

Bulldogs hit paydirt with scoreboard

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Canadian Football League commissioner Mark Cohon and a bevy of local dignitaries were on hand Wednesday to officially unveil Sir Winston Churchill's new football scoreboard.

The clock has been up for awhile and was baptized by game action last week when the school's Bulldogs defeated the Grimsby Eagles in Varsity 1 football action.

"It was up just in time for the school's 50th reunion. I knew all along what it would look like, but when I first drove down Glen Morris by it, it looked sensational," Peter Partridge said.

Partridge, the football team's offensive co-ordinator, coach Steve Cook and defensive co-ordinator Scott Hill were the three quarterbacks of the plan to purchase and install the scoreboard.

Their involvement with coaching and the Churchill football alumni is a labour of love.

"I like giving back to the community and I'm very passionate about football. And the kids have demonstrated over the years that they too are very dedicated," Partridge said.

Partridge serves on the board of the Niagara Spears of the Ontario Varsity Football League, in addition to his coaching and alumni activities with Sir Winston Churchill. He's on the field three hours every weekday during the football season.

"It's such a great sport in that every position on the field is so important. And it's not always the best athlete who is your key player," he said.

The vision for a scoreboard germinated in spring 2008 when the Bulldog football alumni association was deciding what to do with funds raised from its annual golf tournament.

The association's mandate is to help provide extras for the football program and has purchased uniforms, a one-man blocking sled, a quick-feet rope apparatus, blocking bags, and three tackling/blocking dummies for the squad. Since 2001, the association has raised more than \$60,000.

Partridge and Cook approached school principal Mike Simpson with the idea, but Simpson was reluctant at first because he was worried about vandalism. He was eventually won over and Partridge contacted various manufacturers before deciding on Centaur Products.

Up next were countless hoops to jump through, including permission from the District School Board of Niagara, and a building permit and three variances from the city because the scoreboard was too big, too wide and had third-party advertising in a residential neighbourhood.

The total cost of the project was about \$36,000 and the funds were raised from the golf tournament, a \$5,000 donation from Just Junk owners and Bulldog alumni Mike Thorne and John Netherway, and further donations from alumni, parents, and friends. The entire project was paid for by June.

Partridge and fellow Bulldog alumni have only begun. They hope to put lights on the field, add a watering system, repair the field and upgrade the bleachers for the use of the school and community at large.

"We have a wish list and the school has been very receptive to everything. We're going to keep plugging forward, try to come up with some ideas and see what we can develop over the next couple of years," Partridge said.

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