

Wilson sets record as Saints top Regals

Written by Jim Ecker

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All that extra eating and weightlifting paid off handsomely for Maliki Wilson and the Xavier Saints Friday night.

Wilson rambled for a school-record 293 yards and scored three long touchdowns as the Saints trimmed Iowa City Regina, 35-26, in a battle of Catholic school powers at Saints Field in the season opener.

Wilson snapped the old school mark of 271 yards rushing set by Brendan Miller against Linn-Mar in 2013 and his total was the sixth-best in Metro history. And many of Wilson's yards came in big chunks with touchdown jaunts of 68, 31 and 62 yards.

The 68-yard touchdown came on his first carry of the night and the 62-yard touchdown came on his very last attempt to secure the victory with just 49.5 seconds left and the Saints clinging to a 28-26 lead.

Wilson thanked all of his blockers for doing the dirty work up front.

"Man, if you watched the first play over and over again, nobody touched me," he said. "It felt good."

Wilson had to leave the game late in the third quarter with painful leg cramps following a 21-yard run, but he shook it off and got back on the field in the fourth quarter to inflict more damage on Regina.

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"The trainers helped me on the sideline. And then the Powerade," he said about his quick recovery.

"I didn't really want to be out. I can't let these guys down, so I decided to get in there right away. They deserved to have me on the field, and I'm going to work my hardest to be on the field."

Wilson rushed for 1,273 yards as a 160-pound junior last year. Now he's a 200-pound senior, thanks to a ton of cheeseburgers and long hours in the Xavier weight room.



Wilson carried the ball 23 times and averaged a healthy 12.2 yards per pop Friday night, running primarily behind Jack High, Jake Guckenberger, Ryan Jasper, Sam Meyers and Max Johnson, along with fullback Erik Rodriguez and the tight ends.

"We couldn't stop him," said Regina Coach Marv Cook.

The rivalry between Xavier and Regina has become an instant classic the last three years. The Saints rallied for a 38-35 victory at Regina last year after trailing 35-7 at halftime and now own a 2-1 edge in the series.

Xavier enjoyed a huge advantage in manpower Friday night, with 62 seniors and juniors on the roster compared to only 23 for Regina, but the Regals haven't won six state titles in a row by being sissies. The Regals also have 18 sophomores and freshmen on the varsity, giving them a 41-man squad in Class 1A.

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The Saints could not shake the Regals all night, despite being a Class 3A power with a lot more players.

"Our kids are just great kids," said Cook, a former Hawkeye All-American and NFL all-pro tight end. "They're tough kids, they play hard, they practice, they prepare. They're great kids, great players."

The Regals had an answer every time the Saints tried to pull away.

"We knew it was going to be what it was, because that's how they always are," said Xavier Coach Duane Schulte, saluting the Regals. "They are who they are. They were who we thought they were."

Xavier quarterback Bryce Schulte completed only four of 10 passes for 32 yards, but he scored a pair of touchdowns with a 3-yard run in the first half and a 10-yard scamper on an option keeper with 3:50 left in the game for a 28-19 lead.

Regina responded with a 3-yard touchdown by quarterback Thomas Rapp to pull within 28-26 with 1:55 left. The Regals then recovered an on-side kick, but they were clearly off-side and the referees made them kick again.

The Regals tried a pooch kick on the re-boot, but Ty Corrigan caught it cleanly and fell down to avoid a possible fumble.

The Saints took over at their own 34-yard line with 1:48 left in the game, holding that precarious 28-26 lead. Wilson gained three yards on first down and netted just one yard on second down, setting up a 3rd-and-6 from the 38.

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"We were just trying to get a first down," he said. "Right in the huddle I looked down at my O-linemen and I was like, 'Let's score.' And it all opened up."

Wilson broke into the clear but had one man to beat at the 15-yard line. Thinking quickly, he shed Michael Conlon with a stiff-arm and pranced into the end zone for the decisive touchdown.

"I watched my friend Alphonso (Soko) from Muscatine the other day against Kennedy," said Wilson. "He gave that stiff-arm and I thought, 'You know what? I'm going to try and do that tomorrow.'"

Soko attended middle school in Cedar Rapids and began his high school career at Jefferson before moving to Muscatine. Wilson's old friend tormented Kennedy on Thursday night at Kingston Stadium, then Wilson had a big night against Regina.

Regina collected 388 yards of total offense, but the Xavier defense made some big plays to keep them from scoring more points. Josh Gerke intercepted a pass in the end zone late in the first half, McClain Burger intercepted a screen pass in the fourth quarter to ignite a touchdown drive, and Nolan Butkowski made an interception in the final seconds to stop Regina's final possession.

The Saints also made a magnificent goal-line stand in the second quarter. Regina collected a first down at the 3-yard line and had three straight cracks to score from the 1-yard line, but the Saints stopped them every time. Bryce Schulte, who is also playing defense this season, broke into the backfield and tackled the Regina ballcarrier for a 2-yard loss on 4th-and-goal from the 1-yard line.

"That was a tough, tough team that we just played," said Bryce Schulte. "It was a great game to win. Thankfully it wasn't like last year's game. Regina is a great team. It was a great non-district win to get us started."

The Saints rushed for 393 yards, including 75 by Rodriguez on some hard-nosed carries.

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Xavier visits Linn-Mar next Friday night. The Lions fell 26-6 at Iowa City High in their opener

XAVIER 35, IOWA CITY REGINA 26

Regina Xavier

First Downs	15	16
Rushing Yards	35-171	48-393
Passing Yards	217	32
Passing	10-25-3	4-10-0
Punts	5-37.2	5-36.6
Penalties	3-30	8-69
Fumbles/Lost	1-0	0-0

Regina 6 6 7 7 - 26

Xavier 7 7 7 14 - 35

Scoring Plays

X - Maliki Wilson 68 run (Shane Scott kick)

R - Brady Bigley 69 run (kick failed)

X - Bryce Schulte 3 run (Scott kick)

R - Isaac Vollstedt 53 pass from Thomas Rapp (conversion run failed)

X - Wilson 31 run (Scott kick)

R - Vollstedt 47 pass from Rapp (Michael Conlon kick)

X - Schulte 10 run (Scott kick)

X - Wilson 62 run (Scott kick)

Individual Statistics

Rushing

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Regina: Vollstedt 14-84, Bigley 2-65, Simpson 2-18, Phillips 9-7, Rapp 3-4, Conlon 5-minus 7.
Xavier: Wilson 24-293, Rodriguez 9-75, B.Schulte 10-8, Gerke 2-7, Q.Schulte 1-4, Team 2-minus 6.

Passing

Regina: Rapp 10-25-3, 217.
Xavier: B.Schulte 4-10-0, 32.

Receiving

Regina: Jensen 7-120, Vollstedt 2-100, Phillips 1-minus 3.
Xavier: Q.Schulte 2-9, Burns 1-32, Wilson 1-minus 7.