

Summary of 2017 Rugby Virginia State Championship (Tag & Tackle)



Our coaches worked diligently to provide a fun, positive sports experience for the kids. Each week we communicated game results and practice plans to each other, across age groups, to ensure everyone was working together and things were going smoothly. The emails below were shared between coaches after the state tournament – can you pick up the common theme? Call it our own WikiLeaks expose!

The **1st-2nd grade kids** played a great set of games, finishing up the tournament a solid 2 and 2, and winning the final "Shield" match. We lost our first game against a very evenly matched Great Falls team, the final whistle blowing with our tying score just steps from the try zone. We won our second game against Springfield, executing great passing and consistently finding the edge. While losing our third game, the kids never gave up and showed true grit against a very solid Alexandria side. With a three way tie for second in our pool going into the playoff round, point differential put us into the "Shield" Match against the second Alexandria team. The kids finished strong, showing great defense and making clean passes in our last game, resulting in a victory. **Great team effort!**

Man, I am so proud of those kids. [**3rd-4th grade, SYA1**].

We went 3-1 in pool play which culminated with a win over Western Suburbs (crazy end of the game where the horn blew right as they had a breakaway run). Funny enough, we had thought we were BEHIND by one point, not ahead (I'd counted one of their kicks, but the ref said it went wide), so we were rushing against time to try to score again. If we would've known we were ahead, we probably wouldn't have even kicked off after our last try.

Fell short in the Plate championship 42-10. By then, we were just too gassed. Physiology caught up with us. And we played a team with 15 players. Phillip could hardly walk with cramps in his calves and heels, Seth hurt his knee, Beckett took a knee to the nose, and Caleb was dying with cramps. All of our speed players were hobbled, so we had very little outside protection against their speed. But those kids played amazing. Even hurt, they had the passion to keep going. I told all the kids that every single one of them should sleep good. To go up against such odds and do so well shows that they had the HEART of a rugby player. **They played like a TEAM and never gave up.** We were a different team from what we were even two weeks ago.

Our **2nd 3rd-4th SYA team** got off to a poor start (lots of nerves...) and dropped their first two games against Vienna 1 (Cup runner-up) and SYC 1 (Plate winner). After lunch, SYA2 regrouped and played with confidence, offloaded quickly, and got to the edges to find running room. We squeaked past Alexandria 2 (by one point!) and opened up against Great Falls to earn a spot in the Bowl Match. As I coach, I could not be more pleased with the players' resilience, they know they started slow, but stayed positive and built back their confidence as the day went. We met Western Suburbs in the Bowl Match, a team we struggled against two weeks ago during festival play, but we played our best rugby of the season and won a very challenging match, with EVERY player contributing.

I really could not be more pleased with our tournament experience, and that has little to do with the results. **I am so proud how the players were able to work through the early struggles and re-focus on executing well as a team.** Sport is an analog for life, and I am glad we were able to provide such a compact, yet complete, experience for our children. Hollywood could not have scripted a better weekend.

The **5th-6th graders** got off to a bit a rocky start after playing the top ranked Vienna team for the first game but even though our SYA/GF/FPYC team is still very new to tackle, they played a cleaner game and were hardly penalized compared the more experienced Vienna. Despite playing from behind, they kept their heads up and continued to try to tackle and pass. I think this game is just chucked up to Vienna's experience over ours.

The team started out strong in the second game and showed improvement from the first game by supporting their teammates and getting to the rucks faster, but in the end the heat got to us and some speedy Loudoun players got ahead with a few breakaways. They didn't give up there though and picked it up as the day went on. The backline started to gel more, they all started trusting their teammates and setting the ball while letting a teammate ruck over them. We got our first try of the tournament and saw a good amount of improvement. There were some great tackles and a starting form of a back line.

Our final match was a wild card game, the boys really picked up intensity and left it all on the field to try to get to the Bowl match, but unfortunately was edged out by Alexandria. Everyone was hot and tired by the end, but each player still wanted to get as much playing time as possible not matter what the scoreboard showed, some of them were already asking about next season at the end of the day. The beginning of the season to the final game of the tournament was like night and day, we now have a great basis to build from and will only continue to improve and keep having fun!

It makes me incredibly happy that kids were asking about next season since most of them are in 5th grade and will be staying in the same age group. I think if we can get a couple scrimmages in the Fall and a handful of scrimmages and practices in Spring, we could really come out with a bang next Summer.