

Multi-sport star didn't 'wrestle' with rugby

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Stouffville's Daniella Grant has a penchant for learning to do things in rather quick fashion.

That's been evident on the rugby pitch, when she first took to playing the game as a Grade 9 student at Bill Crothers Secondary School in Unionville.

It's been a blessing for more than Grant.

Rugby Canada has also been pleased with her progress as she's now donning a national team jersey as a member of Canada's under-18 junior women's 15s squad.

Playing the wing, fullback and centre positions, Grant will make her international debut this spring when the 24-member Canadian squad travels overseas to England where they will play their under-18 counterparts in two matches April 5 and 9 at Bicton College in Devon.

"For some reason things just clicked with my body and I picked the game up quickly," she said. "By the time my first 15s season rolled around I was a starting player. I could not believe that I was playing with the Grade 12s, it was an incredible feeling."

Along with playing for her school where she recently returned from the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations wrestling championships in Windsor and finished fourth in her 54-kilogram weight class after winning the York Region Athletic Association title, Grant has nurtured her skills with the Aurora Barbarians where she's been a member for the last three years and was a member of Rugby Ontario's under-16 15s team in 2014 and the under-18 squad last year.

"I'm extremely proud and excited to pull the Canadian jersey over my head," she said.

In earning a berth on the junior women's squad, Grant cited it was a drawn-out process that was initiated when

some 58 athletes from across Canada attended a camp in Kingston last October.

With additional prospects identified since that camp to where they now had a total of 75 players on hand, five regional camps were set up across Canada in January to try and whittle down that number.

From the regional camps that were held in January and first week of February, the final 24 players that made the final cut, which included Grant, were officially named Feb. 16.

"There were some pretty talented girls there and the competition was tough," she said. "But I really wanted to make the team, so I tried to give 110 per cent effort all the time."

It wasn't all about the game.

"Even though everyone was very competitive, we were like sisters off the field," she said. "I have made so many new friends from around the country. They are all such incredible girls and I'm so grateful to have been able to meet all of them and continue the dream with 23 of them."

Before making the trip to England though, Grant will be in British Columbia this week where she will play for the Rugby Ontario under-18s seven's team at the national championships.

In earning a berth on the junior women's team, Grant hopes it will jump start her career in the sport and she would like to run with it as far as possible.

She hopes it will enable her to play for the Humber College Hawks where she wants to enrol in a sports/fitness related program and then bridge to the University of Guelph.

"I would like to continue playing rugby at the highest level to wherever it will take me," she said.



Stouffville's Daniella Grant plays on Canada's U18 rugby team.



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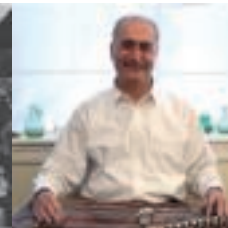
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