

Campion crowned soccer champion

Tuesday June 9 2009
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Brampton high school soccer was in the spotlight in different parts of the province on the weekend.

In Toronto, the St. Edmund Campion Bears finished an undefeated season winning the Ontario Federation of Schools Athletic Association (OFSAA) 4A boys' title on Saturday afternoon.

At almost the same time in Niagara Falls the surprising St. Thomas Aquinas Cardinals earned the silver medal at the girls' championship.

It is the best finish either school has ever had at the provincial final. For Campion, a school opened six years ago, it is the first OFSAA team championship.

"We were the talk of the tournament," said head coach Greg Spagnoli. He said the team was a superb representative for the Region of Peel Secondary School Athletic Association (ROPSSAA) and drew raves from those who watched them play.

While ROPSSAA has won numerous medals at the boys' tournament this is the first gold since the 2005 tournament when the event was held at Mississauga Iceland. That year ROPSSAA swept the medals with St. Augustine earning gold, Notre Dame the silver and Father Goetz the bronze.

The association's record over the last five years earned Campion the No. 2 seed. On the other hand ROPSSAA has not fared as well on the girls' side with Aquinas hoping to become the first Peel team to win gold but just falling short.

The Cardinals were the No. 8 seed.

"I'm really proud of them," said head coach Grace Picicci of what the team accomplished.

Campion had to battle a string of injuries to claim its title. The team went into the playoffs already missing its captain Nathan Wray, out for the season with a knee injury and lost another defender Lucas De Lima Rosa 15 minutes into the first game at OFSAA.

Although the Bears took 19 players to OFSAA, only 16 were able to play with three injured. Spagnoli added the captain of the junior team Alex Halis to the squad and the Grade 9 student made a significant contribution.

In the final the Bears defeated No. 1 St. Thomas Aquinas of London, 2-1 (winning 4-2 on penalties).

In the final the Bears trailed 1-0 after 15 minutes. They got an equalizing goal by Jonathan Osorio before the half.

Campion had the territorial advantage in the second half and the overtime but missed some great chances, hitting the woodwork several times, as the game went to penalty kicks.

The hero was goalie Antonio Ilic who stopped two of four Aquinas shots in the shootout.

Because of that the Bears did not even need their fifth shot with Halis, Brandon Simoes, Osorio and Teneil Gordon all scored on their attempts.

In its semifinal on Saturday morning Campion downed Cardinal Newman 4-1. Osorio scored three times while Roan Baxter also scored.

Campion won its quarterfinal on Friday topping East York 6-0 with single goals from Osorio, Baxter, Kwabena Boateng, Gordon, Carlos Noqueira and Ryan Martin.

Campion breezed to first place in its pool with a 3-0 mark. The Bears topped Ursuline College 7-1. Halis scored three times with Baxter scoring twice. Osorio and Boateng also scored.

On Thursday Campion downed St. Joan of Arc 8-0. Ian Nanco and Baxter had two goals each with the others by Halis, Simoes, Martin and Osorio.

In the opener on Thursday morning Campion downed Robert Borden 4-1.

Spagnoli said it was a total team effort. With the grueling run of six games in three days, everyone got a chance to play. Campion finished the season with a 31-0-2 record.

For the Cardinals girls, Picicci said the grind of the tournament caught up to her players who lost to No. 2 Burlington Notre Dame 4-2 in the final. Aquinas had beaten the Irish during the preliminary round.

That does not detract from the strong tournament for the Cardinals.

"They were just really focused. We could see that from the first night we got there. They were all in their rooms and sleeping, not all the teams were," said Picicci.

Keyanna Jackson scored both of the Aquinas goals in the final.

In Saturday's semifinal the Cardinals downed Kitchener St. Mary's 2-1. Christabel Oduro and Maria Aires scored.

On Friday Aquinas won its quarterfinal over Welland Notre Dame 3-1. Jackson had a pair of goals with the other by Alisha Leila.

Aquinas opened play on Thursday with a 4-1 victory over Saint Paul. Jackson scored three times with Taylor Lyons also scoring.

The Cardinals were 5-3 winners over Cardinal Newman. Jackson scored twice with singles by Aires, Leila and Lyons.

Aquinas earned first-place in its pool with a 2-1 victory over Burlington Notre Dame. Jackson had both goals.

The loss in the final was the Cardinals first setback of the season as they finished the season with a 22-1 record.

Next year the Cardinals could once again be a formidable foe; they are expected to lose only one player.

Campion has six players moving on but also has a strong group returning.