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Down to the wire

Gravolet's last-second field goal lifts Holy Cross over Jesuit

BY ROD WALKER

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For the first time since 2007, the Golden Football Trophy is headed back to Holy Cross.

It was the golden foot of junior Reed Gravolet that brought it back.

Gravolet nailed a 35-yard field goal as time expired to lift Holy Cross to a thrilling 16-13 victory over rival Jesuit on Friday night at Tad Gormley Stadium.

"I was thinking just do it like you do it in practice," Gravolet said of the winning kick. "Everybody is nervous in that situation, but I was thinking the worst thing that can happen is that we go to overtime. I'm not going to lie, it feels pretty good."

Holy Cross, ranked No. 4 in The New Orleans Advocate large school rankings, improved to 6-0 and 1-0 in District 9-5A.

But on this night, the Tigers were more thrilled with beating their rival in the 94th meeting and ending their five-year skid against the Blue Jays (3-3, 0-1).

"You darned right it feels good," said Holy Cross coach Barry Wilson. "After five years, we needed it big time."

Gravolet, who was named Most Valuable Player in the game that was part of the Great American Rivalry Series, also booted a pair of 24-yard field goals in the first half.

"I had a lot of confidence in him," Wilson said. "He has been good all year long."

Gravolet's kick came just minutes after Jesuit tied it 13-13 on a 1-yard plunge by fullback Michael McMahon with 2:34 left. It capped off a 9-play, 74-yard drive, highlighted by the hard-nosed running of Charles Jackson and a 27-yard pass play from Trey LaForge to Malcolm Ben.

It helped the Blue Jays, who dominated most of the second half, erase a 13-3 halftime deficit.

"It was a great ballgame, two great teams," Jesuit coach Wayde Keiser said. "I am proud of my team for battling back from a 10-point deficit. They did what I asked them to do and played without looking at the clock and played hard every down."

Jesuit's other points came on a pair of field goals (30 and 20 yards) by Crew Jacobs.

But in the end, it was the field goal of Gravolet that decided this one.

Holy Cross quarterback James Tabary didn't watch Gravolet's kick sail through the uprights.

"I couldn't look," said Tabary. "I just turned my head and waited for the crowd to go crazy. When I heard them cheer, I threw a football about 150 feet in the air."

It was Tabary's other throws that helped the win though.

He completed 22 of 37 passes for 276 yards.

Tabary connected with Michael Chigbu, hitting the receiver right in stride on an 86-yard touchdown play that gave the Tigers a 13-3 lead with seven minutes left in the first half.

It was just the type of outing Tabary was hoping to have after missing last week's game with a concussion suffered two weeks ago in the first half against West St. John.

"I was prepared," Tabary said. "I had to get my mind right. I watched film all week and we just did what we needed to do.

Chigbu finished with seven catches for 165 yards.

Jackson rushed for 79 yards, and LaForge completed 16 of 30 passes for 181 yards for the Blue Jays.

"We are fighting a few things offensively with a lot of injuries," Keiser said. "Credit our quarterback for coming back with a bruised shoulder in the second half. We didn't know if he was going to be able to do that. It showed a lot of guts on his part."

Jesuit leads the series 54-38-1, but bragging rights for the next year belong to Holy Cross.

"It's the greatest feeling in the world," Tabary said.

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