

## A milestone anniversary

Written by Scott Unash

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Let's take a timeout from the winter sports season as we head into the new year to talk some football.

Several weeks ago I ran into Tyler Gustafson. While we were talking he asked me if I knew what we both were doing five years ago that day. I replied that I had no idea and he then told me that we were both getting ready, in our own ways, for the Class 4A state championship game of 2006.

Tyler was the center for Coach Duane Schulte's team. He recalled nearly every minute of that evening, and where he was at that point. I was getting ready to call the game for KGYM alongside John Hegerty and we were getting ready for our most important game of the year with many people tuning in to hear if the Saints could make history.

To this day, the 2006 Xavier 4A football championship remains one of the most improbable titles in state history and certainly in Metro sports history. The Saints are the only team to win the 4A title as a 3A school. The Saints are now in the 4A classification from an enrollment standpoint, but that wasn't the case in '06 when they were fighting against those 4A schools night in and night out.

Looking back at that season at the five year anniversary, so many things come back into focus. The Saints finished the regular season 9-0 and champs of the Mississippi Division. It was your typical Schulte coached team. Fundamentally sound and great on defense and senior dominated as well. Will Martin was an all-state running back behind one of the best offensive lines around, led by future UNI Panther Jay Teply. The defense was one of the Saints best, fast and sure-tackling.

And the road to the title came after one of the most amazing, if not *the* most amazing plays in Metro football history.

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It was the fourth quarter of the semifinal game against Bettendorf. The Saints and Bulldogs were tied at 14 at the UNI-Dome with Bettendorf moving for the potential game winning score inside the 5-yard line. On a running play the Bulldog runner was stripped of the ball by Josh Lorensen, the ball jumped off the turf and into the hands of David Drahozal, who ran it back for the winning touchdown in a 21-14 Xavier victory. That play to this day remains one of the most amazing, remarkable and game-changing plays of all time. I have still never seen a play quite like it, or certainly called the play-by-play for a moment like that to this day.

The Saints went on to win the title the next Friday by topping Southeast Polk, 21-6. It was almost an anti-climactic win after the play of the week prior, sort of similar to the gold medal game for the 1980 U.S. Olympic Hockey team!

There are so many great memories for everyone from that magical run during the fall of 2006. I'm glad I was reminded of it once again, and, yes, thinking back I do remember a great deal about that championship night. Just like the players.

*(Scott Unash is the sports and program director at KGYM-AM 1600. He is a six-time winner of the Iowa Broadcast News Association play-by-play Announcer of the Year Award. Scott and Mark Dukes co-host the Gym Class weekdays from 3-4 p.m. on KGYM)*