FINAL SCORE: Cortland 16, Montclair St. 12

MONTCLAIR, N.J. – Cortland held Montclair State on five attempts from the 1-yard line in the final 1:08 as the Red Dragons (3-2, 2-1 NJAC) held on to upset the nationally eighth-ranked Red Hawks, 16-12, at Sprague Field. Freshman defensive tackle Steve Longinott (Cornwall) made three tackles on the final goal-line stand, the last of which forced a fumble on the final play to preserve the win.

Montclair started its final drive on its own 41-yard line with 2:46 remaining. A 10-yard run from midfield by Eugene Vick on 4th-and-1 kept the drive alive. Later in the drive, Mike Passero completed a 25-yard pass to Eric Ferriol that initially appeared to go for a touchdown, but instead was spotted at the 1-yard line and Montclair called its final timeout with 1:08 left.

Passero tried rushes on the first two plays, but Longinott was credited with tackles on both plays. On third down, Vick was stopped by sophomore defensive tackle Adam Haas (East Aurora/St. Francis) short of the goal line. A fourth down rush by Vick was also stopped, but Cortland was flagged for being offside. On the Red Hawks' second fourth-down attempt, Longinott broke through the line and knocked the ball out of Passero's hands. The ball was batted all the way back to the Montclair 29-yard line before Passero fell on the ball with three seconds remaining. Cortland took a knee on the next play to end the game.

Cortland trailed 12-0 late in the third quarter before rallying to score the game's final 16 points. Senior kicker Ryan DeCamp (Plattsburgh/Seton Catholic) nailed a career-best 46-yard field goal with 3:14 left in the quarter to put the Red Dragons on the board. Cortland's defense held on three plays during the next series and the Red Dragons' offense took over after a punt on their own 39-yard line. Freshman quarterback Alex Smith (Wheatfield/Wheatfield) completed a six-play, 61-yard scoring drive that took only 1:10 when he ran 11 yards around right end on an option for a touchdown.

The Red Dragons' game-winning drive started on the Montclair 44-yard line with 4:21 left in the game after an 11-yard punt return by senior Jon Frechette (Oswego). On the first play, Smith threw deep to Frechette for a 42-yard gain to the Montclair 2-yard line. A delay of game penalty moved the Red Dragons back to the 7-yard line, but a 5-yard Smith run advanced the ball back to the 2 and senior Steve Davis (Central Islip) ran untouched off right tackle on the next play to give Cortland the lead. Smith's two-point conversion pass missed its mark, leaving the lead at 16-12 with 2:53 left.

The first half was primarily dominated by both teams’ defenses. The game was scoreless until Cortland's Matt Librock (East Aurora), punting from his own end zone, had the kick blocked by Mike Worthington. Librock fell on the ball in the end zone for a Montclair safety and a 2-0 lead. The ensuing free kick was fair caught at the Montclair 46-yard line, and the Red Hawks wasted no time as Passero connected on a 54-yard catch-and-run touchdown to Fred Carter to extend the lead to 9-0 with 59 seconds left in the half.

The Montclair lead grew to 12-0 in the third quarter when Vin Doffont made a 47-yard field goal. The Red Hawks started their drive at Cortland's 27-yard line after recovering a fumble, but the Red Dragons held the hosts to minus-two yards and forced them to settle for Doffont's field goal. Earlier in the game, a second quarter 33-yard Doffont attempt was partially blocked by sophomore safety Josh Jablonski (West Seneca/West Seneca West).
Cortland finished with 384 yards of total offense to 241 for Montclair. The Red Dragons held Montclair to just 67 yards in the second half, and every Red Hawk drive in the second half was nine yards or less until their final possession. Montclair finished with just 17 yards net rushing on 32 carries, while Cortland ran 41 times for 196 yards.

Smith completed 17-of-31 passes for 188 yards and rushed for 71 yards on 11 carries. Montclair did not record a sack or an interception in the contest. Davis ran for 79 yards, 75 in the second half, and senior Neal Heaton Jr. (Bellport) caught six passes. Haas, sophomore safety Chuck Eich (Cheektowaga) and freshman safety Dave D'Aurelio (Rochester/Aquinas Institute) led a balanced defensive effort with six tackles each. Six Red Dragons had five tackles apiece.

Passero was 16-of-33 passing for 224 yards and one touchdown for the Red Hawks. Ferriol made seven catches for 84 yards. Vick, the NJAC’s leading rusher entering the game with more than 125 yards per game, was held to 60 yards on 23 carries. Brian DeCarlo had a team-high nine tackles.

The game was marred by a combined 27 penalties for 226 yards. Cortland was flagged 12 times for 112 yards, while Montclair had 15 penalties for 114 yards.

Cortland will be idle next weekend before traveling to league-leading Rowan on Oct. 16.

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