

Saints will scratch where it itches

Written by Jim Ecker
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The last time Reggie Schulte played a football game for the Xavier Saints, he completed 23 of 27 passes for 312 yards and two touchdowns in a 33-31 loss to Pleasant Valley in the Class 4A playoffs.

The kid can throw, but his father -- Xavier Coach Duane Schulte -- is not ready to give Reggie the keys to the kingdom and make it "Air Schulte" this year.

"I always liked what Hayden Fry used to say," Coach Schulte remarked Tuesday. "Scratch where it itches and take what the defense gives you.

"We'll do what we have to do to try and get first downs. I think that's the bottom line."

But if they have to throw -- or simply want to throw -- they've got an accurate, experienced passer and some guys who can catch the ball, led by Corbin Woods.

The Saints hated losing that playoff game to Pleasant Valley, but the aerial bombardment gave Reggie Schulte a big boost of confidence.

"It did," he said. "I think it was a confidence boost for the passing offense overall. The receivers did a great job that night. They made a lot of great catches."

And Schulte made a lot of great throws, putting the ball right on the money all night while hitting seven different receivers.

"Guys were all on the same page and it kind of got into a groove that night," he said. "Hopefully if we need to throw it, we can be successful. Whatever it takes to win."

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Coach Schulte has confidence in his QB.

"The thing about him, he's been around the game since he was a little guy, and he understands we're just trying to win games. And that's the bottom line," the coach said.

Xavier has approximately 75 players on the roster this season, including 38 seniors and a talented junior class that went undefeated as sophomores last season. Coach Schulte likes what he's seen so far in practice.

"I just like their attitude," he said following a 6:30 a.m. workout Wednesday. "They're working real hard, they've got good chemistry."

Xavier finished 5-5 last year with a demanding schedule that included games against the No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 teams in the state on consecutive weeks in the middle of the season and a battle against a different No. 2 team later in the campaign. The Saints lost all of those games -- to Iowa City High, Cedar Falls, Iowa City West and Linn-Mar -- to finish 5-4 for the regular season.

The schedule isn't quite as imposing this year and there's only one out-of-town trip during the entire regular season. The Saints won't leave the Metro area until the eighth game when they visit Cedar Falls on Oct. 12.

Overall, the schedule might be slightly softer this year.

"I guess," Reggie Schulte remarked, "but like they always say -- every game in the Mississippi Valley Conference is tough. If you get caught looking ahead, then that's when you get a trap game."

The Saints have five home games, two short trips to Kingston Stadium (to face Jefferson and Washington) and a short jaunt to Prairie on Sept. 7. They'll save a ton on gas money this

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season with eight out of nine games right here in the Metro area.

Woods caught 33 passes for 435 yards and five touchdowns last season to lead all the receivers. Tailback Carter Valentine graduated after rushing for 1,149 yards and 10 TDs, but Coach Schulte is confident the Saints will be able to run the ball with Cal Stovie, sprinter Nick Steingreaber and others.

"We've got some guys back there challenging Cal and we'll see how it goes," he said.

Craig Murtha is one of the leaders on defense with Emiliano Martinez, Trey Sampson and Woods.

Reggie Schulte said the team has simple goals this year. "Just get better every day and maybe make a deep playoff run," he said. "Right now we have to work on getting better every day."

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 24 -- Dubuque Hempstead
Aug. 30 -- at Jefferson (Kingston Stadium)
Sept. 7 -- at Prairie
Sept. 14 -- Dubuque Wahlert
Sept. 21 -- Kennedy
Sept. 27 -- at Washington (Kingston Stadium)
Oct. 5 -- Waterloo West
Oct. 12 -- at Cedar Falls (UNI-Dome)
Oct. 19 -- Linn-Mar