

Polished Saints belt Prairie, 48-14

Written by Jim Ecker
Friday, 07 September 2012 23:39 -

No high school team has ever played a perfect football game, but the Xavier Saints came pretty darn close Friday night at John Wall Field.

There were A's and A-pluses all over the place.

The seventh-ranked Saints excelled in all facets of the game and belted the Prairie Hawks, 48-14, in a Mississippi Valley Conference battle of unbeaten clubs.

You name it, and the Saints did it well.

Offense, defense, special teams. It was all Xavier, all night.

"They're a good football team. They're a VERY good football team," said Prairie Coach Mike Morrissey. "I think they're going to have a lot of success this year."

The Saints (3-0, 1-0) led 31-7 at halftime and ignited the continuous clock when they grabbed a 45-7 advantage with 2:36 left in the third quarter.

If this was a showdown of the Metro's best clubs, it could be Xavier and then a huge gap until you find anyone else.

It wasn't a perfect game for the Saints, but it was darn close.

"You can always get better, there's no question," said Xavier quarterback Reggie Schulte, who displayed pinpoint accuracy. "But I'm really proud of the guys and how hard they prepared this week and how hard we played tonight."

"I'm just proud of the guys on both sides of the ball."

Cal Stovie galloped for 223 yards and averaged 9.7 yards per carry, operating behind an offensive line that created big gaps in Prairie's defense. Stovie left the game with a knee injury after racing 55 yards on his first carry of the second half, then watched the rest of the mismatch from the sideline.

"It's just a little tweak in my knee. I'll be fine," he said.

The Xavier defense shut down Prairie's spread offense most of the night without any tricks or gimmicks. The Saints put tremendous pressure on quarterback Jace Hanna with a basic four-man rush, which let their seven other guys drop back in pass defense and keep Prairie's talented receivers under wraps.

"Norm Parker used to do that at Iowa," said Xavier Coach Duane Schulte, saluting the Hawkeyes' former defensive coordinator.

Schulte said the Saints had a strong front-4 on defense in 2006 when they won the Class 4A state title, a group that harrassed quarterbacks and helped the Saints average nearly two interceptions per game.

"I'm not saying this group is as good as that group, by any means. Don't read me wrong there," he remarked. "But generally speaking ..."

Generally speaking, they were awfully good Friday night.

Hanna, normally an accurate passer, misfired on his first five throws and had one of them intercepted by Trey Sampson. By the time Hanna finally completed a pass, the Saints already

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owned a 17-0 lead with two touchdowns and a 40-yard field goal by Ryan Persick.

Coach Schulte began mentioning some of his top performers on defense and quickly mentioned just about everybody. He began by saluting linebacker Craig Murtha, praised defensive backs Sampson and Miles Sullivan for their blanket coverage of Prairie's wide receivers, then credited defensive ends Matt Nelson and David Kirpes for their fine work. He finished by talking about the defensive tackles.

"The whole unit," he agreed.

Meanwhile, Prairie's defense had its hands full, especially in the first half when the Saints took complete control of the game.

Stovie rushed for 167 yards and two touchdowns in the first two quarters, breaking tackles and scooting at will. Meanwhile, Schulte completed 8 of 11 darts for 84 yards and two touchdowns before Prairie's band had a chance to take the field.

Xavier's offensive line of Seth Fahnle, Paul Cavin, Ben Helms, Tristen Scallon and Cole Turner created big holes for Stovie and gave Schulte all the time he needed.

"They did a great job," Reggie Schulte remarked.

"They do a great job every week," Stovie agreed.

Corbin Woods had a series of big plays for the Saints in the first half as a receiver and punt-return specialist. He caught a 20-yard touchdown pass to get Xavier started and also had big punt returns that measured 23, 37 and 24 yards to give his team terrific field position.

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Stovie had a 31-yard punt return of his own, Persick kicked two field goals and had a series of good kickoffs, the defense played well and the offense looked like a well-oiled machine. There didn't appear to be any weaknesses.

