

# LAMORINDA SPORTS



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## Campolindo Returns to State Title Game for Third Time in 5 Years

By Karl Buscheck



Photo Andrew Federas



Photo Gint Federas

Thanks to a late interception by Dante DeLuca, Campolindo toppled Milpitas 27-24 to claim the Northern California Division III-AA regional championship on Dec. 11 in Moraga.

"This was just nasty football," said head coach Kevin Macy, as he stood on the field at Bob Wilson Stadium, surrounded by cheering players, students and fans. "It wasn't pretty. This was not a pretty football game. But if you wanted a junkyard brawl, you got a junkyard brawl tonight. Our guys can fight as hard as anybody."

The next junkyard brawl comes against La Mirada on Dec. 19 in Southern California at 6 p.m., as the defending-champion Cougars advance to the state title game for the third time in five seasons. Campo wouldn't be going back to the championship clash if not for DeLuca's pick with 1:41 in the fourth quarter.

"I'm so shocked right now," DeLuca said after his interception slammed the door on a potential game-winning drive for Milpitas and paved the way for senior Matthew Blair's 32-yard field goal with 23 seconds to go. "I was in the perfect place at the right time."

DeLuca was only in the right place at the right time thanks to the insistence of Macy, who benched the senior for a game early in the campaign after he initially refused to switch from safety to cornerback.

It was only fitting that the interception would determine the outcome in a game in which neither team could hold onto the ball.

"It was turnovers back and forth," Macy said. "Each team all night long was throwing it back in the hands of the other team. Dante's (interception) was so huge."

On offense, the biggest play for Campo came on the opening drive of

the fourth quarter when Macy and his staff dialed up a brilliant trick play. Junior quarterback Jacob Westphal threw a lateral to sophomore John Torchio – the team's backup quarterback – who then connected with senior wide receiver Madison Young for a 59-yard strike, as the Cougars raced out to a 21-17 lead.

"It was just a night of gambling because we couldn't sit back," Macy said. "We just had to take risks."

Campo had to take risks on the defensive side of the ball, too. The Cougars had to entirely re-work their usual defensive game plan as the team was running up against Division I opponent in Milpitas who sported a mountain of an offensive line.

The Cougars arrived at the matchup with Milpitas after securing the NCS Division III crown by smashing past Analy 38-21 on Dec. 4 at Diablo Valley College. Following a sleepy start to the contest, the of-

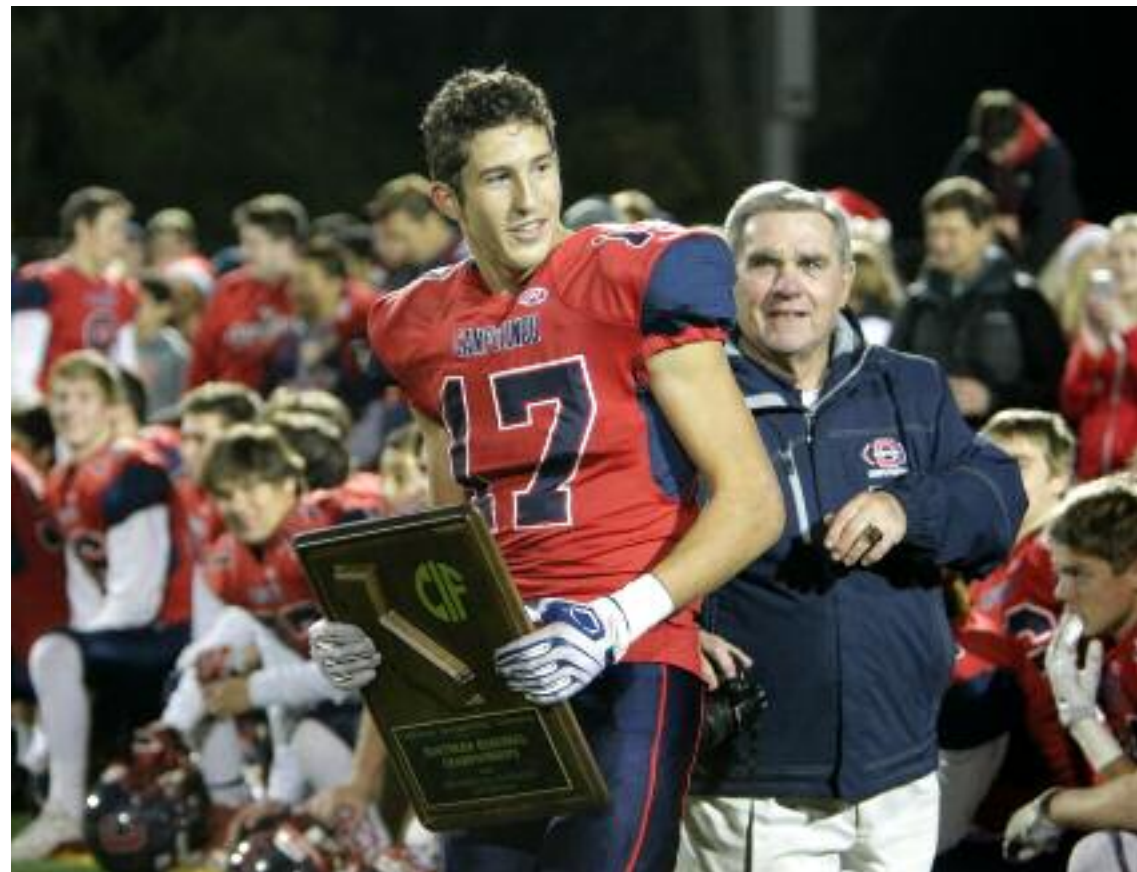
fense roared to life after junior Niki Moore blocked a first-quarter field-goal attempt by Analy.

"I think that was a huge momentum turn," said senior defensive/of-

fensive lineman Sterling Strother. "I think that was our first blocked field goal all year. It was a huge change in the tide."



Coach Macy assigned Travis Brainerd (51) to Milpitas's biggest player, Washington State commit Christian Haangana (77). Photo Gint Federas



Dante DeLuca (17) hoists the CIF regional championship plaque after making a game-clinching interception late in the fourth quarter. Photo Gint Federas

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