

# Muskie pucksters impress at OFSAA

By Jamie Mountain

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The Muskie girls' hockey team was a force to be reckoned with all season and they proved their talent once again last week at the OFSAA 'A/AA' championships in Timmins.

After finishing atop Pool 'C' with a 3-0 record and then blanking Leaside 2-0 in quarter-final action Thursday afternoon, the squad fell just short of their goal of a provincial title with a 3-0 loss to St. Anne's CSS in the semi-finals Friday morning.

The black-and-gold then fell 2-1 to St. David CSS (Waterloo) that afternoon to settle for the "antique bronze" medal.

"I wish we could have a bit more time," said Muskie head coach Todd Hamilton. "I felt we were wearing down the other teams with three lines.

"St. Anne's mostly played two lines, consisting of borrowed junior 'A' or 'AAA' level players," he noted.

"Their third and fourth lines didn't see the ice.

"ESC L'Escale's [Clarence-Rockland] coaches Genevieve Cheff and Miguel Deault used their entire bench with no juniors, I am aware of, and rolled three lines," Hamilton added.

"Definite underdogs in the final [and] I believe Rockland beat St. Anne's because of their depth."

ESC L'Escale claimed the provincial title with a 2-1 overtime win over St. Anne's in Friday's gold-medal final.

Hamilton also noted OFSAA won't be allowing junior 'A' players to participate in the tournament next year.

"Personally, I don't have a problem with it," he remarked. "It's great for our kids to get the opportunity to play against the best players available.

"But I don't really understand why a junior 'A' and 'AAA' level player would want to play in a high school tournament?"

"I don't think Cole Tymkin



**The Muskie girls' hockey team was welcomed back by their loyal supporters Saturday afternoon in the parking lot of the Memorial Sports Centre here. The black-and-gold had just returned after finishing fourth at the OFSAA 'A/AA' championships in Timmins last week to wrap up an impressive season.**

—Submitted photo

[OHL's London Knights] or Ian Tookenay [Fort Frances Lakers] would consider qualifying to play by doing some booklet classes, playing two regular-season high school games, then joining the Muskies at OFSAA in March," Hamilton reasoned.

"Doesn't make much sense."

St. David scored twice in the first period as they carried a 2-0 lead after 15 minutes in the bronze-medal game.

After a scoreless second period, Reece McQuaker netted a beautiful goal with a backhand to the top-shelf with under five minutes to go in the third, but that's as close as the Muskies would get.

Fort High, ranked third for the 16-team tournament, had opened play last Wednesday

morning with a 6-1 romp over fifth-ranked Anderson CVI (Whitby).

Captain Annalise (CC) Hayes led the way with a hat trick while Taylor Crosswell, Kelsey Langtry, and Jessica Steele added singles.

Kamryn Sandelovich earned the win in goal.

The black-and-gold then blanked the 10th-seeded host ESC Thériault 2-0 that afternoon.

Hayes netted both goals while Sandelovich earned the shutout.

"There are no weak teams at OFSAA and the games are 15-minute stop-time [periods] with one flood, so you need to have a good start," Hamilton stressed.

"We also played six very high-tempo, competitive games in three days, with all three days being 8 a.m. [EDT] starts," he noted.

"So on Fort Frances time, the players were getting up at 5 a.m. and playing at 7 a.m. all three days of the tournament.

"Noting these challenges, the players played their best hock-

ey of the season at the right time," Hamilton said.

The Muskies then eked out a 4-3 win against 16th-ranked St. Joseph CSS (Mississauga) on Thursday morning to advance to the championship round with an unblemished record.

Crosswell netted a hat trick in that one while Jillian Calder had the Muskies' other goal.

Hayes also chipped in with three assists.

"They came to play, plain and simple," Hamilton said about the effort of his squad over the three days in Timmins.

"They battled back when we were behind and every player contributed to our success at OFSAA," he noted.

"Just the way the players prepared and played the games, [they] very committed.

"They enjoyed every second and didn't quit until the final buzzer," Hamilton added. "I am very proud of all of them.

"It is a great group."

The Muskies will be losing 12 players to graduation this year, including Hayes, Crosswell, Katelyn Gurniak, Siobhan Mackintosh, Steele, Lillie MacKinnon, Hanna Ledrew, Khali Degagne, Langtry, Jenna Clendenning, Avery Cates, and Carly McKinnon.

What were some of the biggest joys of coaching that group?

"Simply put, they are all just a great bunch of kids," Hamilton lauded.

"Very coachable, committed to the team, and each other," he noted.

"What more can a coach ask for?"

Looking ahead, Hamilton believes the future of Muskie girls' hockey is in good shape.

"I think the FFGWHA [Fort Frances Girls'/Women's Hockey Association] has done a great job developing players," he remarked.

"The Muskie program will continue to have success [both] on and off the ice."

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