

Bulldogs not so perfect after all

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Sir Winston Churchill Bulldogs' undefeated football season has come to a crashing halt.

The team ended up with two losses not on the field, but in the boardroom, when the Niagara Region High School Athletic Association stripped the two-time defending Varsity 1 champions of a 62-7 Week 1 victory over Grimsby and a 48-12 Week 2 victory over Stamford.

It was determined the Bulldogs had used an ineligible player in the first two games of the season and forfeit victories were awarded to Grimsby and Stamford.

As a result, Churchill moves to fourth from second seed, Stamford goes to second from third seed and Beamsville goes to third seed from fourth seed.

This means today's quarter-final schedule is Westlane at Churchill at 2 p. m.; Stamford at Simcoe at noon; Beamsville hosts A. N. Myer at 2 p. m. and Holy Cross hosts Eden at 2:15 p. m.

In a related move, Churchill principal Mike Simpson has removed Peter Perron as head coach and replaced him with assistant Peter Partridge.

According to Simpson, Perron told him and an NRHSAA appeals committee Monday morning that the ineligible player hadn't played in the first two games and his number was worn by another player.

"To put it bluntly, Peter misrepresented the situation," Simpson said. "He didn't tell me the truth of the matter and the boy in question did play both games, and there was a whole series of statements made by Peter that were quite clearly false."

Simpson relieved Perron of his coaching duties Tuesday afternoon.

"My response to the revelation that Peter had misrepresented the facts to the appeals committee was, 'Peter, you're relieved of your duties. You're not going to be on the sidelines, you're not going to be coaching and you're not going to be going on the football field,' and that would be for the duration of the season," he said.

Another meeting was held Wednesday afternoon where it was decided no further action would be taken against the football team or its assistant coaches. But the NRHSAA's sanctions committee decided upon further action against Perron, suspending him from coaching football for five years.

He will be allowed to coach another sport other than football in 2012.

"They felt it was unprofessional behaviour," said Rina Rode, the NRHSAA's athletic coordinator.

"They've rendered a ruling, specifically with regard to Peter and his future in coaching, which I intend to appeal," Simpson said.

Once the decision is sent out, parties have two days to appeal the decision, which will be heard by the NRHSAA's executive. The executive can lessen the punishment, overturn it or uphold the decision.

Rode expects the appeal would be heard early next week.

"It's tough to get these people," she said. "We're asking them to come out of class and they're all coaches."

An obviously upset Perron did not want to comment, referring The Standard to Simpson.

"He's absolutely remorseful," Simpson said. "He understands the huge error he has made."

Partridge and the rest of the team's coaching staff were unaware Perron had told the appeals committee that the ineligible player hadn't played in the team's first two games.

"We were under the understanding that we're appealing a clerical error that we didn't fill out the transfer papers," Partridge said.

He agreed to take over as head coach at the request of Simpson and the other coaches on the team.

"The focus now is on the 57 individuals on the Bulldogs," Partridge said. "We are focusing on and looking forward to playing Westlane (today).

"This is an unfortunate situation and it takes nothing away from the accomplishments of the kids and how hard they have worked."

The unfortunate part about the situation is that the player would have been eligible for the entire season had the proper paperwork been filled out. Once it was completed, the player was eligible to play in the team's third game of the season.

The player in question suited up at Churchill for three years and went to Collegiate for the second semester of the past school year for program reasons. He returned to Churchill in the fall.

"Not all of us are constitutional experts in transfer policy," Simpson said. "And Peter, unwittingly, did not fill in the paperwork, and that was the initial issue."

The principal has worked with Perron for eight years and never had a reason to question the honesty or integrity of the well-respected and popular teacher and coach.

"Peter has written a letter to what was the appeals committee and sort of laid everything out, sort of a full confession if you will, and gave them a sense of what truly was the situation," Simpson said.

"That's where we are now."