



Receiver Nicholas Gonsalves hauls in a 43-yard touchdown pass for St. Augustine, which clinched a co-championship of the Eastern League by defeating Cathedral Catholic. EARNIE GRAFTON • U-T

FRIDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL Beyond the End Zone

## SAINTS WIN THIS ROUND AGAINST RIVAL DON'S

No shock if St. Augustine and Cathedral Catholic meet again in Division III playoffs

**STEVE BRAND**  
SPECIAL TO THE U-T

**Final score:** St. Augustine 28, Cathedral Catholic 21.

**Big plays:** St. Augustine (8-2, 4-1) scored the first three times it had the ball and held on when DB Nicklaus Ruppert batted down a pass in the end zone with two minutes to play. Saints QB Evan Crower was 15-of-21 for 170 yards and three TDs while RB Aaron Anderson gained 136 yards on 16 carries, scoring once. The Dons' Jonny Martin gained 152 yards on 26 carries.

**The series:** With the victory, St. Augustine closes the gap on Cathedral Catholic to 30-19. Sounds lopsided but not recently. Take the series back 10 games and it was 5-5 before Friday night.

**What it means:** Plenty. This morning the section will determine the playoff brackets and both teams are considered strong candidates for the four seeded spots in the Division III playoffs. Since one or the other has captured the section title the past five years and eight times since the division was started in 1993 (Cathedral Catholic the last three years), domination is not too big a word.

**Conspiracy theory:** There are those out there who believe the coaches' committee that makes the recommendation and the committee that determines the playoff brackets have intentionally put Cathedral Catholic and St. Augustine in the same half of the bracket recently. That way only one can make it to

the title game, assuring that a public school has a better chance. That's nonsense. Attendance-wise, section Commissioner Dennis Ackerman would like nothing better than a Cathedral Catholic-St. Augustine finale.

**A freebie:** Playing the week of Veterans Day had its benefits. San Diego Mesa College usually charges \$5 for parking but because of the holiday weekend, the school just charged the hosts, St. Augustine, a single fee and everybody parked for free.

**Low key:** Both schools tried to play down the importance of the game. "We don't make as big a deal as we used to," said St. Augustine AD Mike Stephenson. "A lot of alumni believe if you go 1-9 but that one win is over Cathedral Catholic you've had a

good year. We're looking at the big picture." Cathedral Catholic AD Dave Smola agreed, saying there was no rally and minimal signage around school. "Facebook is where you see most of the comments," said Smola. "You don't have to hype up the kids with rallies when these guys have played on or against each other for years. They go to church together on Sunday. It's for parish bragging rights — that's big."

**Cheerleaders:** Since St. Augustine is an all-boys school, you might expect there to be all boys cheerleaders. Instead, the Academy of Our Lady of Peace, the all-girls Catholic school north of St. Augustine on the rim of Mission Valley, supplies cheerleaders. Friday night they had plenty to cheer about.