

Holy Cross defeats Jesuit on last second Field Goal

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by Bill Baumgarner

Amid all the governmental furloughs and shutdowns, the Tigers of Holy Cross and the Blue Jays of Jesuit reported to Tad Gormley Stadium Friday night, primed and poised for a hard night's work.

And toil they did – for every second of their District 9-5A opener.

After Jesuit's Michael McMahon bulled over from one yard for a touchdown that tied the score at 13 with 2:34 remaining, Holy Cross senior quarterback James Tabary guided the Tigers on a game-winning drive of 57 yards in 10 plays, completing three passes and rushing eight yards for a vital first down. The drive bogged down at the Jesuit 18-yard line with two seconds remaining. Holy Cross called timeout and Jesuit followed suit in an attempt to rattle Tigers' place-kicker Reed Gravolet. But Gravolet's attempt sailed high, long and true from 35 yards as time expired in a 16-13 victory.

The game commemorated the 50th anniversary of the 1963 state championship matchup between the same two teams won by Holy Cross 14-6 with a roster that included Barry Wilson, the Tigers proud head coach.

"My team showed phenomenal guts," said Wilson. ""We knew what we had to do and we finally put things together at the end. "

On the night, Tabary completed 21 of 34 passes for 265 yards and one touchdown but the Tigers netted just 62 yards on 29 rushing attempts. Jesuit had similar problems -- particularly in the first half -- when the ground game accounted for minus five yards on eight carries.

"Their defense just stuffed us," said Wilson.

Each team scored on its opening drive, with Jesuit marching from its 26-yard line to the Tigers' 13 where Crew Jacobs connected on a 30-yard field goal at 9:08. The key play was a 36-yard completion from quarterback Trey LaForge to Charles s Jackson of 36 yards.

Holy Cross (6-0, 1-0) countered with a field goal of 24 yards by Gravolet at the 3:02 mark after the Tigers held the ball for 19 plays, including eight pass completions by Tabary, none of more than 11 yards.

But the Tigers would utilize the short pass to set up the long one.

"The short passes definitely did that," said Tabary. "They pulled their safety up. But that was a great defense over there. Jesuit is smart and they were tough up front."

The chief target for Tabary was 6-foot-2 junior Michael Chigbu, who caught eight passes for 174 yards, including 45-yarder on the first play of the second quarter that set up another field goal by

Gravolet of 24 yards for a 6-3 lead. On the Tigers' next possession, Tabary looked long on the first snap, hitting Chigbu in stride for an 86-yard touchdown bomb and a 13-3 advantage at the 7-minute mark.

"It was a post pattern," said Chigbu. "I just kind of bobbled it when I was trying to tuck it in. We just took a chance on that one."

Holy Cross' William Nash intercepted a Blue Jay pass late in the second quarter and returned the pickoff to the Jesuit 45-yard line but the Jays denied Holy Cross any more points.

Jesuit (3-3, 0-1) rebounded in the third quarter with a rejuvenated running game behind Jackson who had gains of 16 and 29 yards on an effort that resulted in a 20-yard field goal by Jacobs with 5:22 left in the quarter, leaving Holy Cross ahead 13-6.

LaForge's pass completion of 27 yards to Malcolm Ben led to the tying score by McMahon on a drive of 74 yards. LaForge finished with 15 of 32 passing for 191 yards and Jackson had 77 yards on 11 carries after gaining just one yard on one attempt in the first half.

"Any loss hurts but this maybe a little more," said Jesuit coach Wayde Keiser. "We have a lot of kids hurt but in the Catholic League you better have your 2's (second-teamers) ready to play. I was proud of this effort tonight."

The matchup attracted a crowd reminiscent of the 1960's -- about 11,000 fans who witnessed young men at work -- from start to finish. The 94th meeting between the Tigers and Jays began with one place kick and ended with another.

Score by quarters:

Holy Cross 3 10 0 3 – 16

Jesuit 3 0 3 7 – 13

Scoring:

J: Crew Jacobs 30 field goal

HC: Reed Gravolet 24 field goal

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HC: Michael Chigbu 86 pass from James Tabary (Gravolet kick)

J: Jacobs 20 field goal

J: Michael McMahon 1 run (Jacobs kick)

HC: Jacobs 35 field goal

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Covered high school sports from 1972-80 with The State-Item and from 1981 to 2009 with The Times-Picayune. Also covered golf and state school football during the 1970s and LSU football from 1975-'80. Covered college football recruiting from 1975 to the present.