

U18 Barbarian girls are best in Ontario



By Jake Courtepatte

It was an underdog victory for the under-18 Aurora Barbarians girls on Sunday as they took the title of best rugby squad in the province.

The Barbarians, who finished their season with a 4-2-0 record, turned things around in the playoffs after losing two of their final three games in the regular season.

In early August, the seventh-seed Barbarians battled the second-seeded Balmy Beach, with the Barbarians pulling off a surprise upset winning in overtime 17 ? 12. They faced an even greater challenge in the U18 semi-finals the week after, taking on the top-seeded Oshawa Vikings.

The Vikings had the Barbs number earlier in the season, winning both of their league games by scores of 49 ? 12 and 25 ? 10. This game, however, would be all Barbs, as some excellent defense and two tries from Mia Rogers were enough to secure a spot in the championship with a 14 ? 10 victory.

With the top two seeds eliminated at the hands of the Barbs, they would face the number-three Oakville Crusaders in the finals on Saturday.

Fletcher's Field in Markham was abuzz as over 150 fans packed in to watch the Barbs take on the high school powerhouse of Oakville, where the OFSAA ?AAA' gold medal winner of Oakville Trafalgar resides.

The Crusaders came on strong, pinning the Barbs in their own end for the first ten minutes. They finally earned a turnover at a ruck, and Eryn Roberts ran the length of the field untouched for the Barbs' first try.

Julia Giannitopolous converted to give the Barbs a 7 ? 0 lead.

Although Oakville put the pressure back on after the kick-off, Aurora's defence stood tall and allowed Linzi Kruger to score a try in the corner just before halftime. Although the convert was missed, the Barbs led 12 ? 0 at the break.

It was much the same in the second with the Barbarians' strong defence outplaying a surmounting Crusaders' offense. But Oakville finally broke the line at around the fifteen-minute mark, scoring an unconverted try to make it 12 ? 5. They would add another ten minutes later to close the gap to 12 ? 10.

But that would be as close as they would get to the Barbs as Rebecca Godden added a late insurance marker that was once again converted by Giannitopolous for a 19 ? 10 victory.

?It's awesome, but we are not done yet,? said head coach Nick Daniels after the game.

After securing the top spot in the Toronto division, the Barbs quickly turned around to provincial championships back at Fletcher's on Sunday. They cruised past London St. George in the semi-final, winning 33 ? 5. Facing the Hamilton Hornets in the final, the Barbs jumped out to a 21 ? 0 lead by halftime.

Led by two tries each from Roberts and Vyk Brochu, and six conversions from Giannitopolous, the Barbs took the championship by a final score of 42 ? 7.

Mikhaila Irving was awarded the team's most outstanding player at a Barbarian award banquet over the weekend.