No surprise, but no less pleasurable to watch, Norwich repeated as Women's College 7s champion, defeating Navy 17-5 in the final. A credit to the Midshipmen, the title match was Norwich's most competitive by far, but even when Navy threatened a comeback – scoring the second try against Norwich all tournament – there was never any doubt that the Cadets deserved the trophy.

It was only 5-0 at half thanks to a try from Joya Clark. At the 10-minute mark, Ally Day scored Norwich's second try, which Hannah Bell converted. A minute later, Navy's Taylor Lovelace pulled her side within seven, but Clark's second try of the game put the nail in the coffin, 17-5.

"We knew Navy was going to bring it," Norwich coach Austin Hall said. "There were moments when other teams challenged us with what they were doing, but score wise, Navy was the best. It was great to learn from all those teams."

The field would beg to differ; it was Norwich who was handing out lessons to opponents. Over six matches, the team's superior athleticism and individual skill helped Norwich in outscoring opponents 194-12.

"This year, we brought a lot of physicality, which teams don't expect because we're a short team," Hall said. "It's always surprising when a shorter player gets underneath you and knocks you backward. And our creativity, too. Some people said that we don't really play 7s – it is a different game for us. But I think we proved that we can play 7s.

Some of that criticism may have arisen from the fact that Norwich had little 7s exposure prior to the championship, due to their 15s schedule. But adopting the wide-open nature of 7s came naturally to the Cadets and helped alleviate any insecurities.

"We have a nonchalant attitude about 7s rugby," Hall said. "We like to play, and this is an opportunity to play. We don't put any pressure on ourselves – it's like running around the backyard with your sisters, playing the way you did when you were growing up. There was no pressure to repeat, but people did put a bull's eye on our chest."

In other words, Norwich was relaxed coming into the weekend and that allowed for some entertaining, high speed rugby. Standout for the weekend was freshman Ally Day. She was pegged as a player-to-watch before the first kickoff, and she satisfied crowds as she led all teams with 10 tries scored.

"What a special player," Hall said of the Maine resident. "She has the ability to beat her opposite in any number of ways. She can beat them with speed around the corner, by going through them, or dancing around them. She's such a dynamic runner, and she'll put you on your back if you try to take her on."

Hall also tipped his hat to scrumhalf Emily Oor and Vanessa Champagne, who moved from center to prop and scored five tries on the weekend.

Norwich's defense was very solid all weekend long, as they gave up only two tries in six games,

one to Stanford and one to Navy. Meanwhile Clark and Day were consistent scoring threats, recording ten tries each.

“No other prop scored like that,” Hall said. “We had 10 players score this weekend, which is pretty astonishing. A lot of the other teams have three, four, five really good players. Our advantage is that our sixth, seventh, eighth players are just as good.”

That is what is so unique about Norwich. Other teams might have some good athletes who are still familiarizing themselves with rugby, or good rugby players who don’t quite have the athleticism. Norwich is able to combine both attributes and field a side of smart rugby athletes, and that formula produces championship titles at the 7s and 15s levels.

“The first one was amazing, but this one feels better,” Hall said of Norwich’s second consecutive 7s title. “There’s something special about this team … maybe it’s a personal thing, but I feel stronger about this one.”

The adage says the second championship is always harder than the first, and while this year’s field certainly displayed an uptick in talent, Norwich made the repeat title look easy.

Women College 7s Final
Norwich 17
Tries: Clark 2, Day
Conversions: Bell

Navy 5
Tries: Lovelace