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## Local players help North to victory in Foothills Classic

By yourmonroeville

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Players from Gateway and Woodland Hills on the same offensive line? Clairton and Duquesne standouts on the same sideline?

When rivals in the fall become teammates in the summer, it's time for high school all-star football.

The 12th annual Foothills Football Classic brought together 75 of the top high school football players in eastern Allegheny, Fayette, Westmoreland and Indiana counties.

It was one more chance for these seniors to play one more high school football game.

Players from Class A high schools went toe-to-toe with their Quad A counterparts.

When the dust settled, the North, led by players from Gateway, Woodland Hills, Penn Hills, Penn-Trafford and Franklin Regional, snapped an eight-game losing streak to the South, winning 20-10 before more than 2,000 fans at Norwin High School.

The North defense limited the South to just one field goal through three quarters.

One of the main reasons for the North's defensive success was the play of Franklin Regional linebacker Matt Giugliano.

The 6-foot, 190-pounder recorded three sacks, forced a fumble which led to a touchdown, was credited with a safety and made a key stop on fourth-and-inches from the North 16 as the South was on the march to open the second half.

For his efforts, Giugliano was named the game's Most Valuable Player.

"This is a great honor," said Giugliano, who will play at Clarion in the fall.

"I wanted to come out and prove myself. Some say I'm undersized. I just used my speed and determination to get to the ball."

Giugliano was joined by Panther teammates Joe Fox and Jordan Krentz on the North squad

Woodland Hills Lance Patterson earned North MVP honors.

He returned a fumble 44 yards for a touchdown to give the North an 18-3 lead in the second quarter and snuffed out a South drive with an interception early in the fourth quarter.

"It was the first time I played defense in two years," said Patterson, who played cornerback, wide receiver and special teams in Saturday's game.

"I was a little nervous for the simple fact that I hadn't played cornerback for a number of years. I felt better (on defense) when I saw more and more routes coming toward me. I got more comfortable. I came into the game hoping I would make a lot of plays."

Fellow Woodland Hills senior Blane Jefferson returned a fumble 30 yards for a score in the first quarter. Jefferson scooped the ball up after Giugliano hit South quarterback Justin Shaffer (Yough) and jarred the ball loose.

Shaffer lost three fumbles in the first half.

Jefferson also returned two fumbles for touchdowns for Woodland Hills this past season.

"I was excited to get to play one more time and hit one more time," Jefferson said.

Penn-Trafford's Paul Stefanik, a Kent State recruit at linebacker, led the North in rushing with 47 bruising yards on 14 carries.

"I didn't expect to get that many carries," Stefanik said.

"They kept handing me the ball. I told them to keep giving it to me. It felt great to get in there and play after seven months. It was nice to show what I can do on the offensive side of the ball. "

Stefanik had runs of 14, 11 and 12 yards in the game.

Fellow Warrior Matt Curry, who is continuing his football career at Geneva College, got the North on the board in the first quarter with a two-yard plunge. He finished with three carries for six yards.

Curry also saw a few plays at cornerback for the first time in his high school career.

"It felt good to play one more game and play with guys you've gone against your whole life," Curry said.

Stefanik, Curry and lineman Bill Holtzer played against Warrior assistant coach Mark Crovak, who served as a South assistant to head coach Greg Meisner (Hempfield).

Crovak's son, Nick, a Hempfield graduate, played for the South in Saturday's game.

"That turned things up a notch," Curry said. "It was fun."

Joining Patterson and Jefferson from Woodland Hills were lineman Greg McClellan and linebacker Luke Trowell.

"We came out with a lot of intensity," said McClellen, who played both sides of the ball and made three tackles on defense.

"It felt great to go out with a win,"

Penn Hills lineman Ken Airgood was happy to be able to put the pads back on after seven months.

"It was great to come out and hit again," Airgood said.

"The week of practice helped me get my cardio back. After the first pop, instinct took over."

Penn Hills receiver Brandon Carter was selected to play in the game, but a hamstring injury during the week of practice kept him out of the game.

"I didn't want to risk messing it up any further by trying to play," said Carter, who will play football at Kiski Prep in the fall.

"It was tough not being able to play, but I wanted to support the team any way I could. We got the win and I'm happy about that."

Gateway's Leonard Miller played the entire game at center and served as one of the North captains.

He was also a recipient of a \$500 scholarship from the North Huntingdon Township Association of Business.

"All week, the North coaches told us how the North hadn't won in eight years," Miller said.

"That motivated me to play even harder. It was exciting to help the North get a win."

The night was especially emotional for South players Ulysses Brown III and George Tyler, representatives of Duquesne.

Duquesne School District was shut down earlier this month and the Foothills Classic was the final sporting event to feature Duquesne athletes.

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