

Apps debuts on rugby sevens World Cup stage



By Jake Courtepatte

An up-and-coming force on the world rugby stage, Olivia Apps traded in the blue, black, and white of the Aurora Barbarians for the red and white of Team Canada in her national debut at the Rugby World Sevens in January.

Apps, now a student at Queen's University, was one of nine rookie players on the Canadian squad in San Francisco, California last week for the Rugby World Cup, where their inexperience showed in a seventh-place finish.

A strong opening 43-19 win over Brazil in the Round of 16 had the Canadians off to a good start, though a loss to France in game two knocked the women out of the championship bracket.

After falling 26-14 to Spain in the fifth-place semifinal, Canada closed out the tournament with a strong 22-10 win over Russia to land in seventh place.

Ranked third in the world overall, this year's incarnation of the tournament came with a brand new format, including a single-game knockout formula that ultimately proved fatal for the Canadians.

Despite the disappointing finish, Apps and the rest of the Canadians will need to get back on the horse for the USA Sevens in Glendale, Colorado, scheduled in just a few months' time.

"Olivia is a tenacious young player," said John Tait, Head Coach of Team Canada. "She still has a lot of development in her, but we want to give her a taste of the world level."

Earning her first cap at just nineteen years of age, the young Apps size does not match up with many of her teammates and opponents, standing at five-foot-five. Yet the former Barb credits the sevens program, one built for speed with less players on the field, with her success.

"I guess I don't really fit the image of a classic rugby player, but in sevens you need players of all sizes," said Apps. "A lot of my teammates are stronger and bigger, and they carry those strengths—but for me, I may carry other strengths as in speed and agility." Apps compared the practice of sizing up other players to that of kids in a cafeteria.

"It's definitely intimidating, but at the end of the day it's just about how you perform, not how they perform."

New Zealand retained the championship on Sunday for the second tournament in a row.

The Canadian men, meanwhile, closed out the tournament in twelfth place after a final game loss to Wales, and being ousted by Argentina in the Round of 16. The New Zealand All-Blacks also won the men's side.