FINAL SCORE: Rowan 24, Cortland 16

CORTLAND, N.Y. – Junior quarterback Mike Orihel (Trenton, NJ/Central Bucks West (PA)) completed 18-of-29 passes for 246 yards and a touchdown and rushed for a score as Rowan, ranked fourth nationally by D3football.com, defeated Cortland, 24-16, in a battle of the New Jersey Athletic Conference's (NJAC) top two teams. The Profs improved to 5-0 overall and 3-0 in NJAC play with the victory. Cortland is now 4-2 and 3-1.

Orihel connected five times each with senior wide receivers Sakeen Wright (Glassboro, NJ) and Phil Silva (Vineland, NJ). Silva’s catches included a 9-yard touchdown grab. Junior Ulysses Encarnacion (Little Ferry, NJ/Ridgefield Park) ran for 53 yards on 13 carries. Junior defensive back Jabrill Joseph (North Plainfield, NJ) and sophomore linebacker Randy Tosh (Columbia, NJ/North Warren Reg.) each made 10 tackles, with Tosh also recording a forced fumble.

Cortland was led by sophomore quarterback Alex Smith (Niagara Falls/Niagara-Wheatfield), who completed 17-of-35 passes for 243 yards and a touchdown and ran for 30 yards on 10 carries. Junior Anthony Morat (Rome/Rome Free Academy) made five catches for 66 yards, including a 27-yard touchdown, and sophomore Dustin Bowser (Jamesstown/Southwestern) ran 18 times for 53 yards and a touchdown. Sophomore linebacker Bill Hauser (Lancaster) recorded a game-high 16 tackles and junior safety Chuck Eich (Cheektowaga) recorded 11 tackles.

Rowan jumped out to a 21-0 lead in the first half before holding off the Red Dragons. Cortland was within 24-16 and had the ball at the Rowan 25-yard line with 2:28 left, but the Profs stopped Cortland on four plays and were able to run out the clock for the victory.

Orihel's 1-yard quarterback sneak on fourth down capped a 12-play, 76-yard drive and gave the Profs a 7-0 lead with 44 seconds left in the first quarter. Early in the second quarter, junior defensive lineman Keith Heimerl (Sewell, NJ/Clearview Reg.) blocked a Cortland punt at around the 12-yard line. Sophomore Dustin Katcher (Milltown, NJ/Spotswood) fell on the ball in the end zone for a touchdown and a 14-0 Rowan advantage.

On Cortland’s next possession, a low punt was once again blocked by Heimerl, setting up the Profs on the Cortland 30-yard line. Six plays later, Orihel hit Silva on a 9-yard timing pass on the right side of the end zone and Rowan led 21-0 with 7:17 left in the first half.

Cortland fumbled the ball away on its next possession at its own 35-yard line, but eventually broke up a fourth-down Rowan pass in the end zone and took over on the 30-yard line with 4:46 left. The Red Dragons mounted an 11-play drive that culminated in a 28-yard field goal by sophomore Derek Ziders (Lancaster) with 1:56 left in the half. On Rowan’s next drive, sophomore Dave D’Aurelio (Rochester/Aquinas Institute) intercepted an Orihel pass and returned the ball four yards to the Rowan 31-yard line. On 3rd-and-6 with 47 seconds left, Smith found Morat open on a 27-yard post pattern for a touchdown. The extra point failed, leaving Cortland behind 21-9 at the half.

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Neither team scored in the third quarter. Cortland had the best chance of the period when freshman Zak Carter (Fayetteville/Fayetteville-Manlius) turned a short slant pass into a 68-yard gain. He broke away from the defense but was caught from behind by sophomore defensive back Zakee Babb (Sicklerville, NJ/Timber Creek) at the Rowan 9-yard line. Two Bowser rushes moved the ball to the 2-yard line, but a third-down Bowser carry lost a yard and Ziders missed a 20-yard field goal attempt wide right from the right hash.

Orihel left the game with an injury at the end of the third quarter. Behind backup quarterback Joe Rankin (Toms River, NJ/Toms River North), the Profs completed a 12-play, 37-yard scoring drive. Sophomore Matias Spahn's (Hammonton, NJ) 34-yard field goal with 11:24 left in the game gave Rowan a 24-9 lead.

Cortland got back in the game with a 10-play, 60-yard touchdown drive. Bowser's 3-yard scoring run with 3:31 left and Matthew Mintz's (Atlantic Beach/Laurence) extra point pulled the Red Dragons within 24-16. Cortland then got the ball back when sophomore Greg Steward (Elmont/Sewanhaka) intercepted a Rankin third-down pass at the Rowan 27-yard line and returned it to the 25-yard line with 2:28 left. Smith, however, was sacked for an 11-yard loss by senior Brian Bond (Long Valley, NJ/West Morris Central) and Heimerl on first down. After a 10-yard pass on second down, Smith's third-down throw was knocked down by junior lineman Ed Kunder (Tuckerton, Pinelands Reg.) and his fourth-down throw fell incomplete with 1:22 left.

Cortland held a slight advantage in total offensive yards, 355-353. Rowan outgained the Red Dragons in the first half, 282-182, but the Red Dragons gained 173 yards in the second half to only 71 yards for the Profs.

Cortland junior linebacker Josh Jablonski (Buffalo/West Seneca West) blocked a first-quarter Rowan field goal attempt – his fourth blocked kick of the season. He tied the Cortland single-season record for blocks, set by former NFL player R-Kal Truluck in 1996. Cortland's six blocked kicks this season ties a school single-season record.

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