

The Mining Journal
By: Kurt Mensching
Monday, June 30, 2008

Changing Times Ahead For Area Football Stars

MARQUETTE - For some players, the Upper Peninsula Football All-Star Game was a stepping stone.

The game Saturday at the Superior Dome was an intermediate step between being one of the biggest and best players on the high school field, and being one of the young, inexperienced ones finding his way through a college program.

For others, it was the end of the line, one last time to strap on the shoulder pads.

No matter what, it was an experience they'll never forget.

"It was awesome," said Cody Kangas, of Manistique. "It was the most fun we've had, all of us guys, in a long time.

"Going into the week, everybody was kind of off. Nobody was talking to each other because they don't know each other from anywhere. But once you get bonding together, it's amazing."

He signed as a quarterback to take his game to Northern Michigan University this fall, where he will likely be greeted by a red shirt for his first season.

"This is still high school, but it's all the best seniors in high school, so it's a fun experience," Kangas said. "Next year in college it's going to be even better, the best of the best again.

"Better and bigger. I look forward to that."

Matt Cowling of L'Anse is another player who will move on to tougher competition, when he plays football at Michigan Tech this fall.

"Man, you've always got to look for that new level of competition all the time," Cowling said. "That's what everybody out here likes. Man, you can't take a play off, because the kid across from you is just as good as you and he will get you."

Negaunee's Levi Jezek was representative of the other side of the equation.

Although he is smaller - "Coach always says I'm 150 pounds soaking wet, but I play like I'm 215" - Jezek showed how heart can overcome size disadvantages, as he won the East's defensive MVP award.

His football career ended when the clock hit 0:00.

"This is my last football game," he said.

"It's starting to sink in now that I'll never be doing this again. All throughout school, I was like, 'I've got one more football game left. But now it's all over. I'm going on to college, gotta get a career.'"