

## High School Sports

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# Cooper's defensive effort crucial for Blue

Delcastle defensive end thwarts several Gold drives to help preserve win

BY KEVIN TRESOLINI • THE NEWS JOURNAL • JUNE 22, 2008

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NEWARK -- Frank Moffett was seeking playmakers in Saturday night's 53rd annual DFRC Blue-Gold All-Star [Football Game](#).

Philip Cooper answered his Blue team coach's call.

The 6-foot-3, 215-pound stand-up defensive end from Delcastle High made a steady stream of contributions, each of which was crucial in the Blue's down-to-the-wire 23-20 victory at Delaware Stadium.

"I loved this night," Cooper said afterward. "This was a great game for me. My team put it together. They [the Gold] were talking trash all week, and we really wanted it and we took it."

After Kyle Gray's 16-yard interception return for a touchdown on the Gold's first offensive play, Cooper thwarted the Gold on its next possession. He forced a fumble that was recovered by teammate Jason Aviola of St. Mark's at the Blue 33-yard line.

On the Gold's next series, Cooper sacked Gold [quarterback](#) Nick Kmetz for a 7-yard loss.

In the second half, Cooper recovered Monte Murray's fumble to end another Gold series. Later in the third quarter, he had the first hit on Gold quarterback Matt Campbell, resulting in a safety that pulled the Blue to 17-15.

"That's what I do, that's what I like to do, that's what I'm expected to do," Cooper said of his playmaking ability. "It was just another day for me, but a great day."

He hopes to have more of the same at Wesley College, where Cooper will enroll this fall.

### Line of attack

Pat McCloskey missed a couple of early-week Blue-Gold practices due to an ankle injury. But he was healthy enough Saturday, from his right offensive tackle position, to help drive a Blue rushing attack that compiled 299 yards, six shy of the game record. The St. Elizabeth graduate was chosen Blue Hen Touchdown Club Lineman of the Game.

"We had to run the ball down their mouth," McCloskey said of the Blue's approach.

He'll attend Nassau Community College on Long Island, N.Y., this fall.

### INTERACTIVE WEATHER

## Legs and arms

Newark's Alex Carlton kicked a 30-yard [field goal](#) for the Gold's first points with 10:18 left in the first half, then tackled Salesianum's Sal Viscount on his subsequent kickoff return.

Carlton's 49-yard field goal in the fourth quarter set a Blue-Gold record, surpassing the 41-yarder his brother, Chris, who attended McKean, booted in the 2002 game.

## A Golden night

Sussex Central lineman Joe Costa made an impact at both ends of the field for the Gold in the third quarter.

Costa blocked a punt that gave Gold possession at the Blue 7-yard line.

Later, Costa recovered Vinnie Ranauto's fumble near the end zone to help the Gold temporarily protect a 17-13 lead.

## Looking ahead

The 2009 Blue-Gold game could likely include several players destined for major-college football programs, as recruiters have started beating a path to the First State to scrutinize a strong crop of rising seniors.

Caesar Rodney [cornerback](#) Duron Harmon verbally committed last week to Rutgers and is likely to have company in NCAA Division I-A.

Among those who have received I-A offers: Newark lineman Malcolm Bunch; William Penn defensive back/wide receiver Louis Toler; and Hodgson Vo-Tech's Merrell twins -- Jamil, a two-way end, and Jamal, a [wide receiver](#) and defensive back.

The state's top recruit might be Concord's Justin Brown, a 6-4, 215-pound defensive back/wide receiver who has received offers from Maryland, Rutgers, [Penn State](#), Pittsburgh, Tennessee, Wisconsin and Oregon.