

Devilishly good

Oakville Trafalgar captures second OFSAA field hockey bronze in three years

by **Herb Garbutt**
Oakville Beaver Staff

Just a few minutes remained when the player who had boldly claimed her team would win the provincial high school field hockey championship took over.

The Oakville Trafalgar Red Devils had struck first in Saturday's Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations bronze-medal game in Waterloo, scoring early in the second half, but the Pickering Trojans needed only five minutes to square things up. Now, with the final minutes ticking away, OT was facing overtime with its last chance at an OFSAA medal slipping away.

"We didn't really want it to go to strokes," said OT's Ellie Cookson. "We were going to do everything we possibly could to get a goal."

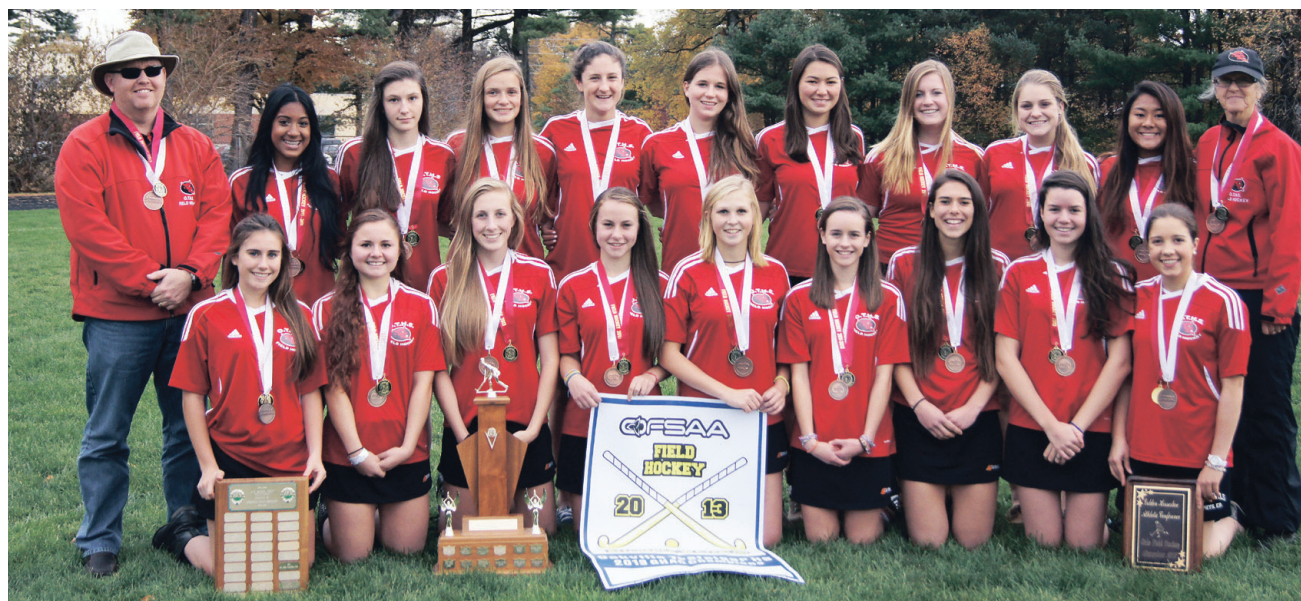
There would be no need for extra time. With just 2:07 left in regulation, Cookson — playing in her final game after four straight Halton championship-winning seasons with the Red Devils — scored what would hold up as the winner in OT's 2-1 victory.

"She just puts it all on herself," said OT coach Jim Groen. "She just plays that much harder."

"It was the biggest relief," Cookson said of her tournament-leading ninth goal. "It was a great moment for the whole team. It was good to finish off strong."

It was the second OFSAA bronze for the Red Devils in the past three years. Like 2011, OT suffered its only loss of the season to Kitchener's Resurrection in the OFSAA semifinal.

