

Lady Redbirds aim to put local lacrosse on the map with Aurora first



By Jake Courtepatte

The Newmarket Lady Redbirds are looking to put Aurora and Newmarket on the map for Canada's national sport.

Girls as young as seven are learning how to play lacrosse on Newmarket's under-11, under-13, and under-15 rep teams.

Now in its second year, the program was born when Carey Fisher saw the interest in girl's field lacrosse in the United States while at one of her son's tournaments.

Fisher is now the head coach of the U11 team, and the assistant for the U13 team.

Still a very young organization, the Redbirds are taking on established Ontario programs from lacrosse towns like Oshawa and Orangeville. While these programs have the opportunity to draw from a pool of hundreds, the Redbirds organization has approximately 40 players in total.

However, the young Redbirds are taking to the game at a rapid pace.

Fisher took the U13 Redbirds to the Provincial Championships last weekend, where the team brought home third place. The accomplishment made the Redbirds what Fisher calls 'the talk of the tournament.'

'You very rarely get a second year doing that well, or even competing. We don't get to choose from the best of the best, we're just trying to turn anyone interested into a lacrosse player.'

Fisher said promoting the game to a young female audience is difficult for a travelling team.

'We don't have a house league program,' said Fisher. 'So it's not like soccer where you're driving around your hometown and seeing girls playing.'

Lacrosse also often gets a bad rap as a violent, overly-physical sport. For parents, this often steers them to encourage their daughters into lighter sports like soccer.

'Everybody seems to associate lacrosse with boys,' said Fisher. 'When some parents think of lacrosse, they just say 'I don't have any sons, so I'm out'. They associate it with being a rough and violent game, but it's not like that at all.'

However, Fisher says the Redbirds' parents are very understanding of the game and the team.

“Our parents all know that their kids are just learning, and not to expect certain things. And as a coaching staff, we really focus on that. We've really had no negative experiences in that sense.”

As for generating interest in young girls, Fisher believes the future is bright.

“If we can get through one more season, I think it looks really good,” she said. “It's something that in five or six years we'll be quite strong. It's like any sport that you're trying to grow, it takes a few years to catch on.”

With what Fisher calls a “strong core of athletes” that started the program, the Redbirds are looking to make a name for themselves in the lacrosse community “and most importantly, are having fun doing so.”

“They're all proud to wear their Redbirds clothing. They're telling their friends to play it.”

Fisher wishes to give credit to the volunteers that make the program possible, crediting them with providing the players with the best experience they can.

At press time, the U11 Redbirds were due to host a doubleheader against Orillia on Wednesday night at St. Maximilian Kolbe CHS. The event marks a special moment for both the Redbirds and the community, as they will be the first girl's lacrosse games held in Aurora.

For more information on the Redbirds, visit www.redbirdslacrosse.com.