

Saints 1 step away from return trip to state

Written by Guy Martino

Wednesday, 23 May 2012 21:46 - Last Updated Wednesday, 23 May 2012 21:53

The DeWitt Central boys soccer team has an unorthodox strategy. Every five minutes, they sub 11 players and bring on an entirely new team. All game long.

You didn't catch the Xavier Saints paying much attention to that repeated exodus.

They were too busy scoring goals.

The Saints kept their foot on the gas pedal and defeated DeWitt Central, 5-1, Wednesday in a Class 2A substate semifinal at Heco Field.

Xavier (7-8-1) hosts Benton in the substate final Saturday at noon. Benton beat Mount Vernon, 2-0, to advance.

The intent of Central's constant substitution was to always have fresh players on the field. Xavier was just too much for either one of DeWitt's squads.

"We played them last year so we knew that they had an unorthodox way of playing," said Xavier Coach Amir Hadzic. "We don't often see teams subbing 11 guys at a time every five minutes, but I thought we handled it well."

Possession was almost entirely controlled by Xavier in the first half with the ball rarely threatening the Saints' side of the field, and the score was 2-0 at intermission. Central didn't

Saints 1 step away from return trip to state

Written by Guy Martino

Wednesday, 23 May 2012 21:46 - Last Updated Wednesday, 23 May 2012 21:53

muster any shots on goal in the first.

The Saints, on the other hand, struck a mere five minutes into the game. Kory Donithan dribbled up the left flank and crossed it to Daniel Cowden. Once he got the ball, Cowden made a nifty cut to the inside of the defender and booted it past the keeper.

Ten minutes later in the game, Issac Frisch muscled a goal home with his body pushing the score to 2-0.

"We were fortunate to score two goals early, which kind of opened the gate, and then we relaxed and played much better," Hadzic said.

The second half started with a flurry. At the 36:40 mark Xavier was awarded a free kick. Central, utilizing another unusual strategy, pulled the goalie and put 11 players on the goal line. Xavier's Colin Gunn struck the free kick very well, and it was able to squeeze through the defense into the goal.

"They have an unusual style," said Hadzic. "They put 11 guys on the goal line on all the free kicks, and that helped us because we could literally be in front of the goal and not be in offside position."

Less than a minute later, Xavier had another free kick. This time, they pulled something out of the playbook. Tom Bales faked the free kick, and while running by, received a touch pass off to the left. He sent it perfectly to the middle, where Alex Haag was waiting to put it home. The goal made it 4-0.

"It is the exact same play that we used last year in the first round of the state tournament," said Hadzic. "Last year when the players introduced it to me, I thought it wouldn't work, but it obviously does."

Saints 1 step away from return trip to state

Written by Guy Martino

Wednesday, 23 May 2012 21:46 - Last Updated Wednesday, 23 May 2012 21:53

Keeping the frantic theme of the second half, Central got on the board as Christian Hansen poked one home at the 35:18 mark.

With the score 4-1, the rest of the game dwindled away with Xavier controlling possession and striking occasional shots on goal.

And at the 3:14 mark, Xavier's Chad Gilmer shut the door on any DeWitt hope as he smashed a 15-yard bullet into the back of the net.

"I give them (Central Dewitt) credit, they played hard in a physical game right up until the end," said Hadzic. "But we take one game at a time. We want to keep a strong desire to win, and defend that state title."

XAVIER 5, DEWITT CENTRAL 1

Goals: CRX—Daniel Cowden, Issac Frisch, Colin Gunn, Alec Haag, Chad Gilmer;
DEWITT—Christian Hansen. Assists: CRX-- Kory Donithan, Chad Gilmer, Tom Bales;
DEWITT—Colby Azinger.