

Championship rematch at Thursday Night Lights



The Stamford Hornets and Sir Winston Churchill Bulldogs will meet tonight at 7 p.m. in Game 2 of The Review's Thursday Night Lights high school football series presented by Falls Chevrolet Cadillac Buick GMC.

Dan Dakin, The Review

Posted By **DAN DAKIN** Review Staff Writer

Updated 6 hours ago

The Stamford Hornets couldn't possibly have come any closer to winning their first football championship in 13 years.

A perfect 7-0 in the regular season, another two wins to get to the championship game and a five-point lead late in the fourth quarter in that final game against Sir Winston Churchill seemed to be the recipe for a Varsity 1 title in 2008.

But it wasn't meant to be.

A late-game fumble led to a game-winning touchdown by the visiting Bulldogs and heartbreak for the Hornets.

It may not carry that same level of importance, but the same two teams will meet again at the Kalar Sports Park in Niagara Falls tonight for a rematch of that championship game in Week 2 of The Review's Thursday Night Lights high school football series presented by Falls Chev Cadillac Buick GMC.

More than 1,000 people took in the first game of the 2009 series last week, where Westlane came from behind to beat A.N. Myer 18-14.

Another big crowd is expected tonight for the rematch between the Hornets and Bulldogs.

"The returning seniors know what happened and it's important to them. It's pretty fresh in their memory," Stamford coach Brad Martin said.

Neither team playing tonight has lost in the regular season since 2007. Not surprisingly, both expect a tight match.

"We're looking at it as a good indicator of where we are and where we need to be because they have a very solid program. They won it the last two years in a row, so it will be a good test for us," Martin said. "We'll find out where we need to improve and what we're doing right and wrong."

Sir Winston coach Peter Perron feels the same way.

"I believe it's going to be a very competitive game. Anybody can take anybody on any given day, so if we don't play hard, we're going to get beaten. If they don't play hard, they'll get beaten. But I think we'll both come out hard. Perhaps it will come down to chance again," he said.

"Brad (Martin) has an excellent coaching staff and they always come well prepared. They're going to come for us and why wouldn't they? But, it's the same thing our way, we're going to come and be as competitive as possible. We had two excellent teams last year and there isn't much of a change," he said.

Though Kalar Sports Park is a neutral field, playing there might be an advantage for Stamford since they have now played under the lights three times. The championship game last year was played during the day, which Perron said makes a big difference.

"It's good we practiced on the field last year and played there in the championship game. But playing under the lights will be a new experience for us. We just have to adjust to the lights.

"(The Hornets) having played there several times makes a big difference because they have that experience. When I scouted them last year, they played very well at night. It's like their element. They have a little bit of an advantage, but it's an advantage we'll try to adapt to and neutralize," said Perron.

The gates open at 6 p.m. tonight with kickoff set for 7 p.m. The United Way will once again be on hand selling 50/50 tickets and the Niagara United Soccer Club, which joined the city last year to build the \$900,000 artificial turf field, will run the concession stand. Family Recreation Centre, one of the event's sponsors, will have a foosball table for people to play and is running a free draw for another table, to be given away at the end of the series.

Tickets are \$4 for adults and \$2 for students and seniors with proceeds going back to the local high school football programs.

sports@nfreview.com