Former York Lion brings Grey Cup home

With no punting in overtime in the CFL, rookie Marc Liegghio stood on the sidelines and watched his Blue Bombers go to work.

His team just scored a touchdown and a two-point conversion. It was all up to the defence to seal the victory.

He watched Jeremiah Masoli begin to march down the Tim Hortons Field's turf. He saw Masoli's pass tipped twice and fall into Kyrie Wilson's arms. It was over.

In his first year in the League, he became a Grey Cup Champion.

He sprinted on to the field in jubilation. He hugged anyone with a Bombers jersey that he could find. He showed respect to Tiger-Cats kicker Michael Domagala on the other side of the field for his incredible game on the field. But when he went into the locker room and the Grey Cup in the team's hands, he said it is something indescribable.

?Going into the changeroom after and seeing all the champagne everywhere, it was such an amazing feeling. It's something you can't write,? Liegghio said.

?I literally couldn't imagine [winning the Grey Cup] at all. Going in there, I just wanted to do my job well. I wanted to make a name for myself and then, by the time we got to the playoffs, I said, wow, we're 11-3 right now. We're the hunted team. We're the ones favoured to win the cup this year. We came this far. We're going to finish our job. There was no thought of it, we won the Grey Cup in 2019. We wanted to win it this year.?

The Woodbridge, ON, native, who was drafted by the Winnipeg Blue Bombers 45 overall in 2020, brought the Grey Cup last Wednesday to the Aurora Sports Dome; his former stomping ground with the York Region Lions.

He had previously brought the Grey Cup to his former high school, Bill Crothers, and was going to bring the Cup back home to his family in Woodbridge as well.

With total euphoria behind his speech, Liegghio said he is also humbled by this victory and was adamant on bringing the Cup to every place that had the most impact on where he is today.

?It still hasn't hit me. It still feels like it's a surreal feeling to be at this part of my life. Seeing little kids come up to me and look up to me. I just want to give back now. I've reached my goal and my goals [are] going to keep growing I'm not done yet,? Liegghio said.

?Just seeing all the youth coming up to me and wanting to be taught, it's such an amazing feeling. It hasn't even hit me yet that I'm a professional football player. Looking at the Cup on the table and looking at everyone look at me, it's starting to sink in a little bit. But, you know, there's always work to be done and I'm going to get better every year.?

Liegghio greeted many local fans, took pictures and signed autographs for the youth in the dome, many of whom were motivated by his latest accomplishment.

A multi-sport athlete in his youth, Liegghio began playing soccer and eventually moved on to play hockey and rugby as well.

In high school, his friend's father recommended he play football. He began kicking, but made his way around each and every position.

Around the same time, Liegghio joined the York Region Lions football program. He began learning how to kick the right way.

At an OFSAA tournament with Bill Crothers, Western University recruited Liegghio.

He helped the Western Mustangs secure a Vanier Cup in 2017. In 2019, Liegghio lead all U-Sports punters and set an OUA record, averaging 47.5 yards per punt. That same year, he was a first-team all-Canadian for kicking and punting and also broke the record for the most field goals in a career.

Then, in 2020, he was selected by the Blue Bombers in what he calls the highlight of his life.

Liegghio thanked all of his coaches that have made a difference and thanked the York Region Lions program for an incredible experience in helping shape him to where he is today.

By Robert Belardi