

Drury volleyballers capture consolation title at 'AA' OFSAA

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

E.C. Drury's senior girls volleyball team refused to come away empty-handed from their first trip to OFSAA.

After efforts to reach the championship-side playoffs fell just short at Ontario's AA showcase in Sudbury, the Spartans quickly shed their disappointment and rededicated themselves to the consolation playdowns.

The result was a perfect three-round sweep Thursday — that gave EC the tier two title. Said head coach Chris Hunt, "Overall, they definitely exceeded my expectations for the tournament. They really pulled it together after not quite advancing past round-robin play, which was what I was hoping to see."

Though unable to reach the elite eight, the local ladies delivered a stellar tournament-opening effort against eventual semifinalist Ashbury before getting eclipsed 25-23, 22-25, 15-13.

Drury kept it tight the entire match — trailing the powerhouse squad by no more than two points at any given time. That was thanks in large part to the dynamite performance of two veterans.

"Our power hitters, Marion Jamieson and Michelle Merritt, were unbeliev-

able," stressed Hunt, who coached this year's team alongside Laura Holmes. "We also had some big digs and were passing the ball really well. That's what kept us in it. It was one of their best matches of the season."

The Spartans won two of their next three matches, but that wasn't quite enough to qualify them for the championship quarterfinals — as just the top two teams in their pool, Ashbury and St. Michael's, moved on.

However, EC would not be denied capturing the secondary title — going an unblemished 6-0 Thursday and punctuating that run with a decisive 25-11, 25-15 victory over Cobourg District Institute East. Co-captains Jamieson and Jessica Brown were exceptional in the consolation finals, keeping Cobourg off balance from start to finish.

Drury's tier two title run actually became more convincing as it wore on, with a nail-biting 27-25, 25-23 win against North Lambton in the quarterfinals followed by a slightly easier 25-18, 25-17 semifinal win versus Governor Simcoe. Rounding out the squad were Calley Robinson, Jan Wollaston, Lori Wollaston, Melena Vinski, Justin Williams, Tammy Merritt and Sarah Fredricks.

Marlins shine at provincials

The Marlins enjoyed more than just individual success at the recent Ontario Junior Championships in Nepean.

Milton's swim club came away with the High Point Trophy as the top team with 70 registered members or less. And that was thanks in large part to a couple of medal-winning performances in relay competition. Michelle Claessens, Aaryn Fraser, Kristen McIlroy and Olympic hopeful Jennifer Porenta pooled their efforts and highlighted the provincial showcase with an upset victory in the 4x50-metre freestyle relay — stopping the clock at 1:48.26 to upstage Oakville Aquatic Club by nearly a full second.

The Marlins weren't quite able to

deliver a relay-winning sweep, however, as the hosts eclipsed them by less than two tenths of a second in the 4x50m medley race with a 2:03.13 finish.

Jessica Switzer replaced Fraser for this race and swam a second-leg breaststroke. Starting things off with the backstroke was McIlroy, while Porenta did a third-leg butterfly and Claessens anchored with the freestyle.

These collective efforts plus seven individual medals gave Milton 12th place among 84 teams. The top 11 spots were filled by mega-sized squads like Oakville, Brampton, London and Toronto.

As usual, Porenta's star shone bright all weekend. Ending her junior provincial career with a hefty

hardware haul, the 17-year-old was golden in both the 100 and 200m freestyle races with times of 56.92 and 2:00.94 respectively.

She struck silver in three other events, including the 50m free (26.25), 100 fly (1:03.71) and 400m free (4:21.90).

Sixteen-year-old McIlroy backstroked her way to bronze in the 200m race with a 2:18.60 showing, while Kim Galvin, 13, rounded out the medal haul with a 2:12.65 effort in the 200m free that was also good enough for third-place honours.

Along with Galvin, Fraser and Switzer also delivered swims that qualified them to join teammates McIlroy, Porenta and Rachel Robinson at the junior nationals.

Juveniles book passage to finals

There's hope for a title yet.

The Milton AA juveniles' OMHA championship hopes were dashed before they really got a chance to take root — but the same can't be said for the Niagara District Hockey League title picture.

The Pinnacle Winterhawks propelled themselves into the league finals by shading Lincoln 3-1 Saturday night at Memorial Arena. The narrow victory — cemented with a last-minute empty netter — capped a four-points-to-one qualifying series win for Milton.

Regrouping from a late breakdown and subsequent 3-3 stalemate Wednesday, the Winterhawks delivered a more gutsy performance on home ice and enjoyed rock-solid goaltending from Jon Sweetland.

Midget call-up Chris Coates put the hosts on the

scoreboard midway through the night, converting a scramble set up by Chris Strank and Travis Van Loosen. Then Conor Sweeney deflected a Rob Day point shot late in the second period that turned out to be the game winner.

Lincoln would cut the lead in half just before intermission, but would draw no closer — and surrendered an empty net deposit to Julian Ricci with 11 seconds remaining. A clutch effort by Sweetland helped preserve the win, which advanced the Winterhawks to league championship play against St. Catharines.

St. Catharines won three of four regular-season games against Milton, but all three of those victories were by two goals or less. The Niagara District League finals are expected to begin sometime next week.



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Game 5	Mar. 14 at Milton (7:30 pm)	
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