

SPORTS

YRAA fall sevens rugby kicks off with new competitive format

Flight system introduced to create parity, more meaningful matches

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How can you schedule games that are fairly competitive and at the same time be meaningful right to the finals?

The York Region Athletic Association might have an ideal format and introduced it last week when it kicked off its boys' and girls' rugby sevens schedule at Fletcher's Field in Markham.

Rather than go with the traditional tier one and two format, a flight system is being utilized.

In describing it, Jamie Hewitt, Stouffville District Secondary School senior boys' coach, said each of the entries was ranked by the league convenors prior to the start of the season.

With 20 boys' entries, each was given a ranking and from there, five flights of four team pools were created.

For the girls, who had 24 entries, the same was conducted, with six flights of four teams.

In recalling the seeding process, Mark Arsenault, YRAA athletic coordinator, acknowledged it was relatively easy to rank the top 10 teams.

But it proved to be more of a challenge with the remaining entries.

With the schedule comprised of four playing dates, which began last Thursday and continuing each Thursday until Oct. 19 and all staged at Fletcher's Field starting with boys in the morning and girls in the afternoon, a mini one-day tournament is created where each team in their pool plays against their three rivals in

14-minute matches.

At the end of each day, the last-place team in their respective flight moves down to the next flight while the top team in the flights other than the first move up to the next for the start of the next week of competition.

The top four teams remaining in the top flight at the end of the regular season will battle it out for the YRAA championship. Under this format, Hewitt feels parity is created and the element of safety is increased as players are facing rivals with a relatively equal skill set.

"This system lends itself to rugby sevens because all of the games are played in one day and to do it this way is nice where you're getting competitive and meaningful games," added Arsenault.

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