

## Steffes helps shoulder load for Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 06 November 2013 23:22 - Last Updated Thursday, 07 November 2013 00:17

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Alex Steffes has been a mainstay on the offensive line for the Cedar Rapids Kennedy football team this season, an effective blocker who has helped the Cougars earn a date in the quarterfinals of the Class 4A playoffs Friday night at Xavier.

He uses every inch and every pound of his 5-foot-10, 245-pound body to block bigger defensive linemen and open holes for the Kennedy running backs, throwing himself into the scrum play after play after play.

Imagine doing that all season with a torn labrum and dislocated shoulder.

"I've played every game and every down," Steffes said Wednesday before practice at Kingston Stadium. "It's partially dislocated on me quite a few times in a few games. The Xavier game, I think it slid out on me three or four times in the first half."

Steffes hurt his right shoulder as a sophomore in 2011, calling it a partial dislocation. He did strengthening exercises, which seemed to help for awhile.

"Toward the end of my junior year it starting slipping out a little bit," he said, so he had an MRI performed after the 2012 season. "It turned out I tore my labrum."

His doctor recommended surgery, but the high school trapshooting season was coming up and he greatly enjoys that sport as well. Surgery did not sound appealing.

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"I didn't really want to do that," he said. "I wasn't really sure what I should do. I ended up not getting the surgery and just getting this (a shoulder harness). And so far it's pretty good."

The harness helps keep his shoulder in place, but he has to be careful. He has to keep his arm low and close to his body to avoid further problems. "If I get it up high, that's when it will slide out on me," he said.

Steffes does not plan to play football in college, so he does not see any reason to undergo surgery once the season is over. "I'm pretty small to go play anywhere else, so I don't think there's really any point," he said.

Steffes has a simple explanation for enduring the pain and discomfort.

"To help my team out," he said. "We've got a state championship to win. I've been with these guys since seventh grade. We've all worked together."

Kennedy (8-3) meets Xavier (10-1) in the quarterfinals Friday at 7 p.m. at Saints Field. Steffes, who wears jersey No.67, plans to take his accustomed spot at left guard on the offensive line, trying to help the Cougars win another ballgame and advance to the semifinals.