Hyde Leadership Public Charter School defeated Gonzaga's Varsity II side to win the Metro Area Varsity Rugby Conference Sunday. Hyde-DC's student-athletes are probably best known for their inspirational story, both on and off the rugby field, yet they managed to pull off a victory in a battle that was truly a "David vs. Goliath" match-up.

The Hyde-DC rugby program draws its 30+ players from a high school population of less than 125 boys. Yet every member of the team showed their determination in upending a Gonzaga rugby program that involves 180 boys drawn from a school population of more than 900. Over the past decade, Gonzaga has built a program that is a respected local and regional powerhouse with an unquestioned string of Championships.

To make it to the Championships, Hyde-DC finished its league season 6-1 as the #2 seed in playoffs, with its only loss at the hands of Gonzaga, 24-10. Gonzaga finished undefeated as the #1 seed. In the semifinals, Gonzaga defeated the #4 seed, a determined and athletic Coolidge High School side, 17-10. Hyde-DC played #3 seed Georgetown Prep and made quick work of them with a 73-0 victory, which set up a Hyde-Gonzaga rematch in the finals.

The Championship was played on Gonzaga's football field and proved to be an exciting and physical encounter. With the field narrowed down to football dimensions, both teams were forced to keep the ball tight. Typically known for its outside speed, Hyde-DC improved its physicality at the breakdown and ball retention and chose to keep the ball in tight with the forwards for much of the match. Gonzaga did similarly with the added option of some tactical kicks from Gonzaga flyhalf to keep Hyde's defense honest.

In the end, Hyde-DC's play proved the old adage that "Defense Wins Championships." With the scoreboard at 24-10, Hyde spent the final nine minutes playing a man down with their inside center having left the field with a yellow card for an overzealous tackle. Hyde managed to stifle the Gonzaga attack until the final minute when Gonzaga scored to put the game within reach at 24-17. Off the ensuing restart, Hyde-DC managed to regain possession and clear the ball to touch to end the game and begin the celebration more than a decade in the making.

While the celebrations were joyous, it was bittersweet for teammates, alumni and parents. This was the first, only and last Championship to be won by a Hyde-DC Rugby team. Hyde

Leadership Public Charter School will be adopting a new school name as it ends its 12-year relationship with the Hyde Schools at the end of June. “We’ll have a new name, but our school’s dedication to and love for the sport of rugby will not change,” head coach Tal Bayer promised.