

# Late rally propels Spartans to final

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The outcome of a rugby match is one that can be determined by which club is more physically prepared.

In the case of the Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans seniors, head coach Jamie Hewitt felt that facet factored into its York Region Athletic Association tier one semifinal match against the visiting St. Joan of Arc Catholic High School Thunder, Monday.

Especially in the late going, as the Spartans overcame a deficit late in the match to prevail 26-20 and reach the final for the 11th time in the last 12 years.

Trailing 13-8 at the half and 20-18 with just four minutes remaining in regulation time, the Spartans battled back to take a 21-20 lead on the second of two penalty kicks by Marnus Coetsee.

Before the match concluded, the Spartans added an insurance try to round out the scoring.

Ben Risi, Zach Bauman, Jordan Marsh and J.R. Newlands each had one try for the Spartans.

"We definitely toughened up in the second half," a relieved Hewitt said afterwards. "We didn't make as many mistakes and our forwards played well... their (St. Joan of Arc)

forwards are big, but once we got going our forwards played well, they took over the game with our physicality."

The victory by the Spartans also atoned for an earlier loss against the Thunder at the Red Hot qualifier last month.

Hewitt said that outcome gave his club plenty of incentive.

"We talked about losing to them earlier in practice," acknowledged Hewitt.

But he was quick to note in that earlier encounter, the matches were just two 15-minute halves.

This time around, the matches were two, 30-minute halves.

"In a match that's twice as long, our fitness definitely was a turning point," Hewitt said. "I thought we were a fitter team."

With the victory, the Spartans will face the defending YRAA champion Bill Crothers Secondary School Colts, who won their semifinal match over St. Maximilian Kolbe Mustangs (Aurora) 53-10, in today's final to take place at St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School in Aurora at 3 p.m.

Hewitt conceded the match will provide a stern challenge for his club, which has won the YRAA title eight times.

"We have to play a forwards game," he said. "Their backs are lightning fast. We're bigger than them and we will have to make the game physical."

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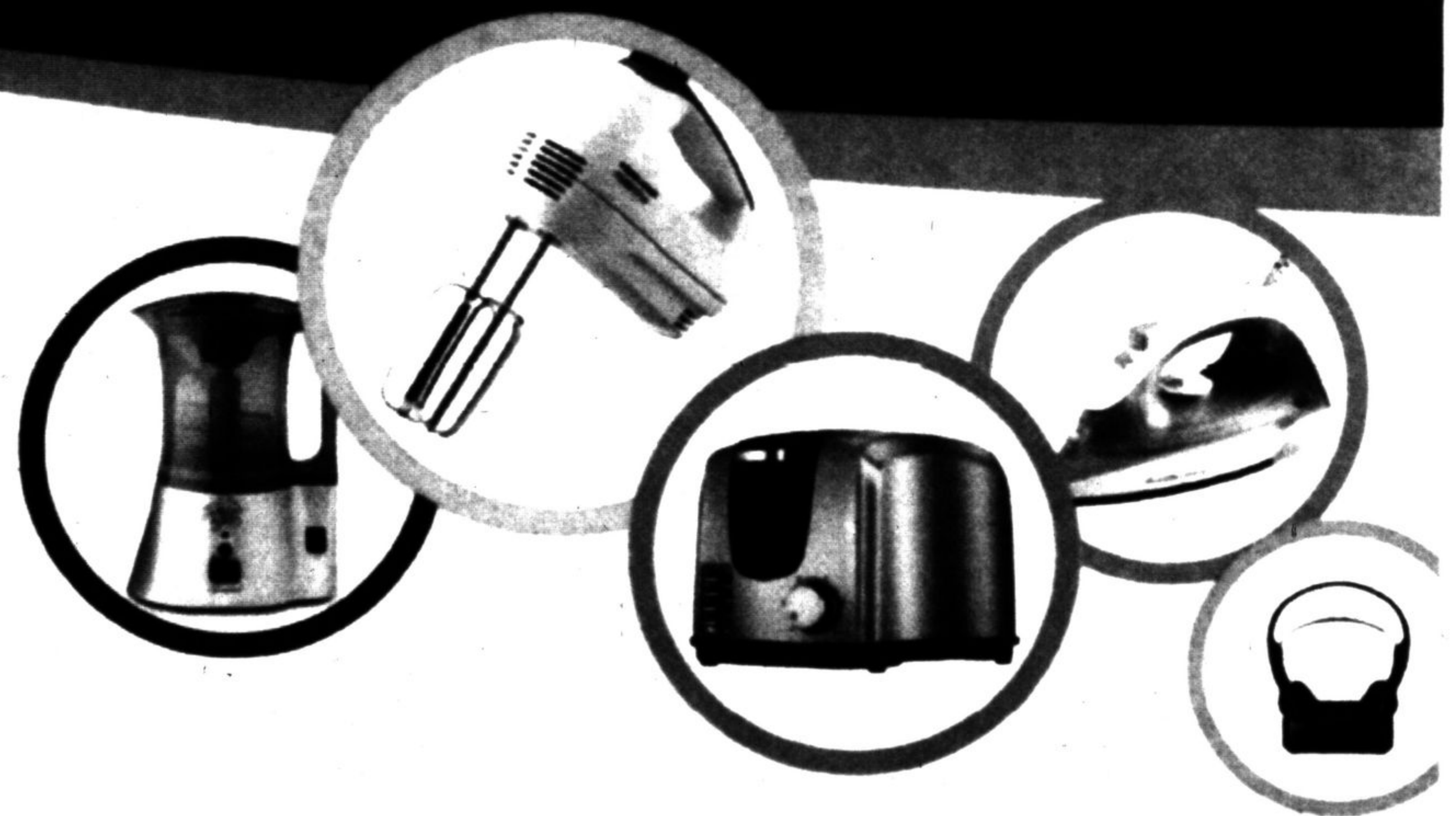
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