SUNY Cortland Sports Information

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SUNY Cortland Football
Cortland vs. Ithaca College
November 12, 2005; Butterfield Stadium; Ithaca, N.Y.

FINAL SCORE: Cortland 37, Ithaca 30 (OT)

ITHACA, N.Y. – Junior Anthony Morat (Rome/Rome Free Academy) made an acrobatic touchdown catch on an 8-yard throw by sophomore Alex Smith (Niagara Falls/Niagara-Wheatfield) on Cortland's first possession of overtime, and junior safety Stef Sair’s (Huntington) second interception of the game sealed the victory as the Red Dragons defeated nationally 13th-ranked Ithaca, 37-30, to re-claim the Cortaca Jug in the annual rivalry game between the Central New York foes.

Cortland has now won three of the last four Cortaca Jug games and is 6-4 versus the Bombers since 1996, including a 4-1 mark at Butterfield Stadium. The Red Dragons improved to 7-2 with the victory, while Ithaca drops to 8-2 with its first home loss since falling to Cortland, 16-15, in 2003.

Ithaca rallied from a 23-6 halftime deficit in front of an overflow crowd of more than 9,000 fans. The Bombers never led in the contest, but did pull into a 30-30 tie on Brett Kitenplon's (Seminole, FL/Admiral Farragut) 27-yard field goal with nine minutes, 20 seconds left in regulation. In the overtime, Ithaca won the coin toss and elected to play defense first. Cortland faced a 3rd-and-4 at the Ithaca 8-yard line when Smith lofted a fade pass to the left corner of the end zone. An Ithaca cornerback appeared to have his hands on the ball for a possible interception, but Morat, behind the defender, reached up and snatched the ball away for the eventual go-ahead score. Cortland's defense held on four plays during Ithaca's possession, with Sair's interception on fourth down ending the contest.

Sair started the scoring in the first quarter. Ithaca drove 43 yards to the Cortland 35-yard line on its first possession before Sair stepped in front of a pass by senior Josh Felicetti (Doylestown, PA/Central Bucks East) at the 30-yard line and raced untouched 70 yards for a touchdown and a 7-0 lead. The score marked the first points allowed by Ithaca in the first quarter in 13 games dating back to October of 2004.

Sair also helped create Cortland's second touchdown drive when he returned a punt 45 yards to the Ithaca 28-yard line late in the first quarter. Three plays later, Smith ran around right end for a 10-yard score and a 14-0 Cortland lead. Ithaca, however, responded quickly as a Kelly Gordon (Ausable Forks/Ausable Valley) 43-yard kickoff return, coupled with a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, gave the Bombers the ball on Cortland's 36-yard line.

Three plays later, Felicetti connected on a 18-yard pass to PJ Canestrari (Ironia, NJ/Randolph) for a touchdown to pull Ithaca within 14-6. On the extra point attempt, however, Cortland junior Josh Jablonski (Buffalo/West Seneca West) blocked the kick and sophomore Greg Steward (Elmont/Sewanhaka) recovered the ball. Steward began racing upfield and, just before being tackled, lateraled the ball to Sair, who ran untouched for the two-point defensive conversion that put Cortland ahead 16-6. The blocked kick by Jablonski was his sixth of the season (three PAT, two punts, one FG), extending his school single-season record and establishing a new career mark with nine blocks in three seasons.

Later in the quarter, the Red Dragons mounted a 15-play, 78-yard touchdown drive that concluded with a 13-yard touchdown run by junior Matt Rickert (Holbrook/Sachem) with 3:09 remaining. Matthew Mintz's (Atlantic Beach/Laurence) extra point pushed Cortland's lead to 23-6. Ithaca had one final scoring chance before the half, marching from its own 9-yard line to the Cortland 18-yard line in just over two minutes. On 3rd-and-10 at the 18-yard line, however, Cortland linebacker Matt Montpetit (Westhampton/Westhampton Beach) forced a fumble after a complete pass and Jablonski recovered the ball.

Ithaca quickly got back into the game in the second half. After holding the Red Dragons on three plays, Ithaca covered 74 yards on seven plays. The final 48 yards came on a Felicetti to Gordon touchdown pass that closed the deficit to 23-13. On Cortland's next series, Ithaca's Chris Medici (Huntington/Sanford H. Calhoun) forced a fumble and Ithaca's Bob Higgins (Rochester/Aquinas Inst.) returned the ball 10 yards to the Cortland 25-yard line. On the next play, Felicetti once again connected with Gordon for a touchdown and the Bombers were within 23-20 with 9:40 left in the quarter.

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Cortland responded with a 16-play, 75-yard touchdown drive to push its lead to 30-20. The Red Dragons converted a pair of fourth down conversions on the drive. The first came on Smith's 1-yard keeper on 4th-and-1 at the Ithaca 44-yard line. The second was four plays later when Cortland punter Jimmy Cunneen (Hicksville) ran six yards on a fake on 4th-and-5 at the Ithaca 38-yard line. The play was one of two successful fake punts for the Red Dragons in the contest. Smith's 15-yard scoring pass to sophomore Dustin Bowser (Jamestown/Southwestern) completed the drive with 2:58 left in the third quarter.

Ithaca pulled back within 30-27 on the first play of the fourth quarter when Felicetti hit senior Justin Esposito (Manlius/Fayetteville-Manlius) on a 16-yard pass to cap a six-play, 53-yard drive. The Bombers' next possession started on the Cortland 41-yard line after a forced fumble by Joe Napoleone (Rochester/Greece Arcadia). Ithaca moved the ball to the Cortland 10-yard line before the drive stalled and Kitenplon made the tying field goal.

Cortland's final scoring attempt in regulation came when the Red Dragons advanced the ball from their own 26-yard line with 3:23 left to Ithaca's 24-yard line. A key tackle for loss by Dave Celeste (North Tonawanda), however, pushed the ball back to the 29-yard line and Mintz's 46-yard field goal attempt with eight seconds remaining was on line but short by a few yards.

Smith finished the game 19-of-34 passing for 191 yards and two touchdowns in addition to his rushing score. He ran 12 times for 47 yards. Morat made eight catches for 72 yards, including two grabs in overtime, and Bowser rushed for 74 yards on nine carries. Sophomore linebacker Bill Hauser (Lancaster) recorded 11 tackles and junior safety Chuck Eich (Cheektowaga) had 10 stops. Jablonski finished with nine tackles in addition to his block and fumble recovery.

Felicetti tied an Ithaca school record with 30 pass completions. He finished 30-of-44 for 373 yards and four touchdowns. Gordon and Esposito each surpassed 100 receiving yards. Gordon made eight catches for 120 yards and two scores and Esposito had six receptions for 109 yards and one score. Medici led the Bombers with 11 tackles. Napoleone added nine tackles, an interception and a forced fumble and Jose Colon (Utica/Proctor) recorded nine stops, a pass breakup and a fumble recovery.

Ithaca finished with 430 yards of total offense, but rushed for only 57 yards on 29 carries against a Cortland squad that entered the game ranked first nationally in Division III in rushing defense. Cortland gained 392 yards, including 201 on the ground. The Red Dragons converted 11-of-18 third downs and 3-of-4 fourth downs, while holding Ithaca to only 5-of-15 third down conversions.