

Sometimes winning is kind of tough: former SDSS coach

Such is the extent of that old Spartan volleyball magic that even when a Stouffville District Secondary School team doesn't win a regional championship, the school's influence can still be felt.

This was the case in last week's senior girls regional championship showdown at the SDSS gym when the Spartans had their throne removed by the young ladies from Newmarket HS.

The Newmarket squad was coached by former SDSS phys ed teacher and coach Cathie Croucher, who's husband Scott remains a member of the phys ed staff at the Stouffville school.

Cathie's crew fell short in last year's title match up with the Spartans. But this time around, her team of veterans weren't to be denied.

As Cathie herself acknowledged, it was a case of a graduating team prevailing over a Spartan team which included



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several first year players. And while Cathie was pleased with the victory, giving her girls full credit for a big effort, she also admitted to having a little difficulty with coming into her old school and pulling the rug out from under her former pupils.

"It's tough," she said after the excitement had died down. "This Stouffville team is made up of the last of the girls I coached when I was here."

She said she had been badgered by some of her old students watching the game who had asked her what she was doing coming back and beating up on her old charges.

"They take it personally," she

lamented. But while Cathie may well have won the battle, the war goes on today (Wednesday) when her team returns to Stouffville to contest the Durham-York (DYSSAA) title.

With the top two teams in each region advancing to the bi-regional finals, there's a good chance the Spartans may get a chance to avenge last week's defeat at the hands of Cathie's girls.

Sheila Coleman, the Spartans coach who once worked alongside Cathie, is determined to make up for what was obviously a bitter pill for her to swallow in last Wednesday's championship encounter.

She felt her girls had let this one get away by not playing with their usual controlled intensity.

Sheila has announced she intends to take no prisoners this week, that her girls will be out there serving, bumping and hitting right from the start.

It should be a classic match up with the Junior Spartans contesting their DYSSAA championship at the school at the same time.

For those people who still look upon volleyball as a game played by indulgent adults on Caribbean beaches, it might be interesting to note an article in the Toronto Star several weeks back.

The story, brought to my attention by SDSS volleyball guru Jim Fletcher, explained how the game is making waves in Canadian universities and colleges.

These institutions are apparently acting as a feeding system for the nation's Olympic team which will assemble in Barcelona this summer.

It seems the Canadian universities are beating their American counterparts with pleasing regularity. And with 27 Canadian volleyballers being paid as much as a half a

million bucks a season to play the game in Europe at the present time, there would appear to be a market for teens who can smash the big white ball.

Fletcher pointed to several former SDSS volleyballers who have caught on in a big way with university squads.

Two-time SDSS top senior male athlete Don Clearwater was named the York Yeomens' most valuable play this past season.

Last year's senior Spartans ace Karam Amer did well with the Laurentian University (Sudbury) varsity crew this season.

Former female Spartan star Kelly Cowan was a mainstay with the Sir Wilfred Laurier (Waterloo) team in the late 1980s.

Other one-time Spartans greats such as Bruce Rodin, Paul Boynton and Dave Elliot have also made their mark with university teams in the past decade or so.

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