

# Girls want to improve on 7th place at OFSAA

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The Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans began the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations girls AAA/AAAA rugby playdowns as the 12th seeded club.

But in the end, they moved up a few notches to finish as the seventh-best team.

The York Region Athletic Association champions did so after defeating ninth ranked St. Michael (Niagara Falls) 22-15 in their final tournament match that determined seventh and eighth place in Hamilton yesterday.

Trailing 8-0 after the opening half, the Spartans rallied with single tries from Stormm Cerelli, Hayley Desjardins, Anna Horner and Abbie Bauman, who also kicked one convert.

"It was a nice way to end off the year. I'm proud of the way they played. It was extremely satisfying," said an elated Spartans' head coach Tara LaBar of her club's effort.

If LaBar had any regrets about her club's OFSAA debut, it would have been in their opening match in which they suffered a heartbreaking 14-12 loss to fifth seed Barrie Central Monday.

That relegated them to the consolation round where they had hoped to come away as winners.

However, a 24-0 loss to second seed St. Peter Catholic High School (Ottawa) in their consolation semifinal match yesterday morning placed the Spartans in the seventh/eighth match.

That setback proved to be an eye-opener for the Spartans.

It also gave them an idea of what it takes to be among the elite squads.

"St. Peter was very good. They were big and skilled," said Janice Monk, Spartans' co-coach. "They performed at the next level. We haven't seen that type of team all season. It was a good experience for us to see that level of play."

"But our girls still played well. We never gave up."

In finishing off the season on a positive note, LaBar remained optimistic it will raise the bar in terms of expectations for next season.

Just as important, she noted the returning players are already excited about next season.

"We now have a goal of where we want to bring our program up to," she said. "The girls are passionate about the game and they are looking forward already to next year."

# Boys fall to familiar foe in York final

Unionville's Bill Crothers Secondary School Colts had a specific game plan in mind when they faced the host Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans for the York Region Athletic Association tier one senior boys' rugby title Friday.

Based on how the Colts performed, their plan of attack appeared to work to near perfection in blanking the Spartans 23-0 to claim their third straight YRAA title.

All three came at the expense of the Spartans, who made their eighth straight YRAA final appearance.

"We stuck to our game plan," said Colts' coach Andrew McCutcheon. "We've played them (Stouffville) three straight years now and we pretty well knew what to expect from them as they haven't changed their system."

"We got everyone involved and moved the ball from channel to channel and we played good defence."

While McCutcheon noted a team effort was required, a big part of their success stemmed from the play of fullback Andrew Coe.

A member of Canada's national team that competed in this year's seven's tournament in Las Vegas, Coe opened the scoring when he booted a 30-metre penalty kick into a head wind in the opening half.

What might have been a major turning point occurred shortly after when the Spartans took the ball down to the Colts' one-metre line and appeared to score a try.

However, the referee ruled the Spartans' player did not touch the ball on the ground.

"It's unfortunate the referee did not see what might have been our first try," said Spartans' head coach Rob Edmondson, who filled in for Jamie Hewitt. "He told one of our players that he wasn't in a position to see the ball go down."

"It would have been interesting to see if the score would have been 5-3 or 7-3 for us."

In gaining possession of the ball, the Colts took full advantage of that situation that was capped off with Coe racing up the middle of the pitch to score a try and kick the conversion to give them a 10-0 lead.

With a YRAA title at stake, the match became physical and reared its ugly head when Coe was issued a yellow card for rough play after the Spartans' Marnus Coetsee was on the receiving end of a hard tackle.

After serving his 10 minutes on the sidelines, Coe returned just before the half that saw the Colts maintain their 10-point margin.

In the second half, Coe continued to make his presence felt when he returned a Spartans' kick for a try.

Moments later, he booted a penalty kick to give the Colts an 18-0 advantage.

But before the match concluded, Coe was forced to retire after incurring a rib injury.

While elated with the win, McCutcheon was disappointed to lose Coe, as his injury status remained in question when the Colts represent the YRAA at the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations AAAA championships in neighbouring Durham Region starting today.

- Michael Hayakawa

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