

Smooth Saints roll by Decorah

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 24 September 2016 06:32 - Last Updated Saturday, 24 September 2016 06:42



DECORAH - Smoooooth.

That's the best way to describe how the Xavier Saints played football Friday night.

Smoooooth, with a lot of extra "o's" for the offense.

The top-ranked Saints enjoyed touchdown drives of 72, 71, 87, 80 and 73 yards and collected a big heaping of revenge against the Decorah Vikings, 38-6, in a Class 3A district game in Decorah.

The Vikings upset the Saints in the Class 3A playoffs in Cedar Rapids last year, handing Xavier its only loss of the season.

"We were ready to play," said Xavier tailback Maliki Wilson, who cracked 200 yards for the third time this season. "After last year, we all hit the weight room and we've been looking forward to this for a whole year.

"None of us really like them after last year," he said.

Wilson did not mean the Saints personally disliked the Vikings. Rather, he meant they didn't like

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what the Vikings did to them a year ago.

"We learned from our mistakes and we just tried to execute," said Wilson, who rushed 26 times for 219 yards and two touchdowns, including a 76-yard burst in the second half. "I think tonight we all wanted to hit somebody. That's football, though."

Bryce Schulte hit 10 of 13 passes for 171 yards in his sharpest game of the year, with Nolan Butkowski hauling in four of those throws for 127 yards.

Shane Scott blasted a 44-yard field goal for the Saints, capping a 65-yard drive in the second half, and nailed all five of his PATs.

Not to be outdone, the Xavier defense came up with two magnificent goal-line stands after Decorah had 1st-and-goal at the 3-yard line and later 1st-and-goal at the 4, turning them away both times. The Saints finished one of those goal-line stands by blocking a field goal.



Zach Barish, Xavier's sturdy 250-pound defensive tackle, played a big role in both goal-line performances, once by tackling Decorah tailback Jake Muhlbauer for a 1-yard loss and the other time by sacking the quarterback for a 3-yard loss on fourth down at the 2.

"It's a really good job on our part," said Barish, "but we never should have allowed them to get to that point in the first place."

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The Saints clicked from the get-go Friday night.

They marched 77 yards on their first possession and scored on a 7-yard pass from Schulte to Brett Burns. They zoomed 71 yards on their next possession and made it 14-0 on an 8-yard burst by Wilson. And they marched 87 yards on their third possession and grabbed a 21-6 advantage on a 5-yard keeper by Schulte.

It was more of the same in the second half.

The Saints went 80 yards on their first possession of the third quarter and made it 28-6 when Wilson grabbed an option pitch from Schulte and galloped 76 yards to paydirt. On their next possession, Schulte connected with Butkowski for a 64-yard pass and the Saints finished their 73-yard drive with a 2-yard touchdown by Erik Rodriguez to make it 35-6.

Scott made it 38-6 with his 44-yard boot with 5:10 left in the game.

"I thought our guys came ready to play. And I think for the most part they executed pretty well," said Xavier Coach Duane Schulte.

"I've got to give credit to our kids. They did their job - an old cliché - especially against a tough Decorah team. Those guys are tough. Good, solid football players and good kids. So for us to execute like that is a credit to our kids, especially after a long bus ride up here."

The outcome left Xavier at 5-0 overall and 3-0 in the district heading into next Friday's homecoming date with Independence. Decorah fell to 2-3 overall and 1-2 in the district.

Some of the Saints helped fill sandbags on Friday as part of the community effort to battle expected flood waters in the next few days. Many of the other Saints plan to join the sandbag

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effort on Saturday.

Wilson plans to take a recruiting trip to Iowa State on Saturday and plans to join the sandbag effort on Sunday. Wilson lives about a mile from the Cedar River on the southeast side of town. He thinks his residence is out of harm's way, but wants to help others.

"I have a lot of friends and businesses down there," he said. "I've got to help."

Wilson has rushed for 960 yards and scored 12 touchdowns this season. He's now rushed for 2,233 yards in his career, lifting him within reach of the school record of 2,498 yards set by Brendan Miller in 2012 and 2013.

Muhlbauer carried the ball 15 times for 107 yards for Decorah and had two long kickoff returns.

XAVIER 38, DECORAH 6

Xavier □ □ Decorah

First Downs	20	12
Rushing	46-277	36-137
Passing yards	171	91
Att-Comp=Int	10-13-0	7-15-0
Punts	2-38.0	4-38.5
Penalties	2-25	1-10
Fumbles/Lost	1-0	2-0

Xavier □ □ □ 7 □ □ 14 □ □ 14 □ 3 - 38

Decorah □ □ 0 □ □ □ 6 □ □ 0 □ □ 0 □ - □ 6

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Scoring Plays

X - Brett Burns 7 pass from Bryce Schulte (Shane Scott kick)

X - Maliki Wilson 8 run (Scott kick)

D - Jake Muhlbauer 9 run (kick blocked)

X - B.Schulte 5 run (Scott kick)

X - Wilson 76 run (Scott kick)

X - Erik Rodriguez 2 run (Scott kick)

X - FG Scott 44

Individual Stats

Rushing

Xavier: Wilson 26-219, B.Schulte 4-32, Rodriguez 5-17, Q.Schulte 2-8, Drahozal 3-8, Junge 4-8, Team 2-minus 15.

Decorah: Muhlbauer 15-107, Numedahl 8-17, Holkesvik 2-14, Hendrickson 4-8, Knoke 2-2, Dugger 1-minus 1, Hogan 4-minus 10.

Passing

Xavier: B.Schulte 10-13-0, 171 yards.

Decorah: Hogan 7-15-0, 91 yards.

Receiving

Xavier: Q.Schulte 5-38, Butkowski 4-127, Burns 1-7.

Decorah: Barth 2-31, Holkesvik 2-6, Anderson 1-28, Shindelar 1-24, Bockman 1-2.