

Big tests ahead for rugby Spartans

BY MICHAEL HAYAKAWA
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When the Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans senior boys take to the pitch for preseason tilts, it enables Jamie Hewitt to see what his club is capable of doing.

Playing a pair of friendlies in which they defeated Stratford Northwestern 36-5 before falling short in a 10-5 decision against Medway Collegiate at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo Monday, the Spartans' veteran head coach was pleased with several aspects of their play.

"We didn't play too bad," Hewitt said. "When we play our style of rugby we're very good. But we have to stick with our system and be on the same page."

In the win over Stratford Northwestern, the Spartans jumped out to a quick 10-0 lead just three minutes into the match and it appeared the rout was on.

But the Spartans let their guard down and allowed their opponents to score their lone try of the match which reduced their advantage to 10-5 by halftime.

That appeared to serve as a wake-up call for the Spartans in the second half as they scored 26 unanswered points. Chris Matsoukas, Marnus Coetsee, Brendan Reesor, Matt Renzoni, Cody Scott and Matt Espey each had one try. Renzoni also booted three converts.

Against Medway, the Spartans trailed 5-0 in the first half and had a good opportunity to tie the score only to be denied after their

opponents came up with a big defensive stand.

After Medway padded their lead with another try in the second half, the Spartans battled back to cut their deficit when J.R. Newlands scored a try.

Unfortunately for the Spartans that would be as close as they would get before the match concluded.

What Hewitt drew most from the match was his club's ability to play a physical game against another tough team.

"Medway is an extremely physical team and our kids proved they can play a physical team. That was good. I thought we showed good character," he said.

Most disturbing to Hewitt, though, was the overall fitness level exhibited by his players.

Hewitt hopes his players will exhibit a little more self discipline if they hope to regain the YRAA title after losing in last year's tier one final to Bill Crothers Secondary School.

"We learned that our guys did not do a lot of fitness on their own time," he said. "I don't know why. But hopefully that will change."

The Spartans return to action tomorrow at the Saltfleet Secondary School tournament at McMaster University.

"Most OFSAA bound teams are in this event," Hewitt said.

"Teams like St. John's College (Brantford), Saltfleet, Uxbridge Secondary School, Barrie Central and Oakville Trafalgar.

"This is definitely a big event."

Minor hockey meets, honours volunteers

With another hockey season history, the Whitechurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association will hold its annual general meeting at the Royal Canadian Legion, 150 Mostar St., Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.

It's an opportunity for members of the community to provide feedback on the hockey program, as well as their thoughts on the direction of the association. Parents, officials and volunteers are urged to attend.

The association will also present three annual awards to players and officials.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the association's board of directors will host a Volunteer Appreciation Night to recognize the contributions made by coaches, trainers, officials and convenors.

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