



SPORTS & LEISURE

Jags top Rebels for senior crown

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 Staff Writer

Having already run for two touchdowns and his Christ the King Jaguars driving for another score while leading 20-14 late the second quarter of their Halton Division II senior football championship game on Wednesday afternoon, tailback Dan Rovere was about to unleash some trickery on the Georgetown Rebels.

After receiving a pitch hand-off from quarterback Alex Dezan at midfield with just a few seconds before halftime, Rovere ran to the left then and surprised most of the 2,800 spectators at Hamilton's Ivor Wynne Stadium by heaving the ball downfield. The teams had traded touchdowns

in a thrilling first quarter that even drew Hamilton Tiger-Cats' coach and director of operations Ron Lancaster out of his stadium office to watch, but only a single point had been scored in the entire second period.

To Rovere's horror, his spiraling pass was picked off at the Georgetown 30-yard line by Rebel defensive back Andrew Cannell, who appeared to be home free for a long and timely TD interception return for the second consecutive week. Rovere was flattened after throwing the pass and watched while sitting on the turf a few seconds later as Cannell was remarkably tripped up by diving CtK running back Giovanni Boni and tackled by Dezan at the Jaguars' one-yard line.

No time remained on the clock, however, preventing the unbeaten Rebels from running another play and possibly getting the go-ahead score.

The 8-1 Jags went on to add three more major scores in the second half and posted a 40-27 triumph, as Rovere matched Georgetown counterpart John Leckie with a spectacular four-TD game in front of a few Canadian university scouts. It was the first Halton title in the four years of existence for Christ the King's senior program, made that much sweeter considering the opponent was the cross-town rival Rebels, who'd never won a regional crown and hadn't been to the final for more than 30 years.

Still, the topic of discussion for many, including those in the Jaguar post-game celebration, was the peculiar play call before the end of the first half that local fans will be talking about for years.

"I'm so glad that Boni and Alex got that tackle because it saved us huge," said Rovere, a first-year senior. "We would have been so down going into the second half after something like that happening. To look up and see the zeroes on the clock was a great relief."

Boni, who had an excellent showing himself with a number of first-down carries, said his 70-yard sprint wouldn't have mattered if Dezan hadn't finished off the tackle just inches short of the goal line.

"That was scary. I got talked into calling that play and it won't happen again," shuddered Christ the King coach Mike Harris when asked about "The Play".

"Dan shouldn't have thrown it. He was



Christ the King Jaguars' quarterback Alex Dezan (11) was effective as a passer and runner throughout his team's 40-27 win over the Georgetown Rebels Wednesday in the Halton Division II senior football final. Dezan threw a couple of touchdown passes to help the Jags claim their first HSSAA gridiron championship. Chasing Dezan in the photo are Rebels Spencer Troop (rear left) and Dan Kearns (54).

Photo by Eamonn Maher



Tight end Steve Ples pulled down this pass for a fourth-quarter touchdown and a 33-21 lead for Christ the King's seniors in the HSSAA Division II title game. The Jaguars avenged a loss earlier in the season to Georgetown by winning Wednesday at Ivor Wynne Stadium,

Photo by Eamonn Maher

told to eat the ball, but that's history now and he did have a great game. It shows you should stay with the basics because when you get too fancy and something like that happens, I'm sure it could have changed the whole complexion of the game if it went the other way."

For their part, the Rebels felt they were still in contention in the fourth quarter, even after 6-foot-5 tight end Steve Ples caught a 12-yard Dezan pass to make the score 33-21. But a GDHS fumble on the ensuing kickoff gave CtK good field position again, and Rovere took the next run play to the right and scampered 42 yards for the clinching points.

CtK's Doug Lowry also was on the receiving end of a long pass-and-run touchdown play early in the first quarter to open the Jaguars' scoring.

Leckie added his final TD of the day with only a few seconds left in his final high school game. Losing at the Halton finals wasn't the first disappointing defeat for many of the senior Rebels, who suffered a last-second heartbreaker two years

ago as juniors against Aldershot on a miraculous field goal.

"It was a well-played game and we felt that it was going to be close. Kudos to (Christ the King)," said GDHS head coach Randy Marinangeli. "We scored 27 points and usually that's good enough to win. What it came down to was that they made fewer mistakes and when we got behind we had to start throwing the ball long and it took us away from what we wanted to do and had done successfully earlier in the game."

Harris added that some last-minute positional changes had to be made just before Wednesday's contest after it was determined that standout safety Mike Schria wouldn't be able to play after getting hurt at practice on Monday.

"Mike's our main guy on 'D' so that really threw us for a loop," the head coach said. "Rovere, Peter Lac and Coulton Vetro stepped in in Mike's place and did the job. We had other guys play both sides of the ball who did an outstanding job as well."

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