



Sherwood Park Northstars vs. Camrose Buffaloes

November 1, 2009

A very loud and enthusiastic crowd greeted the Northstars as they sprinted onto the field at Clarke Park for their Tier IV semi-final against the Camrose Buffaloes. As it turned out, the Northstar fans had a lot to cheer about.

After the Stars kicked off to the Buffaloes, the Stars' defence quickly set the tone for the game. Aaron Chabaylo, back in the line-up after missing last week's game, made his presence known with opening tackles assisted by Mark Risdon and Adam Loov, both of whom had strong games defensively. The Buffaloes punted on third down and the Stars' offence started on their own 14 yard line. Their first play looked promising as Alex Irving burst through the middle for a 28 yard gain, only to have it called back on a Star's offside penalty. The Buffalo defence held them and the Stars punted on third down.

With the Buffaloes starting in great field position at the Northstar's 32 yard line, the Stars' defence came up with big plays of their own and were able to stop Camrose on their third and two gamble.

The Stars' offence took over on their 23 yard line. The second play of the drive resulted in their longest touchdown run of the day. Grady Forsberg sprinted through the middle, and with the help of a great downfield block by Irving, was able to score an 82 yard major. The convert was good, making the score Stars 7 and the Buffaloes 0.

The next series for Camrose was short as Colton Henderson intercepted a Buffalo pass, giving the ball back to the Stars' offence at centre field. With the Stars' offensive line playing strong, the team was able to execute plays to Daniel Marshall, Forsberg and Irving, ending the drive in a 16 yard outside play for a touchdown by Marshall. The convert was missed and the first quarter ended with the score Stars 13, Buffaloes 0.

The Stars' defence continued to play strong, forcing the Buffaloes to punt on third and long. Henderson returned the punt 33 yards, allowing the offence to take over on the Buffalo 31 yard line. Three plays later, Marshall had his second TD of the game with a 29 yard sprint into the end zone. The convert was no good, leaving the score Stars 19 and the Buffaloes 0.

The Buffalo offence continued to struggle against a fired up Northstars' defence. Jeremy Labrecque intercepted a Buffalo pass and ran 18 yards with it, giving the Stars' offence another

start in great field position on the Camrose 26 yard line. However, a bad snap ended the Stars' drive and they turned the ball over on yards not gained.

The Buffalo offence put together a series of plays that gained them some yards but were eventually stopped by the tenacious tackling of Henderson, Risdon and Mitch Friesen.

Back on offence, Star's quarterback Shaun O'Neill completed a pass to Jacob Bennett for a first down but a Northstar penalty called the play back. The Star's were eventually forced to punt, turning the ball over to Camrose on the Buffalo 27 yard line.

The Buffaloes were able to get on the score board with an 83 yard run up the middle for a touchdown. The convert attempt was no good, making the score Stars 19, Buffaloes 6. The Stars only had time for a few plays before the half ended.

The third quarter momentarily recalled the regular season meeting between these two teams where Camrose came from behind in the dying seconds of the game to snatch the win from the Northstars when the opening kick-off to the Stars was recovered by the Buffaloes. But fortunately, the Stars' defence was ready and stopped the Buffaloes on a long third down attempt.

The Stars' offence turned the ball over immediately on a fumble, giving the Buffaloes the ball on the Star's 26 yard line. After a successful third and 1 gamble, the Buffaloes were first and goal on the Star's 9 yard line. It was then that a timely backfield tackle by Friesen, resulting in a 10 yard loss, gave the Stars the breathing room they needed. They were able to stop the Camrose drive and take over on yards not gained on their own 15 yard line.

With Colton Henderson in at QB, the Star's were able to move the ball downfield on a series of first downs until a procedure call and the Buffalo defence put a stop to their drive. The Stars punted, giving the ball back to the Buffaloes on the Camrose 47 yard line.

The fourth quarter started with the Star's secondary being tested as the Buffaloes came out passing. Corey Hicks knocked down a second down pass, forcing the Buffaloes into a punting situation. The punt, however, never materialized as the snap was bobbled and the Stars took over on the Buffalo 30 yard line.

Back in as quarterback, Shaun O'Neill handed off to Marshall for a 30 yard run for his third major of the game. The convert hit the crossbar, leaving the score Stars 25, Buffaloes 6.

The next series, defensively, belonged to Mark Risdon as he sacked the Buffalo quarterback for a 9 yard loss and then again on the Buffalo third down gamble, ran down the Buffalo player for another huge loss.

The Stars took over on the Camrose 40 yard line but eventually turned the ball over on an unsuccessful third and 1 gamble. The Buffaloes got the ball back on their own 14 yard line and were able to move the ball down field despite some great defensive plays by Wyatt Sabourin, including a knocked down pass. Fortunately for the Northstars, the Buffaloes fumbled

the ball on a first down play near centre field. With the Star's Logan Schlamp recovering, their offence took to the field one more time.

With time running out, the Stars were able to keep possession of the ball long enough for O'Neill to run out the clock and take a knee for the win.

Head Coach Rob MacKenzie commented after the game that, "we have steadily improved all year long. We are playing very good football." With regards to the Camrose Buffaloes, MacKenzie stated, "we were prepared for them." About the momentary third quarter lapse, MacKenzie said the team needs to "learn to play with intensity the whole game. They have to be reminded that it's never over."

Looking ahead to the next playoff game, MacKenzie emphasized that "for the level of experience of these kids, a Tier IV final means a championship. It means just as much to these kids as a Tier I level." With a team made up of many first year players, an extended play-off schedule is something that will only benefit these athletes.