

## Nova Scotia trio return home for Newfoundland and Labrador-hosted nationals

For a trio of Nova Scotia players, the host site for this year's Jubilee Trophy Toyota National Championships makes the tournament trip a little more sentimental. Meghan Earle, Lauren Windsor, and Liz McPhail of United DFC (Dartmouth) were either born in Newfoundland and Labrador or lived here for a significant time. This year's tournament is a homecoming of sorts and offers an opportunity to play in front of friends and family for the first time in a few years.

For Earle, the announcement of St. John's as the host site for 2019 was added motivation to help get her team to the competition. "Ever since we found out that the nationals this year will be hosted in St. John's, I really doubted that we would be in Nova Scotia on Thanksgiving weekend. Being one of the three players on the team with ties to NL made this year that much more important to us," Earle said.

"I think there will be some sort of home-away-from-home advantage for us in St John's," said midfielder and Mount Pearl native Windsor "I think it will be an advantage to play on familiar fields and in the unpredictable weather."

For defender McPhail, a return to the island gives her the chance to rediscover the hospitality she grew accustomed to while living in the province for seven years. "I am very excited about the opportunity to return to NL and play soccer again on familiar fields and in front of familiar faces," said McPhail.

While she originally hails from Prince Edward Island, McPhail has plenty of ties to the province and will be looking to get the full NL treatment once again, including her fix of local food. "I am definitely excited to see family and friends as well, and of course, having some Jigg's dinner," she said.

As for the expectations on the field, the team aims to represent their province to the best of their abilities. "As a team, our goal will be to return to Nova Scotia with a medal... we have the potential to do well and I think if we are at our best we will be successful," said Windsor.

"We're definitely motivated to finish as high as we can and to enjoy what will be the first senior club nationals for most of us," Earle said. Having a solid placing would also help for next year, especially since the tournament will be hosted in Halifax."

United DFC will play in Group B in the round-robin, which leaves the possibility of meeting one of the two NL entries exclusively to the final day. Although the focus is on their own team success, the thought of playing one of the local sides is one the team can't ignore.

“It has been a while since I was last at nationals, so I am really looking forward to the shot at winning another medal... I think it would be great if NS ended up facing one of the home teams in a medal game,” said McPhail.

Ultimately, the trip to St. John’s is for soccer and the goal of United DFC is to bring a medal back to Nova Scotia. The opportunity to do so on NL soil in front of friends and family is simply the cherry on top.

As Windsor describes it, the location of the tournament is “the perfect bonus to be home with my family for Thanksgiving.”

United DFC opens the 2019 Jubilee Nationals against Royal Select Beauport on Wednesday at 2 pm at Topsail field. The remainder of their schedule is as follows:

October 10th, 1:00 pm vs. Coquitlam Metro-Ford SC (BC) @ KGV

October 12th, 12:00 pm vs. FC Northwest Winnipeg (MB) @ Topsail