

Bulldogs give credit after beating Cougars

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Once again, the tortoise beat the clock, though only by a hair this time.

Less than a second remained in regulation Wednesday in Varsity 1 high school football at Centennial Secondary School when the host Cougars spiked the ball on Sir Winston Churchill's 15-yard line, hoping to kick a game-winning field goal.

However, their hopes for upsetting the previously unbeaten Bulldogs were dashed when the referee blew his whistle to end a cliffhanger that deserved a better ending.

"Time runs out before we can attempt a field goal, getting stopped on the one-yard line, that's been the story of our season so far this year," Centennial coach Rod Richards lamented after a heartbreaking 21-19 loss that dropped his Cougars to 2-4.

He had nothing but praise for his players, saying the setback wasn't the result of a "lack of effort" on Centennial's part.

"These kids deserve to win by the way they played today," the veteran coach said. "We lost, but the effort was there. The kids tried as hard as they could today."

Churchill head coach Peter Perron agreed with Richards that the Bulldogs weren't the only winners on the field Wednesday. He described Centennial as a "good team" with an offence "that can hurt you with one play."

He said that was why Churchill's game plan was focused on sustaining long drives -- "to eat the clock and keep the ball out of their hands."

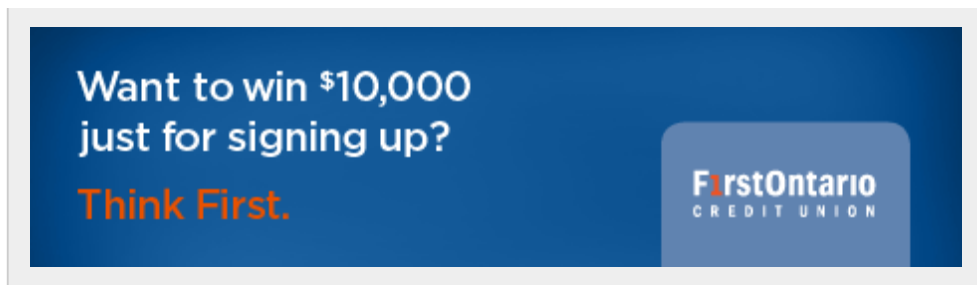
"If you don't give them the ball, they can't hurt you," Perron said in praising the Cougars. "Their record is not indicative of how well they play. They're a helluva team."

Perron's wasn't the lone voice on the Bulldogs who came into the game respecting the opposition. Running back Devon Miller, who led Churchill in scoring with touchdown runs of three and four yards, called his team's 6-0 record the product of hard work and hours of practice.

"We had to show up and play our best today, because no team in this league is unbeatable. We knew this was going to be a tough game to win."

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The fairy tale that wasn't to be for the Cougars started with the hare jumping out to a jackrabbit start. Centennial's Brian Lawrence fielded the opening kickoff at Churchill's 12-yard line and he didn't stop running until he reached the end zone.

That set the stage for the tortoise to enter the picture. Playing slow, steady and, above all else, safe football, the Bulldogs methodically moved the chains in a drive that consumed the entire opening quarter. Twice Churchill converted passes on fourth down to maintain possession and keep the Centennial offence shivering on the sidelines.

The teams changed ends before quarterback John Krzeczkowski punctuated Churchill's marathon march with a five-yard touchdown pass to Jeffrey Finley.

Centennial's next possession went just as quickly as its first, but with a far less satisfying result. A fumble on the ensuing kickoff after the Bulldogs tied the score at 7-7 was bobbled, giving Churchill a first down deep in the Cougars' end of the field.

Krzeczkowski engineered another scoring drive from there, this one culminating in Miller's three-yard run.

Already down by a touchdown, the Cougars looked all but out when a long kickoff forced them to begin a drive on their own two-yard line. They managed to avoid conceding a safety on their first two plays when a resigned Richards shouted "defence, get ready."

Lawrence heard only the thud of Churchill tacklers falling in his wake as he ran 99 yards from his second touchdown of the game.

The hare was back in the race. Lawrence almost scored his third touchdown on a long run in the final quarter, but he was finally brought down after a gain of 40 yards. Still, that impressive gain put Mike Boyd in position to score on a 10-yard run two plays later.

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