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## Brown, Brooks steal show at Foothills

By: Josh Yohe, Daily News Staff Writer

**Dana Brown and Shane Brooks began their respective high school careers at Wilson Christian Academy playing for South Allegheny High School.**

**In the years that followed, Brown and Brooks parted ways but remained friends and went on to enjoy exceptional individual success at Clairton and Duquesne, respectively.**

For one night, Brooks and Brown were reunited at Norwin High School and if there were any questions why the two running backs are headed to Division I colleges this year, they were answered Saturday night.

Brown was named the overall MVP and Brooks the team MVP at the 10th annual Foothills Football Classic after leading the South to a 13-8 win over the North for the eighth consecutive time.

"I wouldn't mind having those two guys on my team," said Thomas Jefferson coach Bill Cherpak, who led the victorious South squad. "It's scary to think what they might have done if they really had time to learn the offense."

Brown scored both touchdowns and Brooks provided the game's most thrilling play - an 80-yard run - in what was a defensive struggle. Brown finished with 72 yards, while Brooks ran for 110.

"It was nice to be able to play with Dana tonight," Brooks said. "I played my first high school football game with him and now I played one of my last. It was a lot of fun for both of us."

While Brown and Brooks were playing their final football game together, McKeesport Area's Dejan Stevens played his first in almost 10 months. Stevens tore his ACL in McKeesport's season opener last fall and missed the rest of his senior season.

Saturday, the Clarion University recruit played with reckless abandon. He led all players with eight tackles, recorded a sack and forced a fumble late in the fourth quarter to preserve the South's lead.

"I felt good out there," Stevens said. "It was very intense, but I felt confident during practice all week and during the game."

Cherpak was delighted that Stevens and other players who missed much of the 2004 season due to injury, such as Elizabeth Forward's Jesse Stasko, were able to participate in Classic.

"That's one of the best things about this game," he said. "It's important to be able to give kids like that an opportunity to play one last football game."

Neither team mounted much of a passing attack. With a plethora of running backs, the North controlled play in the first half, but two drives stalled deep in South territory.

The North got on the board first when Burrell defensive end Bob Johnson caught Thomas Jefferson quarterback Brad Dawson for a safety on the South's opening possession.

The game remained that way until Brooks, a Pitt recruit, broke loose on an 80-yard run to the North 1. He appeared to cross the goal line, but was ruled down just short of the end zone.

"There's no doubt I was in," Brooks insisted. "It was a bad call. But that's OK because we still got the touchdown."

Brooks was stuffed on the following play, losing a yard, but Brown, who'll attend Iowa in the fall, gave the South the lead when he scored from two yards out.

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"I told my offensive line that with Brown and Brooks, all we need to do is open up a little bit of a hole," Cherpak said. "Those two guys are so good, they are going to make something happen if they get a little bit of room."

The North reclaimed the lead before halftime when A.J. Graves went 51 yards after receiving a pitch and lateral play from Jeannette teammate Jordan Thomas. Burrell quarterback Garyn Ehrlich hit Thomas for 12 yards to begin the play.

After that, the South defense controlled the game.

Duquesne's Courtney Dunn was one of the game's best players, finishing with six tackles. He was a physical presence throughout.

Former Clairton star Andre Carr had a 60-yard punt return for a touchdown called back on a questionable clipping penalty, but later picked off an Ehrlich pass to preserve the lead.

Brown scored his second touchdown from four yards out in the fourth quarter to give the South the lead for good.

"I wish I would have had a chance to practice more this week because I know I would have played better," he said. "But it was great to be out there playing football with these guys. Everyone had a good time."



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