

# Stamford stunned in football final

## Hornets stung 15-14 in Varsity 1 championship

Posted By Dan Dakin, The Review

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One mistake. One bad play. One mental lapse.

One fumble was all that made the difference Friday as the Stamford Hornets lost a heartbreaking 15-14 decision to the Sir Winston Churchill Bulldogs in the Varsity 1 championship game.

A fourth-quarter fumble by Stamford in their own end zone gave the Bulldogs the game-winning touchdown and, ultimately, their second-straight league championship.

As time ran out on what seemed like a dream season for the Hornets Friday afternoon, the shellshocked football team stood stunned in their own end wondering what happened.

"We talked about mistakes and we probably made one more mistake than they did and it cost us six points," Stamford head coach Brad Martin said after the game.

The two teams came into the championship game at Kalar Sports Park with perfect 9-0 records, and for the first half of the game it looked like Stamford would be the team to keep its unbeaten mark.

Before the game, Martin identified the nearly unstoppable Bulldogs running back Gary Spero as the key player his team needed to shut down. That threat was neutralized two plays into the game when Spero was taken out of the game after injuring himself making a block.

But in his place came Alexander Christie, a 15-year-old Grade 10 student who came to St. Catharines from Winnipeg this year when his father's job brought him here.

The running back carried the ball 20 times in the game for 122 yards, filling the big shoes of Spero.

"We have so many other kids that are willing to step up," Bulldogs coach Peter Perron said. "With our program, we don't quit. I don't want to sound cocky, but if you want to win a championship you have to come through us."

Stamford's Kurt Brockwell recovered a Churchill fumble deep in the visiting team's end in the first quarter, leading to a Hornets' touchdown on a five-yard pass from Cam Brockwell to Shiloh Ostadhassan. They followed up with an interception by Robbie Farquharson that led to another passing touchdown from Brockwell to Donald Schuell.

The Bulldogs responded on their next possession with a five-yard touchdown pass from John Krzeczkowski to Jeff Finley, but a botched point after made it 14-6 at halftime.

Stamford was to receive the kick after the break, but a trick onside kick play gave Churchill the ball back, and they used that possession to close the gap to 14-9 on a 16-yard field goal by Jonathan Demetriades.

The Hornets continued to struggle in the fourth quarter, but they seemed to turn things around when Remi Moreau intercepted a long pass from Krzeczkowski. The problem was, he picked the ball off deep in Stamford territory, and two-straight runs for negative yards put the Hornets on their own two-yard line on a

third down. They tried to run the ball a third time, but this time the Bulldogs defence stripped the ball, with Devon Miller recovering it in the end zone for what would be the game winning touchdown. A two-point conversion was no good, but the one-point difference was enough to give Sir Winston the championship.

Martin said the plan was to concede the safety, which would have kept Stamford's lead intact.

"We were just running it out and then if it was fourth down we were going to concede the safety. I think it was a mishandle on the exchange and that happens. Unfortunately it was on our two-yard line," he said.

The stops for negative yards that led to the touchdown were the turning point, which Perron called typical of his team.

"The defence stepped up and did what they had to do. When we smelled blood we took it," he said.

Farquharson was named Stamford's player of the game while Christie earned that honor for the Bulldogs.

For Farquharson, the loss was motivation for 2009.

"It will really fire me up. I want another shot at this," he said.

Stamford finished the game with 226 total yards of offence including 118 passing yards on a 10-for-15 day from Brockwell. Sir Winston had 271 total yards of offence including 122 passing yards from Krzeczowski, who went 9-for-17.