

Battle of unbeatens will decide football title

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Two football titans are ready to lock horns.

The 9-0 Stamford Hornets and the 9-0 Sir Winston Churchill Bulldogs will take to the field today for the final game of the 2008 football season.

The two powerhouses will meet today at 2 p. m. in the Varsity 1 championship game, which will be held on the artificial turf at Kalar Sports Park.

The Hornets are trying to win their first football title since 1995, but coach Brad Martin said his squad is calm and ready for the game.

"They're in good spirits. They're a pretty loose bunch. They just want to work hard to prepare for their opponent and then beat them," he said.

Though they haven't met this season, the two teams have run a parallel course in the Varsity 1 league.

Stamford went 7-0 in the regular season and then beat Governor Simcoe in the quarterfinals and A. N. Myer in the semifinals. Sir Winston Churchill also went a perfect 7-0 and then beat Beamsville in the quarters and Holy Cross in the semis.

It's difficult to compare the two finalists since they didn't face each other, but when their records against the same teams are compared, Stamford has the edge.

Both teams met Myer, Beamsville, Centennial and Fort Erie in the regular season and in those four games, Stamford outscored the opposition 128- 32 while Sir Winston beat them 111-36.

"We know they're a very good team and we don't take anything for granted. We know they probably have plays up their sleeves they haven't shown yet," Bulldogs coach Peter Perron said. "I've seen what they do and they're very good at what they do. If we play the game we can, we'll be tough to beat, but the same goes for them."

In Martin's eyes, the key to beating Sir Winston is to shut down star running back Gary Spero.

"I expect to see a lot of Spero. We believe they're pretty run oriented. We're not going to discount the pass, but we know what their bread and butter is. When they're playing well, Spero is playing well," said Martin.

Stamford won home field advantage by way of a coin flip and it was their decision to play at the new Kalar Sports Park, where they have played three times this season. Sir Winston wouldn't play under the lights at the park, but agreed to the daytime game.

Perron's Bulldogs practised on the artificial turf for the first time Wednesday and said he had mixed feelings.

"When it's dry you have good traction, but when it snows, it's a skating rink because your cleats ice up," he said. "With grass, it might be frozen at first, but when you start pounding on it, it starts to muddy up and you have some traction.

"But like anything else, we have to adapt to it, and they'll have to as well," Perron said.

The coach said he feels Stamford may have the upper hand because of its experience on it.

"It's an added advantage because they're used to it," he said.

Sir Winston Churchill comes into the game as the defending league champions, but Perron said that's not putting any more pressure on his team.

"I don't look at us as being an underdog or (a favourite). I think it's a pretty even game. We're just coming to play football. Hopefully if everything falls into place we'll come out with the victory," he said.

Martin expects the first quarter of the game to play a major role in the final outcome, but doesn't want his team to panic if they're behind after 12 minutes.

"You have to set the tempo, but we fell if we're behind, we can come back. We're not cocky, but we're confident in our systems," he said.