

SUN POST

# SUN NEWS SPORTS

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High school football | East-West All-Star Game

## East rallies to beat West in All-Star game

### N. Olmsted's Novak named West MVP

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The East came back to beat the West, 14-7, on the strength of two fourth-quarter touchdowns Friday in the 42nd Cuyahoga County East-West All-Star football game at Baldwin Wallace's George Finnie Stadium.

The East's third consecutive win gave it a 22-19-1 advantage in the series.

North Olmsted quarterback Brad Novak's final pass fell incomplete in the end zone, but his play throughout the game earned him the West MVP honor.

He finished 9-for-18 passing for 93 yards and rushed 18 times for a team-high 71 yards. He threw a first-quarter touchdown pass to Cuyahoga Heights receiver Jack Alpert, giving the West a 7-0 lead.

Novak and Alpert just missed connecting on the previous play, but Novak couldn't miss the wide-open Alpert the second time around.

"The first one was a boot, but the second one, me and Jack talked before the play and he said he kept finding the seam out there," said Novak. "I said to hit it and I'll look for him and he got open like he does, he's a great receiver, and I hit him in the back of the end zone."

After the East scored twice in the fourth quarter, the West got the ball back at its own 16 with 9:37 to play. Novak threw or ran on nine of the 12 plays in the drive. From the East 23, his pass into the end zone on fourth-and-6 fell incomplete.

The East then ran out the clock.

Not that the outcome mattered so much to Novak or any of his teammates.

"When you finish that last game, you think you're never going to play under the lights again," said Novak. "But now I get to come out here and it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I was nervous all week, thinking about it all week. I barely slept last night."

The West made its 7-0 lead stand until the fourth quarter. The East did not complete a pass in the first half (0-for-5), and although the East had 120 yards rushing at the half, the West defense kept it out of the end zone.

The West's best defensive stand came at the end of the half. The East faced first-and-goal at the West 9-yard line but didn't get in.

On third-and-goal from the 9, East quarterback Aaron Ivory of Glenville was met by Malik Duncan (Cleveland Central Catholic) and Cortez Harris (Fairview) at the 2. On the next play, Duncan and Sam Shick (Lutheran West) stopped Shaw's Anthony Shumpert at the goal line.

"I just tried to play smart, play the inside," said Duncan, who almost had a pick-six in the first half. "I just tried to make a play."

Duncan tied Maleke Norton (Lakewood) for a team-high seven tackles. C.J. Yonek (Padua) and Mason Muldoon (Berea-Midpark) each had six.

Normandy coach James Jackson, who led the West squad, expected more trips to the end zone for both teams.

"We were going into this figuring it would be an offensive game



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North Olmsted quarterback Brad Novak, playing for the West, looks for a receiver during the East-West All-Star Game last Friday in Berea. Novak was named the West MVP, but his team lost the game, 14-7.

because that's how the rules are set up," said Jackson. "But you've got to hand it to John Shirilla, our defensive coordinator. He called a great game."

Although his team lost, you couldn't tell by the players and their families, who filtered onto the field after the game.

"There are a lot of happy faces right now," said Jackson. "This is like a rite of passage to get to the next level."

Cuyahoga Heights quarterback Jordan Martin split time with Novak. He was 2-for-9 passing and suffered the interception that led to the winning score in the fourth quarter. He also rushed eight times for 33 yards and almost hooked up with Mike Hunsinger (Olmsted Falls) for a touchdown in the third quarter.

Hunsinger led the West with four catches for 46 yards. Kenny Squires (Brooklyn) rushed six times for 21 yards.

### East notebook

The East scored touchdowns on two straight plays in the fourth quarter — a 44-yard reception by Julio Stevens (Beachwood), and a 22-yard interception return by Craig Sloan (Garfield Heights) — then held on to defeat the West.

The East offense struggled all night before Stevens' touchdown with 9:57 left in the fourth quarter. After the ensuing two-point conversion failed, it was clear the defense had to make a play to give the East a shot at the win.

Enter Sloan, a 5-8 defensive back.

Sloan watched as a pair of

West receivers ran out into the flat, read the eyes of East quarterback Jordan Martin (Cuyahoga Heights) made the interception and ran in from 22 yards for the decisive touchdown.

"I thought that would be the final touchdown," said Sloan, who was named the East MVP. Sloan also had 76 rushing yards on six carries.

Stevens had an argument for East MVP as well. In addition to getting his team on the board with his 44-yard score, Stevens also broke up fourth-down pass in the corner of the end zone late in the fourth quarter.

It marked the last big stand for the East defense, but Stevens still felt his touchdown was the bigger play.

"We had a long drought," Stevens said. "I got us on the board and we got going from there."

Glenville's Aaron Ivory got back behind center during the game, taking snaps at quarterback for the East. Though he played receiver for the Tarboodlers, Ivory was a quarterback at St. Peter Chanel before it closed.

Ivory showed tenacity running the ball and moved the offense well for the East, though it was Brush quarterback Stephen Shorts who threw the team's only touchdown pass.

Gilmour's Frank Grk had two receptions for 28 yards to lead the East, including a big 16-yard reception that helped the East ice the game on its final possession. Brush defensive lineman Devon Hood had a game-high nine tackles, including one sack. Solon's Antwain Hamilton had seven tackles and a forced fumble.



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Olmsted Falls' Mike Hunsinger (25), playing for the West, pulls in a pass during the East-West All-Star Game last Friday in Berea. The East won, 14-7.