FINAL SCORE: Cortland 18, William Paterson 13

CORTLAND, N.Y. – Sophomore quarterback Drew Lascari (Pequannock, NJ/Pequannock Township) came off the bench and led Cortland to two second-half touchdown drives and the Red Dragons defeated William Paterson, 18-13, in a New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) contest. Cortland improves to 4-3 and 3-2 in the NJAC. The Pioneers are 2-5 and 1-4.

Lascari replaced starting quarterback Alex Smith (Wheatfield/Niagara-Wheatfield) on the final possession of the first half. He guided the Red Dragons on a 50-yard touchdown drive late in the third quarter and threw a 29-yard touchdown pass to senior Neal Heaton Jr. (Bellport) on the first play of the fourth quarter to turn a 7-6 deficit into an 18-7 lead. He finished 7-of-12 passing for 86 yards. Senior tailback Steve Davis (Central Islip) rushed 28 times for 107 yards and a touchdown. He has surpassed the 100-yard mark five times in seven games.

William Paterson sophomore quarterback Cristobal Rodriguez (Fort Lee, NJ) completed 20-of-39 passes for 236 yards and also ran for a touchdown. The Pioneers, however, were held to minus-14 yards rushing in the game, primarily the result of 10 Cortland sacks. Sophomore defensive tackle Adam Haas (East Aurora/St. Francis) finished with three sacks and senior Chad Rowe (Cazenovia) had two.

Cortland scored the only points of the first half when sophomore Stef Sair (Huntington) intercepted a pass and ran 68 yards for a touchdown with nine seconds left in the first quarter. The play tied the second-longest interception return in school history. Freshman Derek Ziders' (Lancaster) extra-point kick was no good, however, and the Red Dragons led 6-0.

The Pioneers took a 7-6 lead with 5:25 remaining in the third quarter on a 32-yard halfback option pass from junior Prince Breeden (Jersey City, NJ/Snyder) to freshman Kareen Moon (Staten Island/Susan B. Wagner), who made a nice catch in traffic in the end zone. Moon and Thomas Murphy (Suffern) each finished with six catches to lead the guests.

The Red Dragons drove for the go-ahead touchdown on the next series. The drive started after a short kickoff was returned 23-yards to midfield by Bill Hauser (Lancaster). Lascari hit sophomore Paul DeSantis (Tonawanda/Kenmore East) on a 25-yard pass on the first play of the series. On 3rd-and-5 from the 20-yard line, Davis spun off a tackler for a 13-yard gain. Davis ran for five yards on the next play and scored from two yards away after that. Lascari’s was tackled while trying to pass for the two-point conversion.

William Paterson lost the ball on its next possession when freshman cornerback Jeff Beck (Middlehope/Marlboro) intercepted a pass on the Pioneers’ 42-yard line returned it to the 25-yard line. On the first play of the fourth quarter, Lascari threw a pass to a diving Heaton for a touchdown and an 18-7 lead. An illegal forward pass penalty negated Lascari's two-point conversion pass.

Midway through the fourth quarter, William Paterson mounted a drive to the Cortland 8-yard line. On a field goal attempt, holder Robert Larsen (Voorhees, NJ/Eastern Regional) mishandled the snap and his desperation pass was intercepted by Steve Longinott (Cornwall) at the 6-yard line.

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The Pioneers' defense created another opportunity, however, when senior Mark Zirkel (Toms River, NJ/Toms River East) sacked Lascari and Don Dougherty (Pompton Lakes, NJ) recovered the ball inside the Cortland 20-yard line, but the Red Dragons held and regained the ball on downs with 5:01 remaining. After a three-and-out and a short punt by the Red Dragons, William Paterson took over at the Cortland 33-yard line with 3:07 remaining. A 24-yard pass from Rodriguez to Murphy quickly moved the ball to the 9-yard line and, four plays later, Rodriguez's dive over the line on a 4th-and-1 quarterback sneak drew the Pioneers within 18-13 with 1:37 left. His two-point conversion pass, however, was broken up near the goal line by freshman Greg Steward (Elmont/Sewanhaka).

The ensuing onside kickoff was touched illegally after it had traveled only eight yards. Cortland was able to run out most of the clock, although the Pioneers did get the ball back on downs at their own 34-yard line with seven seconds left. After an incomplete pass, the final play resulted in a short completion, a series of laterals and an eventual fumble that the Red Dragons recovered to end the game.

Cortland finished with 262 yards of total offense – 138 rushing and 124 passing. William Paterson had 254 yards despite its minus-14 rushing yards. The Pioneers turned the ball over four times to just one giveaway by the Red Dragons.

Sophomore Matt Montpetit (Westhampton Beach) led Cortland's defense with 14 tackles, including a sack. Sair finished with eight tackles and a pass breakup in addition to his interception, and Haas had eight total tackles. Beck recorded three pass breakups and an interception.

Dougherty paced the William Paterson defense with 10 tackles and a fumble recovery. Tom Larsen (Ramsey, NJ) had nine tackles, all solo.