

Churchill headed to final

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Following Friday's Varsity 1 football semifinal in St. Catharines, the only thing more tattered than the Holy Cross Raider's championship aspirations were Alex Christie's football pants.

The fleet-footed and hard-hitting Sir Winston Churchill running back shredded the Holy Cross defence for 137 rushing yards and three touchdowns, leading the visiting Bulldogs to a dominating 35-0 victory over the Raiders. On his third touchdown run, the Grade 11 running back saw his pants nearly torn in two.

"I had a little hole in my pants and I dove in the end-zone and the guy got a piece of me and ripped the whole thing, the whole seam and everything," the 16-year-old said.

The 5-foot-8, 165-pounder gained many of his yards on hard runs up the middle seams Friday.

"I'm actually feeling great but tomorrow I'll be sore. I won't be able to walk tomorrow," he said.

But the Winnipeg native, who moved to St. Catharines last year, had his team walking tall Friday.

"He is a sensational running back, He's very elusive, he's very coachable and as Holy Cross saw today, he's very hard to break down," Churchill head coach Peter Partridge said.

As beat up as Christie's pants were the offence and defence of Holy Cross. Sir Winston Churchill dominated on both sides of the ball chalking up 312 yards in net offence while holding Holy Cross to 83. The Raiders, held to eight yards of net offence in the first half, didn't record their initial first down until there was two minutes gone in the final quarter.

"They're a great team and they played an excellent football game. They hit us very hard and that hurt us," Holy Cross head coach Jim Craig said.

Holy Cross looked like it would get a good break early in the game when they recovered an on-side kick on the opening play of the game. But the Raiders were off-side on the play and Churchill responded by scoring on the opening possession.

"It was a little bit disappointing but that wasn't the make-or-break play in the game. But it would have been nice to start that way," Craig said.

Holy Cross, which trailed 14-0 at the half, finished the year with seven victories in eight games and its second straight playoff loss to Churchill.

"We had a good season. The kids worked hard and the coaches had a lot of fun with them," Craig said.

The Raiders have several returning players next season and they will be bolstered by some strong junior players.

"We'll come back next year and get to the finals one of these years," Craig said.

Fans on the sidelines Friday began chanting "threepeat" halfway through the third quarter and the Bulldogs will have a chance to win their third straight Varsity 1 championship next Friday in Niagara Falls against Stamford.

"Our team came fired up. Our O (offensive) line and D (defence) definitely came to play today," Christie said.

"The practices were intense and we didn't take these guys for granted. We played the best football we've played all year."

The Bulldogs have managed to straighten out some problems that surfaced in the team's final two games of the regular season.

"We were taking victories for granted and we thought we would ease over everybody," Christie said.

The team's late-season struggles had Partridge more than a little concerned.

"We were at a malaise for a couple of weeks with a lack of focus during practice and we had a number of kids away with the flu. I think we just struggled with a lack of motivation."

Partridge credits the team's veterans for returning the team to its dominant self.

"We needed to step up the focus and from the first day of practice going into the playoffs, we've been sensational," he said.

THE SCOOP

Bulldogs 35 Raiders 0

Standard Star of the Game: Churchill's Alex Christie with 23 carries for 137 yards, including TD runs of two, five and four yards.

For the Sir Winston Churchill Bulldogs: Christie, 3 TDs; Andrew Krzeczowski, three-yard TD run and 4-7 passing for 77 yards, including 36-yard TD pass to Andrew Dunlop; Dunlop, TD and five carries for 44 yards; Ryan Saunders, five carries for 27 yards; Max Cameron, two catches for 28

yards; sack and fumble recovery by Joel Petriello; fumble recovery by Jeff Finley; fumble recovery by Jarod Cardas; sack by Devon Miller.

For the Holy Cross Raiders: Matt Sills, 10-22 passing for 64 yards; interceptions by Cory Pattison and Coulter Jasnich; fumble recovery by Jesse Barbas.

Game stats: First downs: SWC 16, HC [4](#). Net offence (pass-run) total: SWC (77-235) 312, HC (64-19) 83. Turnovers: SWC 3, HC 4. Penalties: SWC 7-for-55 yards; HC 10-for-75 yards.

Up next: Sir Winston Churchill plays Stamford for the Varsity 1 championship Friday in Niagara Falls.