

Nelson helps No. 4 Saints top Warriors, 35-13

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 27 September 2012 23:26 -

Matt Nelson towered over everybody else at Kingston Stadium Thursday night.

Literally and figuratively.

The 6-foot-8 junior caught two touchdown passes and excelled on defense as No. 4 Xavier escaped upset-minded Washington, 35-13, in a Mississippi Valley Conference game.

Nelson has caught only eight passes this season, but five of them have gone for touchdowns. He also has eight sacks this year as a towering defensive end, and he pestered Washington quarterback Mitch Blades all night.

Nelson played for Xavier's basketball team last season as a sophomore and appears to have a promising future in both sports.

"We've had players with his skills, but not his size. That's a great advantage," said Xavier Coach Duane Schulte. "And he's a smart kid, too. He's got the whole package in both sports, in my opinion."

Nelson caught two passes against the Warriors and both of them resulted in touchdowns. He caught a 21-yard floater from Reggie Schulte in the second quarter for a 13-0 lead and nabbed an 8-yard TD for a 20-13 lead in the third period after Washington had pulled within 14-13.

Schulte likes throwing to his 6-foot-8 target.

"It's a lot of fun," the quarterback said. "He definitely gives you a lot of room for error. He's a physical guy. Just a good all-around football player and we're happy we've got him on our side."

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As it turns out, Nelson would rather sack a quarterback than catch passes from one. "I like playing defense a lot more than I do offense. That's where I was originally," he said.

"Reggie throws a great ball. He throws it right in your hands. It's easy to catch, no matter how big you are."

Nelson saw more time on offense Thursday due to an injury to receiver Jim Moore. It didn't affect his work on defense as he was credited with at least two sacks and numerous other tackles.

Xavier raised its record to 6-0, but the Saints committed four turnovers, repeatedly jumped offsides and made other big mistakes. The Saints have enjoyed a string of smooth performances this season with a bunch of blowouts, but this wasn't one of them.

"We're not thrilled with the performance, but we're happy with the outcome," remarked Coach Schulte. "We knew Wash was going to play us tough and they didn't let us down. You have to give credit to them."

The Warriors slipped to 1-5, but they made it interesting in the third quarter after trailing 14-0 at intermission.

Xavier fumbled the kickoff to start the second half and Washington scored five plays later on a 17-yard scramble by Blades to pull within 14-6. The Warriors missed the PAT, which became a factor in the ballgame.

Washington stuffed the Saints on 4th-and-1 at Xavier's own 47-yard line with eight minutes left in the third quarter, setting up shop on Xavier's side of the field. Mitch Bredeson scored on a 4-yard to make it 14-12 with 5:30 left in the period.

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With 17 1/2 minutes left in the ballgame, Washington Coach Tony Lombardi elected to kick the PAT instead of going for a two-point conversion and a tie game. Riyadh Ajram made the PAT and it was 14-13.

"If we were going to win that game, that was not going to be our last score," said Lombardi. "With that much time left, I would not go for two."

If the Warriors had gone for the two-point conversion and failed, the Saints could have taken a 21-12 lead with a touchdown and PAT to make it a nine-point spread. Lombardi thought it was too risky at that point.

In any case, it became a moot point when the Saints scored 21 unanswered points to pull away.

Reggie Schulte began the game 1-for-5 with two interceptions, but he completed his next 10 passes and finished 11 of 15 for 210 yards and three touchdowns. He had thrown only one interception in Xavier's first five games, but threw two against the Warriors.

The Saints also lost two fumbles.

"That's not really a recipe for success," he said. "Thankfully we overcame it. Hopefully we can clean that up going forward."

"I'm proud of our guys, how we battled through and broke through at the end. It was a good grind-it-out win for us."

Schulte has thrown 21 touchdown passes this season, a school record.

Schulte connected with Nick Steingreaber on a 50-yard pass after the Warriors had pulled

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within 14-13, then hit Nelson with an 8-yard TD on the next play.

Corbin Woods hauled in a 57-yard touchdown pass from Schulte to make it 27-13 with 9:23 left in the contest. Logan Jones scored on a 4-yard run with 4:06 left to make it 34-13 and seal the victory following a 46-yard interception return by Quinton Scholer.

Brendan Miller carried the ball 27 times for 121 yards for the Saints. Ryan Persick made all five of his PATs.

Xavier held Washington to 147 yards of total offense. Bredeson carried the ball 21 times for 72 yards for the Warriors and Blades completed 8 of 20 passes for 84 yards.

The Saints intercepted three passes and also recovered a Washington fumble, giving both teams four turnovers.

Lombardi thought his team made strides in the game.

"We're a long, long way away from where I'm used to seeing this program," he said. "But, I thought we moved in the right direction quite a bit.

"I don't think Xavier was flat or anything like that. I mean, it was a spirited game from the opening kickoff. Both sides."

XAVIER 35, WASHINGTON 13

CRX	CRW	
First Downs	16	11
Rushing	42-149	32-63
Passing	11-15-2	8-20-3
Passing Yards	210	84

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Punts 2-34.5 7-39.1

Fumbles/Lost 4/2 1/1

Penalties 6-29 5-25

Xavier 7 7 7 14 - 35

Washington 0 0 13 0 - 13

CRX - Brendan Miller 6 run (Ryan Persick kick)

CRX - Matt Nelson 21 pass from Reggie Schulte (Persick kick)

CRW - Mitch Blades 17 run (kick failed)

CRW - Mitch Bredeson 4 run (Riyad Ajram kick)

CRX - Nelson 8 pass from Schulte (Persick kick)

CRX - Corbin Woods 57 pass from Schulte (Persick kick)

CRX - Logan Jones 4 run (Persick kick)

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing

Xavier: Miller 27-121, Jones 6-27, Krouse 2-5, Schulte 4-3, Team 3-minus 7

Washington: Bredeson 21-72, Blades 11-minus 9

Passing

Xavier: Schulte 11-15-2-210

Washington: Blades 8-20-3-84

Receiving

Xavier: Woods 3-104, Grimm 3-26, Nelson 2-29, Steingreaber 1-50, Gardner 1-11, Miller 1-minus 10

Washington: C.Bjornsen 4-48, Oney 3-30, Dostal 1-6

Sophs - Washington 21, Xavier 14