"It would have been nice to beat them just once," said



The Oakville Trafalgar Red Devils senior girls' field hockey team shows off the spoils from this season, including an OFSAA banner for winning provincial bronze Saturday in Waterloo. | **photo submitted**

Cookson, who suffered three OFSAA losses to the three-time champions in her high school career.

Resurrection, which later had its string of titles ended by Sir John A. MacDonald, scored just over a minute into its semifinal matchup with OT. It clung to that one-goal lead until adding another early in the second half on its way to a 3-0 victory.

"They were the best team we've played. I think if we were to play them again, it would be a good close game," Groen said. "I know 3-0 doesn't look that close but their goalie made three or four big saves. They got ahead of us early and we were playing catch up the rest of the way."

OT's opponents could relate as the Red Devils scored early and often, outscoring their opponents 11-1 in the opening half of their six games (compared to 6-3 in the second half).

Cookson, Carolyn Black and Logan Hannay's first-half goals led OT to a tournament-opening 3-0 win over Michael Power/St. Joseph. Hannay and Cookson each scored a pair while Brittany Grist added another in a 5-0 win over North Hastings. Cookson then had both in a 2-0 win over Pickering as OT finished pool play undefeated.

The Red Devils continued their dominant play in the quarters, downing Merivale 5-0 behind two goals by Cook-

son and singles by Grist, Hannay and Sadie Stephenson.

As impressive as OT was offensively, it was equally strong on the defensive end.

"They were phenomenal," Cookson said. "Our goalie (Kirsten Persad) was amazing, our defence was strong on the ball and they didn't give up anything."

"The defence was really good the whole tournament," Groen said, "Rebecca Plouffe, Devon Pearson and Victoria Mangialardi were strong back there."

Still, it could have been all for naught. After tasting defeat for the first time this season, OT had a little more than an hour to regroup before the bronze-medal game.

"They were disappointed but even before the last game you could see they had loosened up," Groen said. "By the time they were warming up, their attitude had completely changed. That goes to Ellie and Rebecca's leadership."

And though the final win didn't result in the colour of medal Cookson had originally envisioned — and hoped to reward her coach with — she said it served as a satisfying end to her career.

"It was amazing," she said. "It was sad to end my time with OT field hockey, but at least we were able to go out on a good note."

— *Herb Garbutt can be followed on Twitter @Herbgarbutt*



The Loyola Hawks midget girls' cross-country team of (left to right) Danielle Lysak, Andrea Wallin, Megan Nixon, Victoria Corbett and Sophia Borea won bronze at Saturday's provincial high school championships in Sudbury. | **photo submitted**

Loyola's 'magic combination' wins OFSAA cross-country bronze

by **Jon Kuiperij**
Beaver Sports Editor

Loyola's provincial medal-winning cross-country team nearly never existed.

The fastest runner on the midget girls' squad, Megan Nixon, didn't even initially try out for the team. Neither did another runner, Danielle Lysak, who only joined after the school's junior girls' basketball team fell through.

"A lot of it, I would say, is luck of the draw," said Hawks coach Barb Celestini, who recruited the two girls

to compete in cross-country this fall. "It takes a bit of a magic combination to get four to five really strong runners. These are all midget girls, they're just new to the school. I think we were fortunate to have them come together."

The fivesome — which also includes Sophia Borea, Andrea Wallin and Victoria Corbett — won team bronze at Saturday's Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations championships in Sudbury. None of the Hawks finished in the top 30 of individual competition, but the balance of their rankings (Nixon was 32nd, Borea 46th, Wallin 65th and

Corbett 71st) made the difference in a scoring system that adds up the placings of each school's top four finishers.

In fact, Loyola was just one of two schools to have four runners in the top 80 of the midget girls' race.

"It is really unusual to have this much talent on one team," Celestini said.

"A lot of times, I've had teams with one strong runner, two strong runners, even three. It's always that fourth runner that eludes you, and we have five."

All five runners finished in the top
see Loyola's on p.30