

## Feildians relishing the opportunity to represent the Double Blues on the national stage

Newfoundland and Labrador's Feildians women's team are making the most of their shot at the national stage. Due to an uneven number of teams entering the 2019 Jubilee Nationals, the province was able to submit a second side into the competition. On opening day, they held defending champions Ontario scoreless through 80 minutes of play then earned their first point at nationals through a 1-1 tie.

While the Double Blues have little experience at the senior national level, the team feels they belong among the top teams in the country. "Although we aren't in as provincial champions, we feel like we have a team that's capable of playing at this level," said Feildians defender Erin Mckinnon.

Mckinnon is one of thirteen Feildians players who also suit up for the Memorial University Seahawks. The opportunity for more familiarity among a large portion of the squad as well as the fitness levels demanded by AUS play is one of the big factors Mckinnon attributes to the club's success. "The consistently high-level training we are all receiving playing with the Sea-Hawks will definitely be an asset (in) this tournament," Mckinnon said.

Beyond their varsity experience, the team points to their Feildians coaching staff and the recruitment and quality of training they've implemented as essential to the strides they've made in 2019. "Our coaches Mike (Oliver) and Phil (Oliver) worked extremely hard to recruit younger players which made our team much more successful," said right back Chantel Armstrong.

For such drastic change to occur over the course of one year, the Feildians coaching staff needed the group to collectively buy-in to the plan. With the opportunity looming to represent the club on the national stage, Mackinnon says that's exactly what happened.

"The players have really bought into the systems that our coach, Mike Oliver, has taught us," Mckinnon said. "The commitment he brings is contagious within the group. That, the addition of new, younger players, and our assistant coach, Bobby Gamba, has led to our training sessions having much better quality and I think the results towards the end of the season speak volumes of the steps we've taken as a team."

As the team begins to take more strides, there are specific goals set. While the expectations are to go into each match with ambitions of victory, the team is putting perspective on what they have already achieved in a short time.

"My expectation is to just play our best," Armstrong said. "I would love a medal, but honestly, I am just so proud of my team to make the Nationals."

Leading up to the tournament, Mckinnon stated her Feildians side hoped to “compete hard and surprise a few teams.” With a 1-1 draw against defending champions Scarborough GS United to open their nationals account, the double blues have certainly begun on the right path.