

# Chekay ends rugby career helping Guelph to win national title

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BETHANY CHEKAY

Before graduating from the University of Guelph, Bethany Chekay had one thing she wanted to do.

Now in her fourth season as a member of the Guelph Gryphons rugby team, the 22-year-old Stouffville resident wanted to go out as a national champion.

Chekay's dream came true as the Gryphons took to the Trent University pitch last weekend and throttled St. Francis Xavier University 28-0 in the Canadian Inter-university Sport final.

"Considering it was my last year it was the best way to leave," Chekay, a human kinetics major, said. "Being part of the team for four years and coming up short in the last three where we won the bronze, getting gold was like a dream come true."

Playing scrum half, but versatile enough to play other positions when required, the Stouffville District Secondary School grad felt the biggest difference this time was teamwork.

"This time around we

played for each other," she said. "We understood what the team was and that made the difference."

Chekay said they had a little extra incentive as they lost to St. Francis Xavier in last year's semifinal by just one point on a controversial call.

"That definitely spurred us on," she acknowledged.

First taking up the sport in Grade 9 at SDSS, Chekay credited current girls' physical education teacher Sharon Macfarlane in getting her interested in rugby.

Playing basketball for the

Spartans, Chekay recalled it was Macfarlane who suggested she try rugby to help her become a more physical player.

"I gave it a shot and I was hooked ever since," Chekay said.

Along with playing for her school team, Chekay honed her skills at the club level by playing with the Markham Rugby Football Club girls' teams when she turned 16.

Hoping to become a teacher, Chekay returns to Stouffville District when her academic year at the University of Guelph concludes to assist in her former school's girls' rugby program.

She hopes one day the girls' program can be on a par with their boys' program, which has been dominant in the York Region Athletic Association and provincial level the last few years.

"Anything I can give back to Stouffville District Secondary School I want to do. They have a great physical education program and with rugby, it's a game anyone can play regardless of what their skill set or their body is."

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