SUNY Cortland Football
Cortland vs. The College of New Jersey
September 11, 2004; SUNY Cortland Stadium Complex; Cortland, N.Y.

FINAL SCORE: College of New Jersey 17, Cortland 14

CORTLAND, N.Y. – Junior Blake Abbot (Rumson, NJ/Rumson-Fair Haven Regional) made a 23-yard field goal with five minutes, five seconds remaining to give The College of New Jersey a 17-14 victory over host SUNY Cortland in the New Jersey Athletic Conference opener for both teams. The Lions have won the last four meetings between the schools, with the last three games decided by seven points or less.

Junior Gregg Silvesti (Hammonton, NJ) rushed for 93 yards and a touchdown for the Lions (1-0, 1-0 NJAC). Freshman backup quarterback Jeff Struble (Toms River, NJ/Manchester Township) led New Jersey on its final two scoring drives and finished 6-of-8 passing for 123 yards. Senior tailback Steve Davis (Central Islip) led Cortland (0-2, 0-1 NJAC) with 117 yards rushing on 22 carries. He became the fifth player in school history to surpass 2,000 career rushing yards (currently 2,092).

New Jersey trailed 14-7 before scoring the last 10 points in the fourth quarter. Cortland had taken the lead with 41 seconds left in the third quarter when sophomore lineman Adam Haas (East Aurora/St. Francis) returned a fumble by quarterback Nick D’Aconti (Randolph, NJ) 21 yards for a score.

Struble then entered the game, having played briefly in the first half, and led the Lions on a five-play, 77-yard touchdown drive to tie the game. He connected on a 46-yard pass to junior Alan Kotteles (Rockaway, NJ/Morris Hills) on the third play of the drive to move the ball to the Cortland 27-yard line, and two plays later Silvesti ran 27 yards on a draw play for the tying score.

Cortland advanced inside the New Jersey 40-yard line on its next possession but had to punt. Starting on their own 18-yard line, the Lions drove 76 yards on 13 plays to set up Abbot's field goal. Struble ran 13 yards on a 3rd-and-10 play near midfield to keep the drive alive, and his 21-yard pass to sophomore Cory Schoonover (Toms River, NJ/Manchester) on 3rd-and-5 moved the ball to the Cortland 13-yard line.

Cortland's final drive was stopped quickly as senior linebacker Ray Bateman (Somerville, NJ) picked off a pass by freshman Alex Smith (Wheatfield/Niagara-Wheatfield) at the Cortland 31-yard line with 3:19 left. The Lions faced a 4th-and-1 at the Cortland 11-yard line with 1:34 left, but Struble was able to rush for two yards to seal the win.

New Jersey scored on the first possession of the game. A 12-play, 68-yard drive featured 10 Silvesti carries for 50 yards and was capped by a 4-yard, third-down touchdown pass from D’Aconti to senior Joe Bergondo (Iselin, NJ/JFK Iselin). Cortland responded with a touchdown to tie the game on its first possession. A 29-yard run by Davis and a 15-yard pass from Smith to sophomore Anthony Morat (Rome/Rome Free Academy) were the key plays in the 63-yard drive. Morat's appeared to have scored on his catch, but was ruled out of bounds at the 2-yard line. Davis ran in for the touchdown on the next play.

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One of the key turning points in the game came on Cortland’s first possession of the second half. A 41-yard kickoff return by freshman Stanley Cadet (Hicksville) started the drive on the New Jersey 44-yard line. Davis ran 30 yards on a draw play later in the drive and was stopped at the Lions’ 2-yard line. Davis was held to one yard on first down, and New Jersey held on the next three rushing attempts to regain the ball on downs. Cortland was also unable to score on its next drive despite starting on the New Jersey 28-yard line.

Cortland had two field goal attempts go awry in the contest. Senior Ryan DeCamp (Plattsburgh/Seton Catholic) missed a 30-yard attempt in the first quarter. In the second quarter, DeCamp lined up to attempt a 32-yard field goal, but the snap wasn't handled properly and the kick was never attempted.

Haas finished with eight tackles, seven solo. He had four tackles for losses, including two sacks. Sophomore free safety Stef Sair (Huntington) and sophomore inside linebacker Matt Montpetit (Westhampton Beach) had 13 tackles apiece and sophomore defensive lineman Bryan Murphy (Bethpage) had 2.5 sacks.

Senior linebacker Steve Vogt (Oakhurst, NJ/Ocean Township) led New Jersey with 11 tackles, nine solo. Junior linebacker Josh Baker (Ocean City) made seven stops.