

## Wilson stars as Saints dump Maquoketa

Written by Clete Campbell

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MAQUOKETA – Maliki Wilson studied the tapes of NFL greats like Walter Payton and Barry Sanders. Their reads, their cuts and their moves.

Man, those moves.

"I watch a lot of film of Walter Payton. I watch the way Barry Sanders used to cut back against the field," said Wilson, Xavier's 5-foot-11, 175-pound junior running back. "My dad helps me study a lot."

Imitation is the most sincere form of flattery, and Walter and Barry would have been flattered by Wilson's deft impressions of their Hall of Fame running styles Friday night.

Xavier took full control of the Class 3A, District 4 race with the dynamic and razzle-dazzling Wilson putting on a 191-yard, four-touchdown rushing clinic in the Saints' drama-less 42-13 victory over Maquoketa at Goodenow Field.

"He is a student of the game. He has a great love of the game," Xavier coach Duane Schulte said.

Wilson cut, slashed, gashed, weaved and rolled through the Maquoketa defense for highlight reel touchdown runs covering 13, 15, 65 and 16 yards as the Saints (4-0, 3-0) blitzed to a 42-0 halftime lead and had the clock running on the overmatched Cardinals (3-2, 2-1) throughout the second half.

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"If I had to cut back, it was wide open," said Wilson, whose four rushing scores tied Xavier's school record. "The line did an amazing job."

The Saints encountered a Cardinals team that's traveled miles down the improvement highway from the one-win Maquoketa club it smashed 49-6 last fall. But still, with Wilson insisting on turning the game into a track meet and a brilliant Saints offensive line moving earth and linemen, and opening up limousine-sized holes for their star back, the Cardinals didn't have a prayer of running with Xavier in this District 4 showdown.

The Saints emphatically staked their claim to sole possession of the district lead.

"It was definitely a team effort. It helps a lot when you have a back who can make great cuts like Maliki," Xavier lineman Max Johnson said. "It makes your job really easy. You take out your man and open up a hole for him. It's a lot of fun to watch him run."

Wilson's opening score was a gorgeous 13-yard score up the middle triggered by his wowing spin through the Cardinal D-line. He followed it with a 15-yard TD blast. His third trip to the house was a symphony of sweet running. The play began with Wilson bouncing to the left sideline, where a squadron of Cardinal would-be tacklers was waiting for him.

"I saw all the red (jerseys) on the left side, so I cut back," Wilson said. "Then I saw Bryce (Schulte), our quarterback, downfield. He threw a great block and all I had to beat was one guy."

Wilson reversed course and headed right as the Xavier blocking wall switched gears and direction with him. Schulte's fullback-style block sprung Wilson, who then powered up the jets to fifth gear and amazingly spun Maquoketa defensive back Kyle Schiffler off his back at the 15-yard line.

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“The play was supposed to go to the other side,” Duane Schulte said, “but Maliki made such a nice cut, the offensive line just went with him the other way. Guys like Bryce who were running down the sideline had their heads up and did their job.”

Bryce Schulte also delivered a stellar, radar-accurate passing performance. The junior signal caller hit 8-of-11 attempts for 202 yards and touchdown passes to a wide-open Nick Stark (72 yards) and Nolan Butkowski (20 yards).

On the other side of the ball, the Cardinals found running the ball against a U.S. Steel-tough Xavier defensive line to be running uphill wearing 50-pound ankle weights. Maquoketa netted just 77 yards on 24 rushing attempts and most of those yards came against the Saints' second-team defense.

Xavier neared halftime of the regular season a perfect 4-0 and again emerged a better team than they were the week before. Still, Friday's impressive effort wasn't a flawless performance.

The Saints were flagged 14 times and gave away 93 yards on penalties, including numerous illegal motion flags.

“Whether you're a starter or not, you can't do that,” Coach Schulte said. “We've got to clean that up.”

But Xavier heads to Western Dubuque next week with a perfect and clean win-loss ledger, and still working on a perfect season.

“From where we've started, we've gotten a lot better,” Schulte said.

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X – Maliki Wilson 13 run (Dallas Klein kick)

X – Wilson 15 run (Klein kick)

X – Nick Stark 72 pass from Bryce Schulte (Klein kick)

X – Wilson 65 run (Klein kick)

X – Nolan Butkowski 20 pass from Schulte (Klein kick)

X – Wilson 16 run (Klein kick)

M – Lincoln Aunan 18 pass from Justin Snyder (kick blocked)

M – Andy Ahrens 17 pass from Aunan (Cameron Thede kick)

### **Individual statistics**

#### **Passing**

Xavier – Bryce Schulte 8-11-0, 202.

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Maquoketa – Justin Snyder 7-18-0, 99; Lincoln Aunan 1-1-0, 17.

### **Rushing**

Xavier – Maliki Wilson 12-191, Shane Scott 6-4, Jacob Miller 4-19, Gabe Smith 3-minus 1), Brian Lang 3-12, Erik Rodriguez 1-1, Team 1-minus 2.

Maquoketa – Justin Snyder 12-6, Jake Kloft 7-21, Lincoln Aunan 2-27, Andy Ahrens 1-18, Ian Shea 1-5.

### **Receiving**

Xavier – Nick Stark 2-98, Nolan Butkowski 2-27, Blake Whitten 1-37, Sean Murphy 1-25, Maliki Wilson 1-8.

Maquoketa – Aunan 4-43, Reese Ruppert 1-42, Ahrens 1-17, Kyle Schiffer 1-11, Skyler Bronson 1-3.