

The Evening News  
109 Arlington Street  
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783  
www.sooeveningnews.com

## Helmet Decal Trades Lead To Team Unity

Peter Pietrangelo

MARQUETTE - Fans looking for their hometown players had a more difficult time than usual at Saturday's U.P. All-Star Football Game.

As in the NFL's Pro Bowl and the various college all-star games, players wore the official jersey of the game – which at the Superior Dome was black, white and red – but their own team's helmets.

But players, in a bonding exercise this week, removed many decals from their helmets, swapped among teammates and in some cases added their own.

St. Ignace's Rob Robinson, who had two huge special teams hits in the second half, was sporting helmet decals from Engadine, Westwood, Negaunee and Ishpeming. Sault High's Caleb Vizina had Westwood, Manistique, St. Ignace, his own Sault High logo and a sticker from Xcel Sports Training, the company that puts on the event.

"It was a bonding experience," Robinson explained after East's 21-6 win over West.

Some players managed to score Northern Michigan University logos for their helmets, including Sault High's Chad Anderson, who is going to NMU to play football.

In other helmet-wearing shenanigans, two players from Rapid River, Travis Depuydt and Earl Lancour, wore the white helmets of Mid Peninsula. Both attend the tiny high school in Rock, which dropped football this season.

**WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?** According to unofficial statistics, there were 14 penalties called for 115 yards. Three were personal foul penalties for extracurricular activities after the whistle.

What happened to the unwritten all-star game rules about no defense and easing up on the hitting? Well, the U.P. All-Star Game is unique for a number of reasons. First, most of these players won't suit up competitively for the rest of their lives. Second, because many were overlooked by colleges, they feel they have something to prove. Third, the teams live in close quarters all week, allowing five days of smack talk to build up before the release on Saturday.

"We've been talking crap to each other all week," Vizina said.

Late at night, players would go down to where the other team's dorms were and did breakdowns in the hallway. When the other team was in shouting distance, there would be taunting.

"Smack talk was big," Robinson said. "We hated the other team."

East was called for nine penalties for 60 yards. West's five infractions totaled 55 yards.

**OVERHEARD:** Rudyard's Aaron Diepenhorst (who oddly enough had just the Rudyard logos on his helmet) enlisted in the United State Marine Corps and ships out Sept. 14. "I'm very excited about that," he said....

When East quarterback Josh Mickelson of Manistique hit teammate Garde Kangas in stride for a 54-yard touchdown in the second half, it was a play straight out of the Emeralds' playbook....

"It's crazy to think how many times we've done that," Mickelson told The Mining Journal of Marquette. "And this is the last time."...

West beat East 38-14 last year, making the teams 1-1. However, Menominee is 2-0 after moving from the West team to the East team this year....

Next year's game is scheduled for June 26. This year's game was moved up a week to facilitate the replacement of the 18-year-old artificial turf at the Superior Dome, beginning today.



The East All-Stars celebrate with the trophy after winning the U.P. All-Star Game Saturday at the Superior Dome.

Photo Courtesy of Maxx Anderson