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TOUGH SLEDDING: Oakville Titans ball-carrier Nathan Hay tries to plow through several Burlington Stampede opponents during Saturday's Ontario Football Conference bantam varsity final in Burlington. The Stampede defeated Oakville 76-22.

Titans downed in provincial final

By Jon Kuiperij
BEAVER SPORTS EDITOR

Oakville Titans bantam coach Steve Elliott knew beating the Burlington Stampede was a tall enough order on its own. Not having a full complement of players at his disposal certainly didn't help matters.

Playing without seven defensive starters, the Titans were defeated 76-22 by the Stampede in the Ontario Football Conference varsity division final Saturday at Burlington's Nelson Stadium.

Elliott did not want to take anything away from the dominance of Burlington, which won all eight of its regular-season games by an average score of 56-6. But he couldn't pretend that Oakville's injuries and player absences weren't a factor, either.

"We didn't want to be negative with our team going in. We tried to rally the troops as much as we could," Elliott said. "But when you're missing your starting defensive ends, your starting defensive tackle, your starting cornerback and a couple of your linebackers, you know the game's not going to go your way."

Burlington struck for a touchdown on its opening possession and didn't relent the rest of the contest, having its way with an Oakville defence that allowed approximately 30 points a game during the regular

season.

Calieal Dingwell had two touchdowns and Jack Baldin returned a fumble for a major to account for most of the Titans' scoring, all of the points coming in the second half.

John Rizzuti was named Oakville's defensive MVP, while Dingwell was the club's offensive MVP. Elliott also credited Titans quarterback Nick Skura for demonstrating good poise in the pocket despite being under constant pressure; slotback Alexander Filippini for fighting through an ankle injury; and cornerback Will Elliott for a strong performance in the Oakville secondary.

The lopsided loss was an unfortunate end to an otherwise successful season for the Titans bantams, making their first-ever appearance in the provincial final. Oakville finished atop the North Division with a 5-3 record and was the only team to score more than 13 points against Burlington this year (the Titans put up 28 points in a regular-season loss June 3).

"My message to the guys was, 'You made it to the finals, You played a great season. You can't be upset, you can't be sad, you can't be down,'" Elliott said.

"We were just happy to make the finals, and we enjoyed it. Even though it was just to get kicked in the gut."

Women's soccer bronze emotional for former star

For nearly a decade, Kara Lang was the most recognizable face of women's soccer in Canada, the child prodigy that developed into one of the best players in our country's history.

Lang helped put the Canadian women's program on the international soccer map. She played in the 2003 FIFA Women's World Cup as a 16-year-old, scoring twice during the tournament as Canada finished fourth. And she was an integral cog when the national team made its first-ever Olympic appearance in 2008, scoring the winning goal in a 2-1 victory over Argentina as Canada reached the quarter-finals before falling to the United States.

Unfortunately, of course, recurring knee injuries forced Lang to retire from the game last year at the still-tender age of 24.

Ultimately, those injuries cost her a chance to be part of Canada's biggest soccer triumph yet, that dramatic 1-0 victory over France in the Olympic bronze-medal game Thursday in England when fellow Oakvillian Diana Matheson provided the game winner in the dying seconds. All those years of blood, sweat and tears had finally been rewarded — and Lang was on the CTV consortium's set at the International Broadcast Centre in London, relegated to analyzing it all from more than 100 miles away.

"As soon as the goal went in, my eyes started welling up," Lang, now 25 and in her second year as an analyst for Sportsnet, said Friday from London. "It wasn't long before I caught myself and realized, oh (no), I have to go on camera soon. So I managed to hold it back, at least until after my segment was concerned."



Kara Lang

Considering all the time she put in with the women's program, including 89 career appearances with the senior team and 33 more with the under-20 squad, Lang's emotional reaction would certainly seem both inevitable and warranted. But Lang said she was more happy for her former teammates — and still her friends — than anything else.

"It's been a while now (since retiring), so it's not really something I think about anymore," the St. Thomas Aquinas grad said. "I couldn't be happier

for the players. If I had put in the last year and a half of work they had, it might be harder to say 'they' than 'we'. But they did the work, and they deserve all the credit and recognition, and then some.

"I think the way I feel part of it is that these are my closest friends. So to watch them achieve something so great and for their dreams to come true, I couldn't be any happier," added Lang, who was reunited with the squad Thursday night when it visited the CTV consortium studio for a group interview with Brian Williams. "I think anybody watching their best friends in the highlight of their life, I don't think they'd feel anything but pride."

She was particularly proud of Matheson, her long-time teammate who had always toiled in virtual anonymity before notching Thursday's memo-



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