Ewing, N.J. – SUNY Cortland opened the 2005 New Jersey Athletic Conference race with a 30-13 road win over The College of New Jersey at Lions’ Stadium. The victory puts Cortland at 2-0 overall and 1-0 in the NJAC, while TCNJ drops to 0-2 overall and 0-1 in the conference.

The Red Dragon victory over the Lions is the team’s first win over TCNJ since the 2000 season and its first ever at Lions’ Stadium. The 0-2 start for TCNJ is the program’s first 0-2 start since the 1992 season when then-Trenton State College opened the year with an 0-4 start en route to a 3-7 finish. Conversely, the strong start by Cortland marks the Red Dragons’ first 2-0 start since the 1997 season. That year, the team finished 8-3 overall with an NCAA tournament appearance at year’s end.

Cortland’s defense held TCNJ to 195 total yards, including only 49 rushing yards on 31 attempts. The Red Dragons recorded four sacks, forced four Lions turnovers and allowed only one third-down conversion in 14 attempts. Cortland’s two tailbacks, junior Matt Rickert (Holbrook/Sachem) and sophomore Dustin Bowser (Jamestown/Southwestern), paced the offense as the pair combined for 167 rushing yards, one rushing score and one touchdown reception. Rickert had 22 carries for 83 yards on the ground with a 34-yard catch for a score to help Cortland jump out to a 13-0 lead at the end of the first quarter. Bowser added a career-best 84 yards rushing yards, including a 24-yard rushing score to close the scoring and break open the game with just 47 seconds left in the fourth quarter.

Sophomore quarterback Alex Smith (Niagara Falls/Niagara-Wheatfield) was 13-for-28 passing for 134 yards and two touchdowns – a first quarter pass to Rickert and a 19-yard pass to junior wide receiver Anthony Morat (Rome/Rome Free Academy) at 12:44 in the second. Smith also ran nine yards for a touchdown on Cortland’s first possession.

For TCNJ, sophomore quarterback Jeff Struble (Toms River, NJ/Manchester Township) was knocked from the game after being sacked by Cortland junior defensive tackle Adam Haas (East Aurora/St. Francis). Haas recorded two sacks of Struble and tied a career high with three sacks for minus-18 yards. He finished the game with eight tackles, four for losses, two quarterback hurries and a forced fumble that set up a touchdown. Struble was limited to a 2-for-6 effort for just nine passing yards with one interception. Sophomore linebacker Bill Hauser (Lancaster) recorded nine tackles, two pass breakups and a forced fumble for Cortland. Junior linebacker Matt Montpetit (Westhampton/Westhampton Beach) added seven tackles.

Junior Chris Bell (Galloway Township, NJ/Holy Spirit) came in the game in the second quarter for TCNJ and had a career-best effort 9-for-25 effort for 137 yards and two touchdowns – a first quarter pass to Rickert and a 19-yard pass to junior wide receiver Anthony Morat (Rome/Rome Free Academy) at 12:44 in the second. Smith also ran nine yards for a touchdown on Cortland's first possession.

TCNJ’s first score of the game came on a fumble recovery by sophomore linebacker Nicholas Steffner (Bridgewater, NJ/Bridgewater). Rickert was hit by senior co-captain Miles Shanklin (Wall, NJ/Wall) and his fumble was brought in two yards by Stebrought for the Lions’ first score of the game. Steffner led the Lions on the day with 11 tackles, three of which were for a loss (-14 yards). Shanklin and senior linebacker Terence Nish (Vernon, NJ/Vernon Township) each recorded nine tackles as well for the Lions.

Cortland’s junior defensive back Stef Sair (Huntington) had a 43-yard interception return on the Lions' third play of the game. The play set up Cortland’s first score, Smith's 9-yard scamper just inside the left pylon at 12:34 in the first quarter. Cortland's other interceptions were fourth quarter picks by sophomore cornerback Jeff Beck (Middlehope/ Marlboro) and junior linebacker Josh Jablonski (Buffalo/West Seneca West). Beck’s interception came in the end zone to stop a Lions’ drive in the red zone. Cortland also recorded two blocked kicks in the game. Sophomore Vinny Aiello (Medford/Patchogue-Medford) blocked a punt in the second quarter and Bowser blocked a field goal attempt in the fourth quarter.

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