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Calumet, In Many Colors

By Brandon Veale - DMG Sports Editor

Calumet High School's colors are blue and gray. But when I went to the U.P. Football All-Star Game, I found that the Copper Kings logo had run riot throughout the color palette.

The exchanging of helmet logos is customary at any all-star football event. However, it appears the Copper Kings, represented by players Jake Bjorn and Brad Anderson and coaches John Croze and George Twardzik, brought Calumet C's by the truckload.

I saw Calumet on L'Anse's purple, Ewen-Trout Creek and Forest Park's black, Norway's dark blue and in what was probably the most visually-disturbing of all, Iron Mountain's gold.

In what developed into a sort of theme throughout the interviews I did with players before and after the game, this was an event stripped of local animosity and personal rivalry, boiled down to two objectives: Win and have fun.

Almost all the intensity of a regular-season sideline was there, especially when it was becoming apparent that the tide was tilting against the West.

Interviews with losing players aren't easy. I'm sure none of the guys I saw or talked to wanted to discuss losing the last football game many of them would ever play. But they were gracious, and underneath all of the disappointment, it was apparent they'd experienced something they'll never forget.

Among the other things I noticed at Saturday's game:

A nice crowd. I'd make a ballpark estimate of about 1,500, which is a heck of a draw when you consider that this was an exhibition, played way outside of football season (in June), on one of the best days of the summer so far.

Lake Linden-Hubbell coach Andy Crouch gets credit for the call on the hook-and-ladder play that resulted in the West's only score of the game. However, after observing their offense during my brief indoctrination to LL-H football last fall, I fear the Lakes may have hit their quota of pass plays for the season already.

Mid Peninsula's football program merged with Rapid River at the beginning of the 2008 season, but the Wolverines lived on for at least another day: The East's Travis Depuydt and Earl Lancour, both MPHS grads, wore their white Mid Pen helmets Saturday as opposed to purple Rapid River helmets.

The third annual game is already scheduled for June 26, 2010. Because of scheduling requirements set by NMU's turf replacement project this year, the event had to flip-flop with the U.P. All-Star Basketball Classic, which takes place Saturday in Escanaba.

And finally, a not-so fond farewell to the aforementioned carpet. I remember marching on it in school, which was back when the Dome turf was so cool, everyone wanted to play on it in the last three weeks of the regular season, not to mention playoffs.

My fondest memory? Probably trying to use the static electricity I'd built up to give electric shocks to classmates. Now, all I got out of the experience was a stiff back and a sense of gratitude that I didn't have any turf burns for coach to spray disinfectant on.