



# CLASS 11

## STAPLES 21

## WEST HAVEN 20

By GERRY deSIMAS, Jr.  
Collinsville Press.com

NEW BRITAIN, Dec. 9, 2023 – Late in the second quarter, West Haven’s Armani Reed faked out two Staples defenders, including Max Maurillo on his way to scoring a nine-yard touchdown reception to give the Blue Devils a seven-point lead at the half.

But Maurillo made up for that mistake, tackling Reed on a two-point conversion attempt with 1:15 remaining in the game to help No. 1 Staples beat West Haven, 21-20 Saturday night at Central Connecticut State’s Arute Field. The Blue Devils had marched 70 yards in eight plays to pull within one point on a two-yard touchdown pass to Reid from quarterback Nick Conlan. Reid caught two passes for 35 yards on the drive.



Instead of going for one point and tying the game, No. 3 West Haven (10-3) went for the lead. Reid caught the pass from Conlan near the three-yard line but Maurillo brought him down on the one-yard line to preserve the lead and the win.

“Defense has been the heartbeat of our team all year,” Staples head coach Adam Behrends said. “I’m not surprised we were able to do that. It’s a perfect end to who they’ve been and what this team has been through all year.”



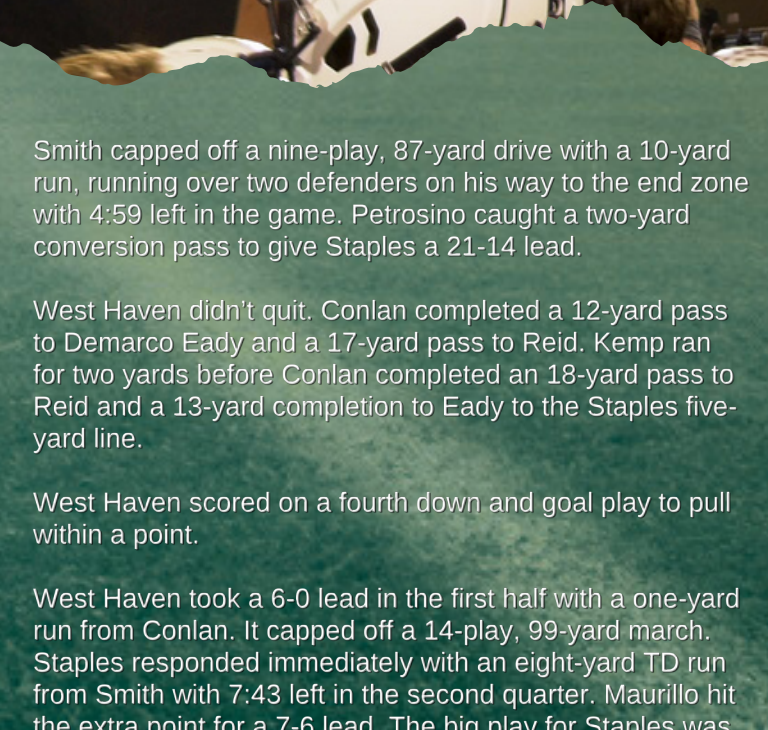
The victory gave Staples (12-1) their first state championship since 2005. And it was the 12th consecutive win for the Wreckers, who dropped a 10-point decision to West Haven on opening day, 33-23.

“We know they gave us their best shot after that first half,” Staples QB Caleb Smith said. “We knew we had a lot more left in the tank, a lot more coming.”

Trailing 14-7, Staples cut the lead to one on a two-yard run from Smith, with 2:09 left in the third quarter. But Maurillo, who had missed just one extra point all season, hit the upright on the extra point attempt and the ball bounced away, leaving West Haven with a 14-13 lead.

Behind Camren Kemp, the Blue Devils marched to the Staples 18-yard line before the Wreckers stiffened with the drive dying on the Staples 13-yard line with 8:23 left in the game. Kemp led West Haven with 147 yards rushing on 26 carries.

Smith converted a on huge third down and 10 play from the Staples 13, hitting Samuel Petrosino down the middle of the field for a 47-yard gain and a first down. Two plays later, it was Anthony Armentano with a 17-yard run to the West Haven 12-yard line.



Smith capped off a nine-play, 87-yard drive with a 10-yard run, running over two defenders on his way to the end zone with 4:59 left in the game. Petrosino caught a two-yard conversion pass to give Staples a 21-14 lead.

West Haven didn’t quit. Conlan completed a 12-yard pass to Demarco Eady and a 17-yard pass to Reid. Kemp ran for two yards before Conlan completed an 18-yard pass to Reid and a 13-yard completion to Eady to the Staples five-yard line.

West Haven scored on a fourth down and goal play to pull within a point.

West Haven took a 6-0 lead in the first half with a one-yard run from Conlan. It capped off a 14-play, 99-yard march. Staples responded immediately with an eight-yard TD run from Smith with 7:43 left in the second quarter. Maurillo hit the extra point for a 7-6 lead. The big play for Staples was a 55-yard run up the middle from Alexander Fiala to put the ball on the West Haven eight-yard line.

West Haven took a 14-7 lead with a nine-yard pass to Reid from Conlan and a successful two-point conversion play to Reid from Conlan with 3:40 left in the second quarter.



Staples 21, West Haven 20  
At New Britain  
West Haven (10-3) 0 14 0 6 – 20  
Staples (12-1) 0 7 6 8 --21

Second quarter  
WH: Nick Conlan 1 run (kick fails), 8:49  
S: Caleb Smith 8 run (Maxwell Maurillo kick), 7:43  
WH: Armani Reid 9 pass from Conlan (Reid pass from Conlan), 3:40

Third quarter  
S: Smith 2 run (kick wide), 2:09

Fourth quarter  
S: Smith 10 run (Sam Petrosino pass from Smith), 4:59  
WH: Reid 2 pass from Conlan (pass fails), 1:15

Individual statistics

RUSHING: West Haven – Nick Conlan 12-28, Carmen Kemp 26-147; Staples – Caleb Smith 16-90, Anthony Armentano 8-43, Alexander Fiala 1-55

PASSING: West Haven – Nick Conlan 20-28-0, 185; Caleb Smith 4-9-1, 81

RECEIVING: West Haven – Carmen Kemp 2-9, Armani Reid 8-75, Davan McFadden-Doram 1-11, Demarco Eddy 7-67, Aedan Coe 2-11; Staples – Alexander Fiala 1-0, Samuel Petrosino 1-47, Nathan Smith 2-34