



St. Malo legend Gosselin honoured before MJHL game **2B**

Carillon SPORTS



Sabres celebrate achievements on and off the field **2B**

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Fans rush the floor to celebrate with the AAAA provincial champion varsity girls Sabres team.



Sienna Driedger won provincial tournament most valuable player honours. The Sabres captain and Trinity Western Commit was spectacular in the final, leading her team to its first AAAA varsity girls volleyball provincial banner in school history.

Sabres outlast Royals for provincial volleyball championship

by CASSIDY DANKOCHIK

The Steinbach Regional Secondary School (SRSS) Sabres girls varsity volleyball team made a little history Dec. 4, finally bringing home a top-tier Manitoba High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) banner after defeating the Lord Selkirk Royals in a five-set battle 3-2 (25-23, 24-26, 26-28, 25-19, 15-13).

It was a marathon game between the two squads, but the Sabres appeared comfortable in the decisive moment, jumping out to a massive 6-0 lead in the fifth set, before clinging

on for a two-point margin in the end.

That poise didn't surprise head coach Amy Toews.

"When we hit that fifth set, we knew we were ready for it because we've been through this before," Toews said.

"We've done this and we can do it again. We were just excited to be in that spot."

The team needed five sets to get past both Vincent Massey in the quarterfinals and Jeanne-Sauve in the semis.

After taking that big fifth-set lead,

the Sabres held off a furious Selkirk comeback, with team captain and tournament most valuable player Sienna Driedger smashing a kill off the Royals block attempt and onto the ground to win the match, prompting many of the Steinbach fans who made the trip to the University of Manitoba gym to rush the floor in celebration.

"It was exhilarating," Driedger said on the team's hot start in the fifth.

"We're a team that really relies on our energy, so to start the set off like that was really good."

Steinbach and Selkirk had battled in tournament play multiple times this season, with the Royals always seeming to get the upper hand. That was reflected in the teams' rankings heading into the tournament, with the Royals seeded as the top team in the province.

"We kept saying to ourselves, 'this isn't the one that matters, it's the provincial final that matters,' and here we are, we did it," Toews said.

It was a partisan crowd inside the gym, with Steinbach fans in the hundreds outnumbering their Selkirk counterparts by a two-to-one margin,

and loudly voicing their support throughout the match.

"The fans tonight were amazing," Toews said.

"To hear everyone chant for the Sabres, and to hear the drums and all the encouragement and have the community surround and support this team was amazing."

There was no question who was going to be named the best player of the tournament, with Driedger elevating her usual great level of play even higher in the first and fifth sets to clinch the victory.

The Trinity Western commit had a game-high 24-kills in the final, including the championship clinching point. While her point-to-point skills and offensive output earned her accolades, Toews praised Driedger for her leadership.

"She keeps such a level head regardless of what's going on in the game, and I think that really helped level our team," Toews said.

Callie Andres and Isabelle Voth were named to the all-star team as well.

Throughout the first three sets, Selkirk appeared to dominate in at-

tack striking at a vulnerable middle of the court, with Steinbach only able to come out on top in the first set thanks to service errors from the Royals.

All that changed as the game wore on, with Toews noting she encouraged all players to play more on their toes to defend a vulnerable piece of the court. She also noted Selkirk attackers preferred to hit between two blockers when given the opportunity.

"If our middle didn't close, we know they like to hit the seam," Toews said.

"I told (Driedger) and Kiersten (Reimer) playing in the backcourt they needed to pinch into that seam and that worked for us as well."

A Steinbach school last found themselves atop the girls volleyball mountain when the then-named Steinbach Collegiate Institute won the 1968 Manitoba High School Volleyball Championship, before the AAAA classification was created.

Vincent Massey would win the boys AAAA final, as Steinbach was knocked out in the preliminary round after losing to Transcona.



Denton Mateychuk slams on the brakes during a WHL playoff game last season. The Dominion City defenseman was named to Team Canada's World Juniors selection camp roster.

Red-hot Mateychuk named to initial Team Canada roster

by CASSIDY DANKOCHIK

It could be a very busy holiday season for Denton Mateychuk.

The Dominion City defenseman was named to Team Canada's World Junior Championship selection camp, which is set to kick off Dec. 10.

Mateychuk has been incredible to start the season for the Moose Jaw Warriors in the Western Hockey League, scoring at least one point in every game for the team so far this year.

The 2004-born Columbus Blue Jackets draft pick has an impressive 33 points in 21 games for Moose Jaw.

The World Junior Championships will take place in Sweden this year, with the team set to travel di-

rectly from the selection camp in Oakville, Ont. to Europe.

During selection camp, Team Canada hopefuls will play two games against a Canadian university all-star team. While the World Junior tournament begins on boxing day, the team will play a pre-tournament exhibition schedule overseas.

Fellow 2022 first-round NHL pick Owen Pickering wasn't able to crack the selection camp roster, despite playing in a Team Canada jersey at the U18 level in the 2021/2022 season.

The St Adolphe defenseman made some appearances in the American League last season, and returned to the Swift Current Broncos as team captain to start this year.



Selkirk took advantage of seams in the SRSS block whenever they could, before mid-game adjustments improved the Sabres' defense.