgery.

"They didn't think he was going to live," Duane Schulte said. "My mom was praying like a banshee. She thought it pulled him through." Greg and Jean Schulte had six more children after he survived the delicate surgery.

Schulte said both of his parents instilled old-fashioned traits in their children.

"That comes from both of them," he said. "There was some humility in our family growing up. Nobody got too high on the horse."

There's a certain amount of emotion in his voice when Schulte talks lovingly of his father. "Every morning, he started on his knees and every evening he finished on his knees," Schulte remarked. "That's the greatest compliment I can give him."

Xavier assistant coach Craig Jelinek has known Duane Schulte for 35 years. Jelinek was one of Schulte's coaches at LaSalle High School when Schulte played football for the Lancers in 1978 and '79, then they coached against each other when Jelinek was the head coach at Prairie.

Jelinek retired as Prairie's head coach after the 2010 season. He joined his friend's staff at Xavier last year and has greatly enjoyed the experience.

"The thing about Duane is, I guess the word is magnanimous," Jelinek remarked. "He gives

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credit to everybody else but himself. He is the most humble and the least egotistical - and extremely intellectual when it comes to offensive football - of anybody I've ever been around. His enthusiasm for a three-hour practice is second-to-none."

Schulte led Xavier to the Class 4A state title in 2006. The Saints reached the state finals last year and again this year, making three trips to the championship game in eight seasons.

Jelinek said Schulte is the genuine article, as a coach and person.

"He is not a phony. He is exactly what you see," Jelinek remarked. "It's just a family trait. Being humble, hard-working. The whole family is like that."

Schulte will never brag about what the Saints have accomplished, but he's extremely proud of the entire Xavier family.

"There's no doubt about it," Schulte said. "I don't want to harp on us being a small school when we do stuff, but that's the reality of it. So I'm very happy.

"We've had a good cycle of kids go through here and some good back-to-back classes the last eight years. We've had some players. You're a lot better coach when you have good players."