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PO Box 368
Houghton, MI 49931
906-482-1500
www.MiningGazette.com

Stars Align For East

Brandon Veale, DMG Sports Editor

McGaha's Lateral Leads To West's Only Points

MARQUETTE - All day long, the West All-Stars kept looking for that missing link; the big play or the perfect block that set their teams up for glory in many of their prep careers.

It never materialized.

The East made the majority of the big plays on a defensively-dominated day, and won the second annual U.P. Football All-Star Game 21-6 Saturday.

"Our offense wasn't what it should have been," lamented Baraga's Tyler McGaha. "We just let the big plays go."

McGaha played a key role in the only East points of the day. Early in the second quarter with the West offense just inside the opposing 20-yard line, Lake Linden-Hubbell quarterback Logan Chadde hit McGaha (making a rare appearance at wide receiver) on a short pass route. McGaha flipped the ball to Norway running back Jake Meneghini for a perfect hook-and-ladder play and a touchdown.

McGaha said he was certain the play would work.

"They were off 10 yards, so I just did a quick hitch, got the ball and tossed it to the running back," he said.

Turnovers and penalty yards doomed the West. The East defenders collected three interceptions (two by Sault Ste. Marie's Tyler Wollan) and a fumble, while the West had three second-half personal fouls on special teams that led to poor field position.

Gladstone's Kyle Jensen, selected as the all-U.P. Dream Team quarterback, demonstrated why midway through the first quarter. With the right side jammed up, he cut back on a keeper and ran 53 yards to the end zone to open the scoring.

"I just came around the corner and saw the defense overplay, so I took the cutback. Then, I just had to beat one guy," he said.

Jensen, picked as the East's Offensive MVP, will try to walk on to the football team at the University of Michigan.

The West outgained the East 136-64 in the first half and held it to one first down, but neither side generated sustained offense. Hancock's Reece Anderson saw time at linebacker and said the game was faster, with a higher level of competition.

"It's a lot tougher to make plays," he said.

After the West went three-and-out to start the second half, the East went 42 yards in six plays, scoring on an 18-yard fade pass from Jensen to Justin Salzman of Menominee.

Largely thanks to the poor field position, the West never advanced the ball farther than the East's 48 in the second half, and that drive ended when Wollan picked off Chadde at the 31 midway through the fourth quarter. Five plays later, the East provided the decisive blow when Manistique teammates Josh Mickelson and Garde Kangas linked up on a 46-yard pass play down the middle of the field.

Dustin Demers of Manistique made 10 tackles and was named his team's defensive MVP. Salzman earned the East team's Character Award. For the West, Pat Flood of Iron Mountain was the Offensive MVP with 50 running and 53 passing yards. Tim Obradovich of Iron Mountain was the Defensive MVP and Jim Wheeler of Forest Park won the Character Award.

Of the 16 area players who participated, one who got his name called early and often was Ewen-Trout Creek punter Colin Ahlskog. Ahlskog had several solid kicks, including a third-quarter boot that got a favorable bounce and rolled 55 yards down the Superior Dome turf.

"I guess it just got lucky and had that good front-spin to keep going," he said.

Chadde had five completions for 20 yards and five runs for minus-1. Brad Anderson of Calumet was the area's leading rusher, with 10 yards on six carries. McGaha had two catches for 14 yards to lead area receivers.

On defense, L'Anse's Dan Perrault (a Michigan Tech recruit) made three solo tackles at linebacker, while Ryan Moreau of Ontonagon and Mike Niemi of Baraga made a tackle apiece.

NOTES: The game was the last to be played on the Superior Dome's original AstroTurf surface ...

The two sides have split the first two All-Star Games, as the West won 38-10 in 2008. However, Menominee players were assigned to the winning side in both games...

The game will air on tape delay on WLUC-TV6 Saturday at 1 p.m....

East running back Kyle Smock of St. Ignace played despite missing his entire senior season with a knee injury and ran for 22 yards on five carries...

17 area players made the trip to Marquette, but only 16 played. Josh Verran of Hancock had to sit out with an infection in his knee...

Earlier in the week, the players participated in skills challenges. Perrault won the Strongest Man competition for non-linemen, bench pressing 225 pounds 16 times...

McGaha will be one of six players to also compete in the U.P. All-Star Basketball Classic Saturday in Escanaba.

GAME FACTS:

East 7 0 7 7 – 21

West 0 6 0 0 -- 6

First Quarter

East - Kyle Jensen (Gladstone) 53 run (Andrew Figures [Cedarville] kick), 5:49

Second Quarter

West - Jake Meneghini (Norway), 11 lateral from Tyler McGaha (Baraga) [Kick failed], 11:41

Third Quarter

East - Justin Salzman (Menominee), 18 catch from Jensen (Figures kick), 8:44

Fourth Quarter

East - Garde Kangas (Manistique), 46 pass from Josh Mickelson (Manistique), (Figures kick), 4:35

Statistics

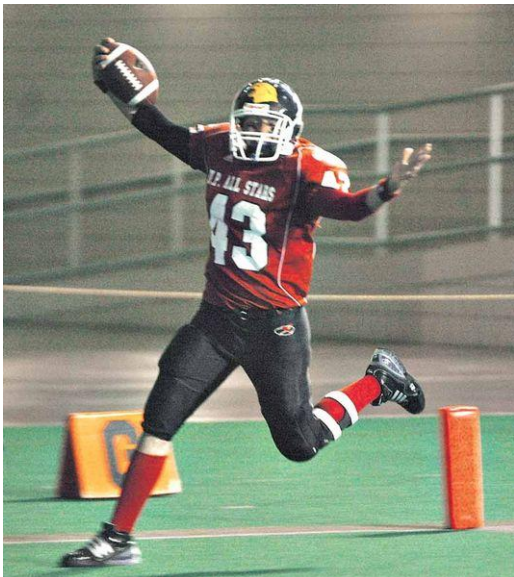
Total offense: East 186 (107 run, 79 pass), West 175 (112 run, 63 pass)

First downs: East 3, West 6

Passing leaders: East, Mickelson, 1-3-1-1-46; West, Flood (Iron Mountain), 6-15-0-1-61

Rushing leaders: East, Jensen, 9-92; West, Flood, 11-46

Receiving leaders: East, Kangas, 2-53; West, Veraghen (North Central), 3-47



West running back Jake Meneghini of Norway celebrates after scoring on an 11-yard lateral from Baraga's Tyler McGaha in the second quarter Saturday. McGaha caught a pass from Logan Chadde of Lake Linden-Hubbell to start the play.
(DMG Photo by Brandon Veale)



Dan Perrault of L'Anse takes the field during player introductions for the U.P. Football All-Star Game Saturday at the Superior Dome in Marquette. The Michigan Tech recruit had three tackles in the West's 21-6 loss.