

The Best Is Yet To Come

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Red Deer Titan Courtney Hueppelsheuser hauls down Taylor Lappage who usually plays for the Titans but was loaned to the Leduc Crude Wednesday. The Titans won the under 18 match by default.

The Red Deer under-18 Titans girls rugby squad has excelled in league play, but coach Mike Haugen insists the best is yet to come.

“We have a lot of girls who are keen on the game and they’re excited to play, which makes my job that much easier,” Haugen said Wednesday, following his team’s 20-0 win over Leduc in Edmonton League action at Titans Park.

“It’s been a treat that way. The girls who are here for the summer want to be here. For a coach, you can’t ask for more than that. We’re doing well in the league standings (with a 3-1 record) and what’s encouraging is we could be doing better. We haven’t fully played our best game as a team yet.”

Haugen is in his first year as the Titans U18 girls coach after five seasons as a high school coach at Rocky Mountain House.

“The calibre of play at this level is similar to high school,” he said. “It’s still a lot of same girls. Fortunately, three of the girls I coached in high school are playing for me here so we have some familiarity there. And I recognize a lot of the other girls from playing against me (in high school play), plus they recognize me too, so it’s been pretty good in terms of us coming together as a team.”

The U18 Titans girls lost the bronze-medal game in the Alberta Summer Games and also played two games in a Calgary league in July before joining the Edmonton loop.

So far, so good, at least in regards to the Edmonton League. The Titans have one last regular-season match tonight in Edmonton, then will prepare for the playoffs.

Haugen hasn’t heard any news of a U18 provincial championship tournament this summer, but he’s confident that the Titans will be more than competitive if they are able to vie for an Alberta title.

For now, he’ll settle on winning the Edmonton League championship.

“If the girls come together more and start playing more as a team, we can have a legitimate shot at winning the league,” he said.

“We have a high level of individual skill and we just have to translate that to a team game.”

A portion of the U18 Titans girls team suited up with Leduc when the visitors showed up with a small roster. Emily Neville scored three tries to lead the Titans to victory.

• Meanwhile, the Titans U18 boys suffered their first Edmonton League loss in a 22-10 setback to the visiting Clansmen II. Kyle Pickett and Colin Robertson each scored a try in a losing cause.