

Saints suffocate Wahlert, 38-0

Written by Clete Campbell

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DUBUQUE -- It's a proven scientific football fact no defense is impregnable, but Cedar Rapids Xavier is sure challenging the theory.

Everyone's got weaknesses hidden in the cracks. It might be trouble recognizing the option read. It might be a suspect secondary or a lack of speed.

Xavier defenders will be the first to tell you they're not perfect. The Saints are indeed a human high school unit with holes.

Thing is, no one has come close to discovering any deficiencies in Xavier's gold-plated defense over the first half of the season. How do you solve a unit yielding less than a field goal of offense per week (2 points) and getting better and sharper by the game?

"Our motto at Xavier is 'Get better every day.' The coaches drill us (on that) every day," Saints all-state defensive end Matt Nelson said. "There are no plays we get to take off. We always know we've got to get better every day."

Friday night, it was Dubuque Wahlert's turn to try to expose and beat a dynamite unit that is allowing foes nothing but spare change yardage this fall. Outside of four fleeting first-quarter seconds and a 39-yard pass play, the Golden Eagles got nothing as the Class 4A No. 1-ranked Saints delivered a 38-0 power slam to their northeast Iowa Catholic cousins at Loras College's Rock Bowl.

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The Saints iced an invisible Wahlert running game to minus 7 rushing yards on 19 attempts, and Xavier (4-0, 2-0) delivered maybe its most impressive triumph yet of its flawless season. The Saints have played as close to the definition of perfect as possible over the season's first half.

"I'm glad it looks that way," Xavier coach Duane Schule said. "As coaches, we're always seeking perfection. We want these kids to seek perfection, but stay humble while you do it. Respect your opponents, respect your teammates and keep going hard.

"... Trust me, we're not as good as (people think we are)."

Coach, tell that to Wahlert (2-2, 0-1), which scored a minor victory by playing Xavier within a touchdown for one quarter. It was the Eagles' only triumph of the night.

Xavier quickly steamrolled away and out of hailing distance with a 28-point second quarter. Quinton Scholer threw three first-half touchdowns, including a 7-yard hookup with Wesley Gardner, a 46-yard strike to a wide-open Frank Hill (who didn't have a Wahlert defender within 7 yards of him) and a 13-yard connection with Joe Welch. With Xavier up 35-0 at halftime, the clock ran continuously in the second half.

"All of Xavier's (many strengths) played into (the decisive) victory," Wahlert coach Travis Zajac said.

Running back Brendan Miller added 99 yards and a 3-yard score, Bryce Grimm reached the house on a 28-yard scoring reverse and kicker Ryan Persick tacked on a 45-yard field goal for Xavier, which immediately turned the page to next week.

"We're just trying to get better week by week," Miller said. "We like to get after it."

Nelson and a furious Xavier front seven got after Wahlert quarterbacks and tailbacks all night

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long. The Saints sacked Daniel Broderick five times, none more emphatic than Nelson's 14-yard tackle for loss of Broderick.

Throw out Broderick's 39-yard first-quarter pass to Jared Walker, Wahlert gained a grand total of 7 yards on the night.

The Saints graded their performance good, but far from perfect. But what about that almost invisible opponent's scoring average?

"Sure, that's a nice stat to look at, but you got to get better every day," Nelson said.

For as good as they've looked so far, the Xavier Fighting Saints are far from perfect enough for their own liking, and that's a terrifying thought for future foes.

XAVIER 38, DUBUQUE WAHLERT 0

CRX DW

First downs	23	2
Rushes-yards	45-268	19-(-7)
Passing yards	88	45
Comp-Att-Int	6-9-1	2-10-1
Fumbles-lost	1-1	1-0
Punts-avg.	1-6	6-40.4
Penalties-yards	6-40	5-28

Xavier	7	28	3	0	- 38
Wahlert	0	0	0	0	- 0

X - Wesley Gardner 7 pass from Quinton Scholer (Ryan Persick kick)

X - Bryce Grimm 15 reverse (Persick kick)

X - Frank Hill 46 pass from Scholer (Persick kick)

X - Brendan Miller 3 run (Persick kick)

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X - Joe Welch 13 pass from Scholer (Persick kick)

X - FG Persick 45

Individual Statistics

Rushing

Xavier - Miller 13-99, Jay Kortemeyer 6-37, Dylan Eller 10-36, Adam Steffensmeier 4-27, Gardner 4-21, Grimm 1-15, Andrew Steffensmeier 4-12, Scholer 1-6, Taylor Malloy 1-5, John Hovda 1-1, Camden Stovie 1-1.

Wahlert - Colin Smith 5-20, Riley Hasken 9-(-4), Daniel Broderick 5-(-23).

Passing

Xavier - Scholer 5-7-1-81, Tursi 1-2-7.

Wahlert - Broderick 2-9-1-39, Jacob Nemmers 1-1-0-6.

Receiving

Xavier - Hill 1-46, Welch 1-13, Gardner 1-7, Sam Hiserote 1-6, Grimm 1-6, Taylor Malloy 1-5.

Wahlert - Jared Walker 1-39, Eric Lattner 1-6.