

St. Mary's pulls away late from St. John to advance to 2nd round

PLAQUEMINES, La. – The 21st-ranked St. Mary's Tigers knocked off the 12th-ranked St. John Eagles, 30-14, in the first round of the LHSAA Division IV Select high school football playoffs Thursday night at St. John.

The Tigers (6-5) took the early advantage on a 25-yard field goal by junior Carter Hogg with 2;17 left in the first quarter. With SMS's defense holding the Eagles (7-4) at bay, the Tigers were able to add on to the lead late in the second quarter. Junior running back John Paul Thibodaux scored on a 9-yard touchdown run making it 10-0 with 4:35 left in the first half.

With SMS leading 10-0 at the half, they seemed in control. But the third quarter was controlled by the Eagles. St. John's scored midway through the quarter on a 6-yard touchdown to make it 10-7 as the Tigers were in a battle going to the fourth quarter.

But it was SMS's defense that turned the momentum of the game. With the Eagles facing a fourth and short, they lined up for a punt and faked it. But senior Haiden Nelson was there to stuff the run a yard short of the first down.

On the next play, senior Chalin Gandy connected with senior Cole Yopp on a half-back pass for a 35-yard touchdown making it 16-7 Tigers with 9:55 to go in the game.

On the following possession, it was the Tigers' defense yet again that came up big. Junior Conor Kay forced a fumble and recovered it as the Tigers took over at St. John 46-yard line. SMS would capitalize as Jacob Thibodaux scored on a 13-yard touchdown reception.

After the Eagles punted, JP Thibodaux scored on a 41-yard run to make it 30-7 (Hogg PAT good) with 2:07 to go as the Tigers punched their ticket to the second round.

But it was the Tigers' defense that was the heroes led by Tucker Johnson, Dennison Morgan, Latravion Jefferson, Nelson, Hudson Methvin, Brady Childress, AJ Lavespere and Kane Dortlon, Gandy and Kay as the SMS defensive unit held the Eagles to one score.

"Why not us," said second-year head coach Kedrin Seastrunk. "People have seen what we could be when we were almost there. Now everyone can see the team we really are. We had some tough losses early and I think it made us a better team and a tougher team and it really showed tonight. We dominated a 12-seed on both sides of the ball. Why not us."

The Tigers will face fifth-ranked Ascension Catholic (8-2) in the second round Friday, Nov. 21 on the road in Donaldsonville, La.