

Canada Celebrates Ideal LVI Weekend

Written by Jackie Finlan

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The Women's Elite final was the only LVI game contested today inside Sam Boyd Stadium during the USA 7s. But for American fans, it was a bit anti-climatic as two Canada select sides faced off for the title. But all credit goes to coach John Tait's teams. They were subject to same conditions and constraints as the USA teams but defeated both Americans sides convincingly.



"It's one of the more relaxed finals I've been a part of," Tait joked after Maple Leafs 1 defeated Maple Leafs 2 26-0. "I was really proud of both teams. The black team [Maple Leafs 2] definitely had the tougher draw the last two days, so they're really down to about nine healthy bodies. They came up against a well rested, more experienced side in the final. They did pretty well over the course of the tournament, and I'm happy with the results, particularly over the US."

Veteran Mandy Marchak led with nine points on a try and two conversions, while newcomer Brittany Benn followed with seven on a try and conversion. Flyers Magali Harvey and Bianca Farella also dotted down. One might presume that the teams would have pulled up a bit, playing against teammates and all, but they're building toward the Rugby World Cup Sevens and still vying for spots on upcoming tournament rosters.

"The red team [Maple Leafs 1] had 10 of the girls from Houston, and we brought up a couple of our girls who are decentralized to replace Ashley Steacy and Brittany Waters," Tait said. "The black team [Maple Leafs 2] has some experienced girls who are coming off of injuries and trying to get back into the top team, along with some other development players. They're not too far apart, but the ball bounced the red way today."

Tait was particularly impressed with young collegians Amanda Thornborough and Elissa Alarie,

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two players from Victoria who have come a long way in the last year and continue to improve with every tournament. He was also pleased with Farella's development.

"She's really starting to come along," Tait said of the speedy wing. "She's got a lot of pace and is just figuring out how to bring it into the game more and more."

Las Vegas was an enjoyable experience overall, and although the players weren't mulling over their Houston 7s finish last weekend, they were happy to reinforce their quality as a team.

"We performed pretty well in Houston," Tait retorted. "We really just had one bad game after our quarterfinal loss to New Zealand. It was a close game, and the girls were gutted. We didn't put that away before our next game against the Netherlands, and we let that get away from us. That was really the only poor performance."

No poor performances from the Canadian sides this weekend, and they were rewarded with two spots in the final and the inevitable trophy.