

YEARS IN THE MAKING, GEORGETOWN CLAIMS OFSAA VOLLEYBALL GOLD

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Late in the second set of the OFSAA gold-medal match, Georgetown trailed by four points. They had lost only one of 16 sets against the province's best teams at that point, but it looked as though they were about to drop a second, which would allow York Mills Collegiate to square the championship match.

"We were down 23-19, and (York Mills) had arguably the best player in Canada (left-side hitter Cole Ketrzynski) in the front row," said Georgetown coach Kyle Stewart.

Georgetown, trailing throughout the set, had mounted several comebacks, but each time, York Mills held them off to maintain the lead. So even after Georgetown had pulled within one, at 23-22, a York Mills point that pushed it to set point demonstrated the slim margin for error.

Rather than resigning itself to a three-set show-down for the gold, Georgetown continued to battle, taking the next four points and pulling out an unlikely 26-24 win.

"John Dunning comes up with three unbelievable blocks and a very impressive kill," Stewart said. "We get an incredible dig by Davis Young. A lot of great things happened in those last eight points of the game, and it took the wind out of their sails."

Georgetown carried its momentum into the third set, built an early lead and cruised to a 25-11 victory, to clinch its first Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations boys volleyball title since 2000.

While the gold-medal

match's second set proved to be the critical moment of Georgetown's victory, it was a comeback that had been in the making for seven years.

Georgetown setter Chris Bowen began playing volleyball in Grade 4 at George Kennedy Public School, but it was in Grade 6 at Centennial that his affection for the game grew.

"Our coach, Patty Hall - she gave us a love for volleyball," Bowen said.

Playing on a Centennial team that included his future Georgetown teammates Josh Pereira, Steven Abrams and Blake Armstrong, the Chargers won the Halton elementary school championship.

Last year, Georgetown won its first Halton title in four years but didn't qualify for OFSAA. This year, despite losing twice at its first tournament (both times to Eden High School, which went on to claim its 10th OFSAA AA title in 14 years), Georgetown quickly established itself as a contender for the Ontario AAA title.

"The four of us went to middle school together, and the other guys we knew from either playing against them or from rep teams," Bowen said. "We were all friends before high school. We had chemistry right away. It was different than any other year."

Playing against the top teams in the province, Georgetown won tournaments in Chatham and at Hayden in Burlington, and took silver medals in Waterloo and at St. Mike's. In league play, Georgetown went 10-0, dropping only one set all season. It swept Garth Webb to defend its Halton title, then beat Guelph Street rivals Christ the King in the Golden Horseshoe final.



Paul Timukas/Photo

Georgetown won its first boys OFSAA volleyball championship in 18 years when it swept York Mills Collegiate in the gold medal match. Georgetown dropped only one set the entire tournament.

"A great group of young men," Stewart said. "It's the deepest team we've ever had. We were able to play the entire team. When they were on the court, they were able to get the job done, and that allowed our starters to rest."

Georgetown had won two OFSAA medals (bronze in 2007, silver in 2013) since it last won the provincial title. But on the strength of its 40-4 record heading into OFSAA, Georgetown earned the No. 1 seed. While it was a recognition of its outstanding season, it also put a target squarely on the team's back.

"Not many teams that come in ranked No. 1 come out ranked No. 1," Bowen said.

"Everybody's gunning for you," Stewart said. "There's a great deal of pressure."

Georgetown lived up to it at the provincial tournament. It went 4-0 in pool play, including a 25-22, 25-23 win over sixth-seeded York Mills, which had lost just once in 30 matches this season.

Bowen, despite battling a fever, "was the best setter at OFSAA," Stewart said, while Abrams continued the strong play he had provided all season.

Georgetown swept St. Peter in the quarterfinals but then lost the opening set of the semifinal to A.B. Lucas, 25-23. It stormed back to take the next three 25-17, 25-14, 25-15, earning its spot in the championship match.

In the final, despite a strong York Mills attack led by Ketrzynski, Georgetown took the opener 25-22, helped by Armstrong's strong service reception. After rallying for the victory in the second set, Georgetown steamrolled through the third. Josh Timukas was an offensive force, combining with Dunning to shut down the York Mills attack. Meanwhile, Pereira's defensive play and passing allowed Bowen to mix up his sets and move the ball around the court to keep the York Mills defence off guard.

When Dunning hammered the final point off a York Mills block, the Georgetown players rushed onto the court to celebrate their win.

"They were the biggest

games of my life, the biggest match of my life," Bowen said. "We worked so hard for this, right from Grade 6. All that hard work paid off."

GEORGETOWN OFSAA VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONS

- Steven Abrams
- Josh Pereira
- Davis Young
- Curtis Elinesky
- Jordan Watkins
- Hunter Gibson
- Chris Bowen
- Ryan Harris
- Gavin Conroy
- Sam Krause
- John Dunning
- Josh Timukas
- Blake Armstrong
- Kyle Stewart, head coach
- Van Avramidis, assistant coach

COUNTDOWN TO THE RAIDERS NEXT HOME GAME

SAT NIGHT
Sat Dec 8th, 2018 - 7:30pm
Georgetown Raiders vs. Burlington Cougars
 Games at Mold-Masters SportsPlex

WED NIGHT
Wed Dec 12th, 2018 - 7:30pm
Georgetown Raiders vs. Toronto Patriots

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