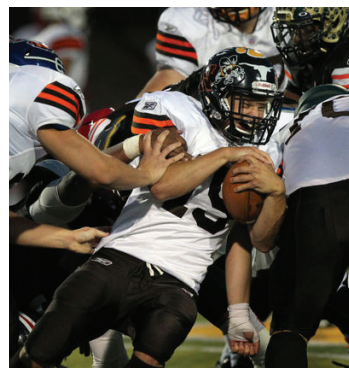


THE PLAIN DEALER

Saturday, June 14, 2014



Cuyahoga Heights receiver Jack Alpert, of the West, pulls in a touchdown pass in the first quarter in the East-West All Star Football game Friday, June 13, 2014. (Gus Chan / The Plain Dealer)

East Squad Notebook

Sloan provides offence from his spot on defense

It took three quarters for the East to get a break, but when it happened, the team never looked back.

The East scored touchdowns on two straight plays in the fourth quarter — a 44-yard reception by Julio Stevens, and a 22-yard interception return by Craig Sloan on the next drive — then held on to defeat the West, 14-7, in the 42nd GCFCA Cuyahoga

County East-West All-Star Game on Friday at Finnie Stadium in Berea.

The win is the third straight for the East, which improved its record to 22-19-1 in the game.

Sloan, defense provide a much-needed lift: The East offense struggled all night before Steven's 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-foot-8 defensive back from Garfield Heights.

Sloan watched as a pair of West receivers ran out into the flat, read the eyes of East quarterback Jordan Martin and picked the ball out of the

air, walking into the end zone from 22 yards out for the decisive touchdown.

“I thought that would be the final touchdown,” said Sloan, who was named MVP of the East team. “I had faith in my team. I knew they weren’t just gonna give up. I knew they were gonna keep going. I had faith in them the whole time.”



Sloan led all players with 76 rushing yards on six carries.

Stevens comes up big twice: Beachwood's Julio Stevens had an argument for the East MVP as well. In addition to finally getting his team on the board with his 44-yard score, Stevens also broke up a pass in the corner of the end zone to turn the ball over on downs 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."

East goes no-huddle: East coast Jason Bednar, an assistant from Gilmour Academy, elected to install a no-huddle offense during the two weeks of practice leading up to Friday's game.

It wasn't necessarily fast-paced, but it was a different look for an all-star game.

"The nice thing is we started right off the bat from Day 1," Bednar said. "We went no-huddle and it's something that we as an offensive staff have been doing at Gilmour. We thought that if we could put it together it would work in our favor."

Though Bednar admitted it was a little difficult to install with a group of players who have never played together before. That showed early on as penalties slowed down the East offense.

Ivory gets shot at quarterback: Glenville's Aaron Ivory got back behind center during Friday's game, taking snaps at quarterback for the East. Though he played some as a receiver for the Tarblooders, Ivory was a quarterback at St. Peter Chanel before the school closed.

Ivory showed a lot of tenacity running the ball and moved the offense well for the East, though it was Brush quarter-

back Stephen Shorts who threw the team's only touchdown pass.

Ivory finished with 36 yards on four carries and completed one pass for 16 yards. Shorts was 3-for-7 for 72 yards and a touchdown.

Other standouts: 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. ■

West Squad Notebook

North Olmsted's Novak earns team MVP honors

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.

Here's a closer look at the West squad's performance:

Novak is MVP: 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.

Novak finished 9-of-18 for 93 yards passing 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 the early 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 final 4:28.

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.”

Early West defense was the key: The West made its 7-0 lead stand up

until the fourth quarter due to its defense. The East did not complete a pass in the first half (0-for-5). And although it 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 first 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 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.

Not the way they planned it: 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 because that’s how the rules are set up,” said Jackson. “But you’ve got to hand it to our 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.”

Stats breakdown:

Cuyahoga Heights quarterback Jordan Martin split time with Novak on Friday. 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.

