

18. Finishing with a Bang

In the championship game on November 27, 2021, Cody Metzner, the Cubs' hard-hitting player, initially doubted the crowd's turnout due to the Thanksgiving holiday. However, upon entering John W. North High School stadium, he was taken aback by the thousands of fans clad in red shirts, with ticket sales soaring to 2,362 and more at the door. Media presence was overwhelming, with reporters from top networks including ABC, NBC, and ESPN, and even representatives from Tom Brady's production company showing interest in making a film about the team.

Among the spectators was Nancy Hlibok Amann, the superintendent of CSDR, renowned in the deaf community, given her family's impactful history. As she was interviewed, she emphasized the significance of the night, hoping the game would send a strong worldwide message about the prowess of a deaf football team competing for a trophy typically claimed by hearing teams.

As the game commenced, the Cubs struggled right from their first possession. Despite an impressive twenty-yard catch by Jory Valencia, they ultimately failed to capitalize, and Faith Baptist's quarterback Luke Rasmussen swiftly scored first, putting the Cubs at a deficit. By the end of the first quarter, the Cubs found themselves trailing 28–0, after failing repeatedly to defend against Faith's aggressive offense.

In a moment of desperation, Coach Keith Adams decided on a risky fourth down play deep in their territory. Felix Gonzales made a stunning sixty-yard run for a touchdown, igniting hope for the Cubs. They continued to build momentum, with Jory catching pass after pass, bringing the score to 28–16. As the game intensified, aggressive play led to unsportsmanlike conduct, highlighting the physical nature of the clash.

Despite facing injuries and setbacks, including Jory's foot injury and Kaden Adams' broken ankle, the Cubs managed to score once more, bringing the score to 28–22, just one touchdown away from tying the game. The precedent set by the deaf team in their fight against the odds became a central narrative of the championship night, demonstrating resilience and determination in the face of challenge.