



Volume 1 Week 31

Wednesday, June 98

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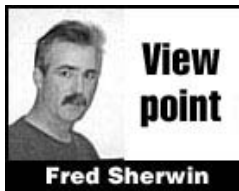
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The triumph of the human spirit



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Somewhere in heaven Dapo Agoro is smiling – pleased at the effort put in by his comrades in arms on the Lester B. Pearson senior boys soccer team this past Wednesday as they overcame the type of adversity few of us could ever imagine on a soccer pitch behind a high school in Sturgeon Falls in front of a crowd of about 20 people.

I can only thank the Good Lord that I was lucky enough to have witnessed it so that I can retell it for you here now.

I've been to a lot of big sporting events in my life – the World Series, the Stanley Cup playoffs, a Super Bowl, even a World Cup final – but none can compare in drama or emotion to the course of events that unfolded this past week on that soccer pitch in Sturgeon Falls.

Last Sunday, the team gathered in Ottawa in the aftermath of the murder of teammate Dapo Agoro to decide whether they should attend the provincial A/AA high school soccer championships or pull out. Some were still in a state of shock when the team vote was taken.

In the end they chose to go, determined to honour Dapo's spirit by doing what he would have wanted them to do had he been able to tell them himself.

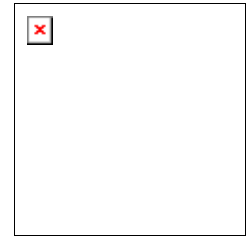
Once in Sturgeon Falls the Panthers played like fiends, with striker Justin Dasah scoring seven goals in the first two games.

In the third and final round robin game the Panthers lost to eventual tournament winner St. Mary's 4-0. After bouncing back to win their quarterfinal game 1-0, they faced St. Francis in the semi-finals.

If this was a fairy tale the Panthers would have won the game and advanced to the gold medal final. It isn't, of course, and the Panthers lost the game with a minute left to go in extra time. It was a devastating blow for a team that been through so much both physically and emotionally.

At that moment they were drained. Keep in mind these kids are only 17 and 18 years old. Many likely just wanted to pack their bags and head back to Ottawa to begin mourning their friend and former teammate.

Instead, they had to prepare for the bronze medal game an hour later. For any team to bounce back from such a heart-breaking loss is a lot to



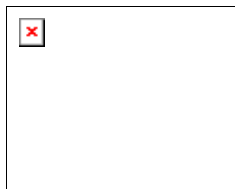
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Posted July 1



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 Caitlin diary updated
 August 31



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CITIZEN OF THE YEAR POLL

How do you feel about Canada's future over the next five years?

- Very optimistic
- Optimistic
- Pessimistic
- Very pessimistic
- More worried about the next five days

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LAST WEEK'S RESULTS

How would you grade the job the provincial Tories have done in light of last week's budget announcement?

- 0% A+
- 23% A
- 25% B
- 23% C
- 29% D
- 0% F

ask for. For a team who had one of their most talented players murdered just two days before the tournament opens to bounce back is ludicrous, or so I thought as I watched the crestfallen Panthers take the field.

By half-time St. Francis had jumped out to a 1-0 lead.

St. Francis would score again several minutes into the second half prompting Panthers' coach Rob Chiasson to comment that his players had nothing left in the tank.

No sooner did he utter those words than the Panthers mounted a comeback scoring two goals in less than five minutes. Again the euphoria was shortlived as St. Mary's scored another goal to retake the lead.

At that moment I was certain the game was over. No one could be expected to come back twice under such conditions. But the Panthers were playing for a higher cause that day. Not only did they score in the final minute of regulation to tie the game 3-3, they scored again in extra time to win the game and the bronze medal.

It was the most amazing thing I have ever witnessed in any sport at any level, and I feel privileged and honoured for having been there. My only regret is that more people weren't there to see it.

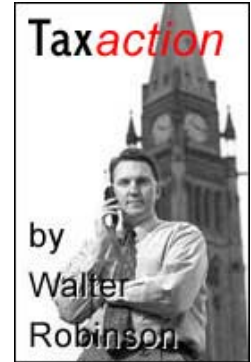
Those who lived it, the players who left everything they had on the field, will never forget it. It will shape their lives in ways they cannot even begin to imagine and for that they'll have their fallen friend to thank.

The person who murdered Dapo Agoro may have taken his life, but he will never take his spirit. It lives on in the hearts and minds of the Lester B. Pearson Panthers seniors boys soccer team – 2002 Ontario bronze medalists.

(If you wish to comment on this or any other ViewPoint column please write to Fred Sherwin at fsherwin@magma.ca)

Posted June 19

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