

## Solid start for Fighting Irish

It was a debut to remember for Johnny Augustine.

The American kid was difficult to stop as he ran for three touchdowns to lead the Notre Dame Fighting Irish to a 45-24 victory over the Sir Winston Churchill Bulldogs in high school football action in Welland Friday afternoon.

The 17-year-old from Florida had no problems adjusting to the Canadian style of football, using his speed and tenacity to run for a touchdown in the first half and two more in the second half.

However, Augustine wasn't the only reason Notre Dame won in their season opener -- it was quarterback Jonathan Mataya and receivers Adam Mataya and Mike Prytula who produced points too. Also, the offensive line was big and strong and gave Augustine room to roam on the field.

The lanky pivot Mataya threw two touchdown passes to his brother and one to Prytula and Tyler Lahey intercepted Churchill quarterback Andrew Krzeczowski late in the second quarter.

For Augustine, he was glad to have such a productive opening game in Canada with a new team and different atmosphere than what he was used to in the U.S.

"It was a rush. It was fun out there. I felt like a champ," said Augustine, whose goal is to play in the NFL.

The humble high school student/athlete gave credit to Notre Dame's offensive line, saying he couldn't have scored touchdowns without their performance.

"I'm proud of the guys," he said.

Notre Dame coach Tim Bisci liked what he saw from the rookie.

"He can run the ball, he's a tough kid. You can see how tough he is when he gets hit and keeps his legs going. The kid doesn't get winded too quickly," Bisci said.

Does it give Notre Dame an advantage having an American-trained player?

"He's an athlete. If he was a Canadian kid who was athletic like that we wouldn't even be talking about it," Bisci said.

"He's a kid who likes football, he works hard to play football, he's an athletic gifted kid."

The Bulldogs were the better team in the first quarter as they scored the game's opening touchdown on a short run by running back Alex Christie. But the Fighting Irish roared back, led by Augustine, and took it to the visitors for the rest of the match.

"Shaky start. Once we got rolling and got our legs under us, we started to really move the ball," Bisci said.

"We played physical -- if we keep playing physical good things are going to happen. We had a lot of intensity which is good for the start of the season."

With the realignment of high school football, Churchill moved up a level to join teams such as Notre Dame and Lakeshore Catholic in the top tier in the Niagara region. Bisci said he was impressed with how well the Bulldogs played and challenged them on the gridiron.

"They were physical in the film that I saw them on from last year, they were big and strong, they ran the ball well. Today we just outplayed them physically and we came up and made some plays," he said.

Bulldogs coach Peter Partridge said playing Notre Dame in the first week of the season was a good test for his men.

"We're a young team -- we're going to learn," he explained after the game.

He said his squad will have to challenge quarterbacks and force them to act quickly in future outings.

"We need to get pressure on the quarterback," he added.

Scoring touchdowns for Churchill were Christie, Max Cameron and Ryan Mattei.

Churchill will visit Westlane next Thursday while Notre Dame will travel to Blessed Trinity for their second game.