"If there were," said Morrissey, "they didn't show many.

"They're aggressive, they run well, they're obviously well-coached. They do good things on both sides. They create matchup problems."

Schulte hit Woods with a 20-yard touchdown pass and it was 7-0. Schulte then tossed a 2-yard touchdown to Nelson, an imposing tight end at 6-foot-8 and 230 pounds to make it 14-0. Persick drilled his 40-yarder and it was 17-0 with 11:38 left in the half.

Stovie broke loose for a 33-yard touchdown and it was 24-0 with 5:33 remaining in the second quarter, ruining most of the fun for the big crowd that showed up to support the Hawks (2-1, 0-1).

Prairie scored on a 14-yard pass from Hanna to Jerrod Edmonds to make it 24-7, but the Saints countered on a 1-yard run by Stovie in the final seconds of the first half to make it 31-7 at intermission.

Xavier made it 38-7 on a 1-yard touchdown pass from Schulte to Daniel Vega, then 45-7 on a 4-yard run by Brendan Miller and 48-7 on a 20-yard field goal by Persick.

Trey Beckman collected a consolation touchdown for Prairie on a 25-yard run scamper with 1:07 left in the game against Xavier's reserves. The Hawks finished with 34 yards on the ground, with most of that coming on Beckman's run.

Beckman replaced Hanna at quarterback midway through the third quarter with the game already out of hand. Hanna finished the game with an ice bag on his left ankle after completing

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13 of 21 passes for 150 yards.

Prairie faces another stiff challenge next Friday at No. 5 Iowa City West. Xavier returns home to host Dubuque Wahlert.

XAVIER 48, PRAIRIE 14

CRX CRP

First Downs	15	11
Rushing	41-277	19-34
Passing	9-14-0	13-26-1
Passing Yards	85	150
Punts	2-35.0	6-43.5
Penalties	5-45	5-33
Fumbles/Lost	0/0	1/1

Xavier 14 17 14 3 -- 48

Prairie 0 7 0 7 -- 14

Scoring Plays

CRX - Corbin Woods 20 pass from Reggie Schulte (Ryan Persick kick)

CRX - Matt Nelson 2 pass from Schulte (Persick kick)

CRX - Persick 40 FG

CRX - Cal Stovie 33 run (Persick kick)

CRP - Jerrod Edmonds 14 pass from Jace Hanna (Sam Drysdale kick)

CRX - Stovie 1 run (Persick kick)

CRX - Daniel Vega 1 pass from Schulte (Persick kick)

CRX - Brendan Miller 4 run (Persick kick)

CRX - Persick 20 FG

CRP - Trey Beckman 25 run (Drysdale kick)

Individual Statistics

Rushing

Xavier: Cal Stovie 23-223, Logan Jones 4-44, Zach Brown 2-9, Brendan Miller 3-6, Luke Hammerberg 4-2, Corbin Woods 1-0, Reggie Schulte 2-minus 4, Team 2-minus 3.

Prairie: Trey Beckman 5-26, Jarred Edmonds 1-10, Jace Hanna 9-minus 3, Tristan Beyer 1-1, JoJo Simpson 2-2, Trevor Northrup 1-0.

Passing

Xavier: Reggie Schulte 9-12-0, 85 yards; Team 0-2-0, 0 yards

Prairie: Jace Hanna 13-21-1, 150 yards; Trey Beckman 0-4-0, 0 yards; Kentrel Smith 0-1-0, 0

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yards.

Receiving

Xavier: Corbin Woods 3-47, Cal Stovie 2-21, Bryce Grimm 1-7, Logan Jones 1-7, Matt Nelson 1-2, Daniel Vega 1-1.

Prairie: Jarred Edmonds 6-60, Kentrel Smith 4-67, Demetrius Harper 2-15, Tristan Beyer 1-7.