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## South All-Stars down North in youth football

### Emerging athletes shine in annual game

JENNY McCOY  
FOR FLORIDA TODAY

Cold weather and bright lights didn't slow down the South in the Brevard County Youth Football and Cheerleading Association Seniors division All-Star football game last Friday at Palm Bay High School.

The South took an early lead and never looked back, defeating the North by a final score of 62-28.

Leading the South were a pair of Melbourne Bulldogs — Lonico Portis and Chris Hill, who each contributed two touchdowns to the winning effort.

The South scored a touchdown on their first possession on a pass to Portis with 6:44 remaining in the first quarter.

The South added two more touchdowns before the North All-Stars could get on the score board, making the margin 22-0 with 7:44 left in the second quarter.

The North fought back, tallying two touchdowns from Suntree/Viera's Irvin Rutledge in the second quarter, but Hill gave the momentum back to the South with a kickoff return for a touchdown with 35 seconds left to play in the half, giving the South a commanding 36-12 lead at halftime.

While the North All-Stars started the second half with a kickoff return touchdown of their own by Rick Rivers of the Rockledge Raiders, they couldn't shut down the South's offense.

South All-Stars head coach Darrol Dennard of Melbourne attributed the South's success offensively to the number of Melbourne players on the team.

"We basically had our whole offensive line, running backs and our quarterback from the regular season," said Dennard. "It made it a lot easier to come together because the players already knew the plays."

The South dominated the game throughout the second half, outscoring the North 26-16, with

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**Breaking away.** North halfback Chevelle Buie of Rockledge, right, runs by South defender Brandon Fontaine of Melbourne during the Brevard County Youth Football and Cheerleading Association Seniors division All-Star game last Friday at Palm Bay High School. The South beat the North, 62-28. Ryan Seeloff, for FLORIDA TODAY

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Portis, Hill and Melbourne's J.J. Keels all adding touchdowns.

Despite the lopsided score, players and coaches alike said they enjoyed the chance to compete in the All-Star game.

"This game is for the kids to showcase their talents and play in front of the high school coaches," said Steve Hughes, offensive line coach of the North-All Stars. "The score means nothing in this game."

Coaches picked All-Star players following the youth football Super Bowl game in November and were able to practice with their players seven times before the All-Star Game.

Merritt Island's Joshua Foster said he enjoyed the ability to learn new skills and strategies during the practices before the All-Star game.

"It was a great experience and I had a lot of fun," said Foster. "It was great to have new experiences and I learned a lot from the different coaches."

Foster will attend Merritt Island High School next year and said he is undecided about whether he will play another year in the Seniors division or play for the high school freshman team next season.

The South All-Stars were comprised of players from the Melbourne Bulldogs, West Melbourne Cowboys and Palm Bay Pirates, while the North All-Stars were selected from the Merritt Island Mustangs, Rockledge Raiders and Suntree/Viera Lightning.

The game put rival teams such as the Palm Bay Pirates and Melbourne Bulldogs in matching uniforms.

Ryan Simpson, a Palm Bay Pirates player, said he especially enjoyed this aspect of the game.

"We came together and played well despite the rivalry that we have with the Melbourne teams during the regular season," said Simpson. "It was fun because we're all friends."

It also allowed players to truly put their skills to the test as they competed against the best players from teams in the Seniors division.

"It was fun playing against the other athletes with the same talent level," said Irvin Rutledge, the North All-Stars most valuable player. "It's unexplainable what an honor it is to be picked for the MVP award in this game.

Rutledge will attend Eau Gallie High School next year.

Chris Hill of Melbourne was named South All-Stars MVP.

"We had great players and a great team and we accomplished what we had to do," said Hill, who will attend Palm Bay High School next year.



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