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## Redeeming win sends Spartans to provincials



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Huron Heights' Justin Murphy throws the ball away under pressure from Stouffville's Rylan DesJardins in the YRAA senior rugby final. The Spartans won 24-3 at Fletcher's Fields in Markham on Thursday.

BY MICHAEL HAYAKAWA mhayakawa@yrmg.com

The Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans senior boys' rugby team had something to prove at the Fletcher's Field pitch in Markham during the York Region Athletic Association final with the Huron Heights (Newmarket) Warriors Thursday.

Having played their worst game in the regular season against the Warriors that resulted in a 12-12 tie, the Spartans wanted to prove that was an aberration.

They did, cruising to their fourth straight YRAA tier one title and seventh in the last eight years with a 24-3 win.

Jesse Lofthouse, Kevin Devogel, Paul Geiger and Scott Miller each scored one try for the Spartans, who held a 14-0 halftime lead. Oliver Boettcher booted two converts.

"Our kids definitely wanted to play Huron Heights (in the final) like you wouldn't believe after we played our worst game in five years when we battled them to a tie earlier in the year," Spartans head coach Jamie Hewitt said. "They got their wish and they played well."

In analyzing the match, Hewitt felt the turning point came when Devogel scored on the final play of the opening half enabling the Spartans to take a 14-0 lead.

"I couldn't pick an MVP for our team," Hewitt said. "Each game someone new stepped up. Today, Geiger set the tone. We have a lot of good players, but no superstars and we have a lot of guys who can lead the team."

The Spartans gained a berth in the final with a 25-10 win over St. Theresa of Lisieux

(Richmond Hill) in their semifinal match earlier in the day.

Lofthouse, Geiger, Curtis Crago, Connor McDonald and Brandon Paulino each had one try for the Spartans.

The Spartans will take part in the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations AAA/AAAA playdowns in Oshawa June 2 to 4.

In the junior playdowns, the Spartans saw their two-year reign as YRAA champions come to an end after they were defeated by the eventual gold medallists Dr. J.M. Denison Huskies (Newmarket) 24-5 in their semifinal match.

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Rob Edmondson, Spartans head coach, felt a slow start on the part of his club set the tone for their fate.

"They took advantage of our mistakes in the first 10 minutes of the match and got two quick tries," he said. "But after that the game was tight."

Edmondson felt the Huskies' athleticism was a little too much for his club to overcome.

"They had some stud athletes and we couldn't outrugby them," he said.

Melvin Nolan scored the lone try for the Spartans.



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