

Competition tough, but Mustangs say they're ready

By **ANDREW HYDE**
Special to *The Champion*

There was a cloud of disappointment in the air as the Milton District Mustangs walked off the field to end the rugby season last year.

After a semifinal loss to Burlington's Nelson Lords (a team they had defeated earlier in the season), the Mustangs were left to ponder what might have been.

That could have included Milton's first trip to the provincial playoff rugby tournament, and a chance to dethrone Oakville Trafalgar as Halton high school champions.

This year's squad, however, intends to focus on the successes of last year's 6-2 season. They believe they can make another strong bid for the Halton high school championship. The majority of players have returned from last year, leaving the starting lineup virtually unchanged.

"With most of us playing together for three years now," said scrum-half Gareth Llewellyn, "I think we've got a pretty good shot."

"We're pretty much the same core of guys," added outside-center, Paul Hume.

The few Mustangs lost to graduation could prove costly though. Forwards Colin Graham, Howard McGill and Clark Northcott provided size on a relatively small Mustang team. All three graduated last spring.

To accommodate for this lack of size in the forwards, Mark Hume has been moved from the backs and now takes up the eight-man position. Hume was a major force on the Mustang football team and should provide some needed heft up front. Speedy newcomer Jim Mora will fill the gaps in the Mustangs' back line.

Barrie Llewellyn has been coaching rugby at Milton District for the past four years. He insists that the Nelson Lords and Oakville Trafalgar Red Devils will again be the teams to beat.

The Red Devils took their 25th consecutive Halton championship last year, after a close battle with the Lords. The two squads represented Halton at the Ontario Federation of Schools Athletic Association (OFSAA) high school championships last season, and have been touring overseas this spring.

Touring against teams in the United Kingdom gave Nelson and

Oakville Trafalgar a tremendous advantage going into the season, Llewellyn believes. The level of competition in the U.K. is much higher than it is here, and a tour gives teams more time to practise and gel together.

The Mustangs last toured in 1990. According to Llewellyn, the timing wasn't right for another overseas trip this year. The Mustangs had planned on travelling to Ottawa for a tournament last weekend, but tremendous rains in the nation's capital forced tournament organizers to cancel.

The Mustang coach says rugby has a bigger following at Nelson and Oakville Trafalgar than most other schools. "They (Nelson and O.T.) get more support," Llewellyn explained in his distinctly Welsh accent. "Milton District is primarily basketball and football. That's about it."

Gareth Llewellyn, a fourth year player on the Mustangs, insists the team is trying to make a name for itself at the school. When most other spring season athletes were just thinking of registration, the Mustang rugby team was holding indoor practices. While the baseball and soccer teams were waiting for the snow to melt, the rugby team was rucking and mauling outside on the frozen field. Early competitions have proven promising for the Mustangs. In a pair of scrimmages against Notre Dame and Crosstown rivals E.C. Drury, the Mustangs came up big defensively. Not a single try was scored by either opponent in these preseason match-ups. The Mustangs scored four tries against Notre Dame and one against Drury.

"Our goal was to put what we did in training onto the field in a game situation and we accomplished that," said coach Llewellyn.

Regular season action got underway last Thursday and saw the Mustangs taking on a much improved Notre Dame team at home. A hailstorm of lengthy kicks from the Fighting Irish fullback kept the Mustangs from building up any kind of momentum in the windy conditions. The Mustangs' only try came off a Notre Dame fumble at midfield.

Jonathon Fisher jumped on the loose ball, securing it for the forwards, who promptly took it over the try line. In response, the Irish made good on a penalty kick, but it was all they could muster. The 5-3 final gave MDHS their first regular season victory by the narrowest of margins.

The Mustangs will be hoping for a better performance when they take on Georgetown at MDHS tomorrow. Action gets underway at 4:30 pm.

Spartans win

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Vervenne all posted one run. Vervenne swung the hottest stick on the day with two hits and four RBIs.

Jeffrey and Gregory each recorded three RBIs, with two for Taylor and singles by Friedrich, Petherick and Mandy Huffman.

While giving up over a dozen hits, MD hurlers Shea and Cathy Rayner also walked a combined eight Drury players, which contributed to the lopsided final. A couple of wild throws gave the Spartans runs in the first and sixth as well.

E.C. Drury's next home game will be against Burlington's M.M. Robinson tomorrow (Thursday) at 3:30 p.m., at which time Milton District will host Assumption.

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