

St. Andrew's College Saints capture CISAA title with a convincing 37-8 victory



The St. Andrew's College Saints first football team made it look easy in the CISAA finals last Wednesday.

The boys cruised to a 37-8 victory over the visiting Upper Canada College Blues to capture the championship.

In a cool, windy, but luckily sunny afternoon, the Saints had come into this match without conceding a point in CISAA play all season. They posted 149 points forward and none against.

The Blues had won the coin toss and elected to defer the ball, giving the Saints the first shot at the end zone.

Beginning on the two-yard line, led by quarterback Anthony Lio, the Saints moved the ball exceptionally well. Markus Millar had some nice rushes, Lio some rushes of his own, Ashton Watson came in with a few end arounds and Roan Binnendyk made some great catches. As they entered the red zone, Lio found Teagh Tremain in the end zone to cap-off the 108-yard drive to begin the game and with the extra point good from Spencer Haslett, the Saints were already up 7-0.

Defensively, as always, the Saints were sound and left no opportunity for the Blues to get going.

Nathan Pahanich broke his way through the Blues' offensive line and brought down their quarterback for a huge loss that immediately shifted momentum.

Towards the end of the first quarter with the Saints knocking on the door again, Lio uncharacteristically threw an interception, heading into the second quarter only up 7-0.

That wasn't a deterrent to the Saints' level of play, however, as the defence came out swinging. The boys forced the Blues to take a safety, adding two points to the scoreboard.

On the ensuing drive, Binnendyk was all over this one making a few exceptional catches and broke some tackles to gain extra yards. Close to the goal line, running back Nicholas Belmonte punched it in making it 16-0.

The Saints would continue to go on and pound the Blues for the rest of the quarter. Lio earned himself a rushing touchdown and then, on another drive, Lio scrambled out to the right and completed a sensational throw off-balance to Jack Hudson who broke free in behind a few corner backs to make it 30-0.

On the next possession, Pahanich forced a fumble just inside the 10-yard line setting up a rushing touchdown by James Gillingham.

With a 37-0 lead, the Saints opted to replace Lio with Ronan Nordick and ran the clock the rest of the way.

However, to the Saints' dismay, with 2:59 left to go in the game, the boys coughed up their first touchdown of the season and two-point conversion. Blues quarterback Charles Price lofted the ball to Justin Chin who ran a vertical route into the back of the end zone.

When the clock ran out, the men in red, white and silver were filled with unbridled joy and fans, students and staff in attendance were thrilled with the victory.

"We had a game plan. We knew no matter where we were going to start we knew what we had on our script was going to move the chains. We sure as heck did it. I'm so proud of our kids that opening drive really set the tone," said head coach Marcello Lio after the win.

"The biggest thing was just to make sure we don't get complacent. When you're up big on an opponent in a previous game, a lot of the times you drop your level of play because you expect the game to go a certain way. Coming into the game, we needed to make sure we kept our mindset right. We did a lot of mental work throughout the week focusing on not getting too high, not getting too low, staying even-keel throughout the game and I think that really paid off for us in today's win," said linebacker and senior co-captain Tinaye Ngorima.

Ngorima, along with his other captains Lio, Watson, Pahanich and Gillingham, have all played their final game with St. Andrew's College.

Other players on the roster also played their final game of football at the school.

They are Charlie Guy, Riley Sullivan, Joseph Aitoro, Jack Hudson, Binnendyk, Nordick, Lucas Morrison, Wyatt Biggar, Jack Hargrave, Millar, Gabriel Ste. Marie, Declan Ste. Marie, Sam Power, Jack Bulmer, Seyi Akinbola, Kian Pouragha, Hudson Shea, Konstantine Sauer, Kai Kang, Tremain, Luke Brandon and Cody Kumm.

Head coach Marcello Lio said next year will be a big transition losing all of these talented seniors, but invites the challenge of bringing in new players to the squad next year.

Congratulations to the 2022 St. Andrew's College Saints on their CISAA Championship.

By Robert Belardi