

Robeson game was sidelight to outpouring of support for Caldwell High School gridder

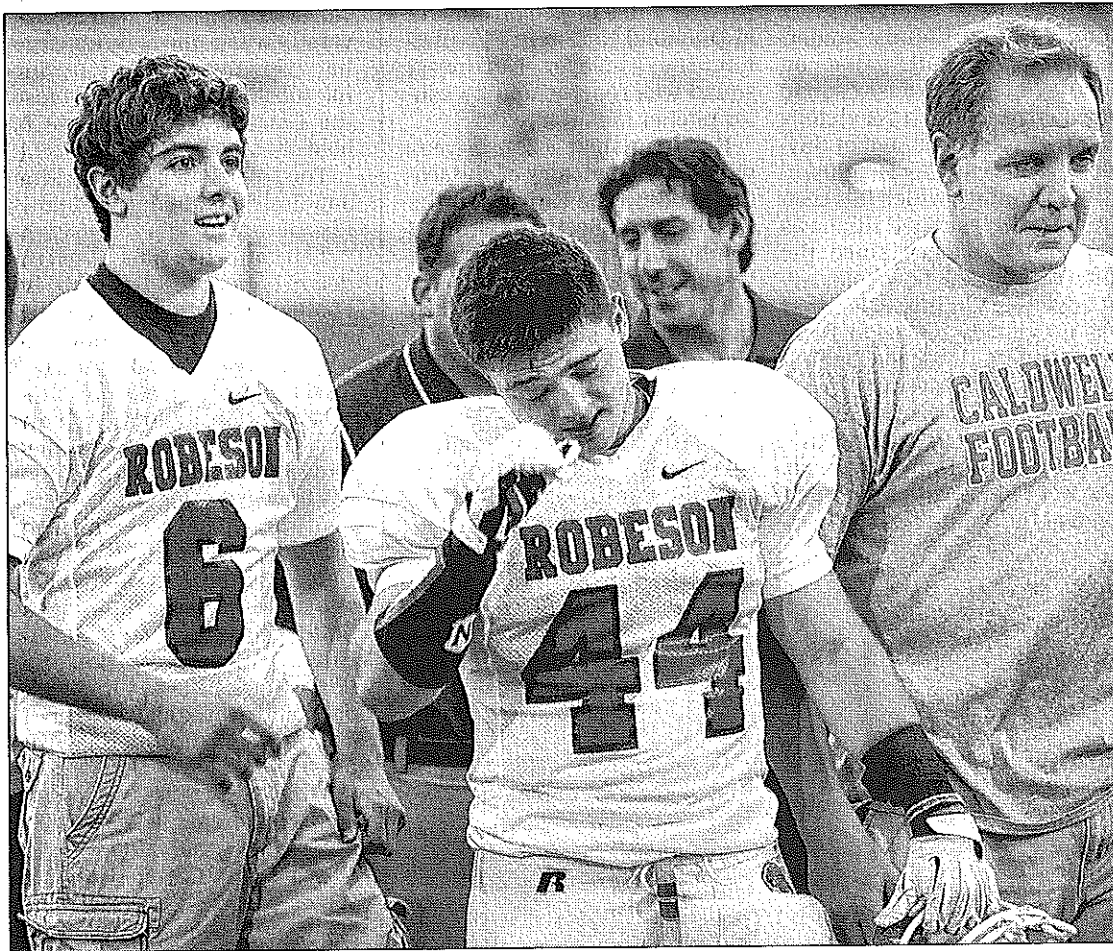


Photo by Bill Allen Jr.

Caldwell High School senior Jimmy Stille (44) displays his emotions as his best friend, fellow senior Steve Brown (6), who is stricken with leukemia, receives a standing ovation during halftime ceremonies at the

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WEST CALDWELL TWP. — Clearly, it was not the way that Steve Brown might have envisioned getting a standing ovation at the 21st annual Paul Robeson East/West All-Star Classic, a football game on Tuesday, June 10, at Robeson Stadium in East Orange.

A 6-1, 190-pound senior wide receiver and strong safety, Brown would have loved to have either caught a touchdown pass, broken up an attempted TD toss or made some other spectacular play in order to have brought the crowd to its feet.

Instead, Brown was saluted and showered with love and admiration and reaped a standing ovation after he was able to leave his hospital bed and appear on the Robeson Stadium field during halftime ceremonies.

In an ironic situation, practicing for the Robeson might just have also helped save Brown's life.

"It was the end of May and I was working out to be ready for the Robeson and the start of my college career and I just didn't feel right," Brown recounted. "I just couldn't catch my breath and had no strength, so I went to the doctor. had blood-work done,

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was told that I had leukemia and ended up in the hospital that same day," Brown said.

Diagnosed with ALL, Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, Brown immediately started getting chemotherapy and, when the Robeson Game was delayed a day because of bad weather, it made all the difference in the world.

'Incredible'

"My first treatment schedule had me in the hospital until Tuesday, so I knew I couldn't even be on the sidelines with my teammates on Monday night," said Brown. "But, when the game was postponed, that gave me a chance to get there and put on my jersey and that was incredible."

Fellow Caldwell High School senior Jimmy Stille recalled the moment.

"I can't tell you how happy it made us to see Steve on the field," Stille said.

"When Steve first found out that he had this disease and that he was not going to be able to play at Lehigh starting this fall, I

told him that I would call the coaching staff and let them know," said Brown's father, Scott. "But, he said, 'No dad, that's my responsibility and, right away, he made that call.

"I have to tell you, I was amazed. I don't know that I would have had the guts to have done that as a 17- or 18-year-old high school kid."

During his senior season at JCHS, Brown, a Second Team All-Super Essex Conference/Liberty pick, totaled 59 tackles, two signal-caller sacks, two INTs and a pair of fumble recoveries.

"I can't tell you how much all the support that I've received from the Caldwell community and the football community has meant to me and how much it's helping me get better," Brown said.

"I can say this though, you never know what's going to happen in life, day-to-day. You can't ever predict anything. But, you can try to make sure that what happens to you doesn't define you and that you always work hard and do all that you can to have health and be happy."

With the cure rate for someone of his age afflicted with ALL at over 85 percent, Brown is aiming to start his studies and football career at Lehigh in September 2015.