

St. Max Mustangs capture their first YRAA Varsity Girls? Rugby 15's Championship



The St. Maximilian Kolbe Mustangs capped their best Varsity Girls Rugby season in school history by winning the York Region 15's championship last week.

The Mustangs defeated the St. Theresa of Lisieux Lions in two straight games in a best-of-three final to secure the long-sought after YRAA title and, subsequently, punched their ticket to the provincial championships.

The series sweep versus the Lions represented a Triple Crown of championships in 2023-24 for the Mustangs. In the Fall, the Aurora high school captured both the Junior 10's and Senior 10's titles to set up the trifecta this Spring.

The Mustangs gallop into Peterborough to compete at OFSAA from June 3-5 against powerhouses like the #1-ranked defending champs Mayfield SS (Caledon) as well as #2-ranked John F. Ross CVI (Guelph) and #5-ranked Ajax and #7-ranked Uxbridge from Durham Region.

However, the daunting task of taking down these perennial provincial-caliber programs did not faze either of the Mustang captains.

Grade 12 multisport student-athlete Mikayla Young, who has committed to a soccer scholarship at Wheeling University in West Virginia in September, is the kicker for the Mustangs and is optimistic about her squad's chances in Peterborough.

?I'm hopeful that [we] can do very well at OFSAA. We'll try our best as we have all season. We started training in December for this. All the time and effort has been put in by everyone involved so we're ready to compete.?

Fellow Senior Verena Marsig, who has committed to play rugby for the Marauders and attend McMaster in Hamilton this Fall, was even more confident and was looking to leave a legacy of winning for the school she is graduating from in four weeks.

?The biggest thing last year was putting our school and Aurora on the map as having a proper, competitive rugby program. We lost in the YRAA finals last year so winning the championship this year made it even more meaningful. Now, we're representing St. Max, Aurora, and the Barbarians in the Ontario championships. We need to put up a good fight when we're representing so many. This is a great way to go out as graduating players.?

The Mustangs' coaching staff?comprised of Meaghan Sheahan, Kate Treacy, and Melissa Menard ? was equally enthusiastic about the team's chances in Peterborough.

Coach Kate Treacy, who also coaches Varsity Hockey, offered a voice of experience that exuded confidence in her student-athletes.

"I've been to OFSAA for hockey and I can appreciate that anything can happen. They're passionate about rugby and they've shown it all season. They are going to be competitive at OFSAA. We told them at practice that "It's up to you now."

Coach Melissa Menard noted, "This is my first OFSAA and I'm looking forward to seeing them compete against strong programs and seeing all the work they've put in this season put into practice at the provincial championships."

Coach Meaghan Sheahan, a veteran rugby coach and a former player for the Aurora Barbarians, praised her players and felt confident regarding her Mustangs' prospects in Peterborough.

"These are some of the most inspirational athletes that I've ever coached. Their debut at OFSAA will highlight the hard work, dedication, and adaptability they have shown this season."

Coach Sheahan acknowledged the vital importance of the team's leadership group to cope with the pressures that come with a team's first trip to the provincial championships.

"We have fantastic leadership in both the forwards and the backs. Our captains Verena and Mikayla inspire and motivate their teammates to work together as one cohesive unit. While this may be our first time attending OFSAA, we have the advantage of being unknown to most other competitors. I have no doubt that this team will turn some heads and make a statement that St. Max is also a rugby powerhouse, not to be underestimated."

It's possible to underestimate the #14-ranked Mustangs. However, their pristine 6-0 regular season record during which they outscored their opponents 123-25 would contradict such a low seeding.

Additionally, the Mustangs' participation in two tournaments at McMaster University and Durham College earlier in May yielded a 2-1-2 record on the road—five games of vital experience that will serve them well when they perform on the pitch at the provincials in Peterborough this week.

By Jim Stewart