

Caledon Citizen's Student Athlete of the Week: Two-Time OFSAA Rugby champion Mia VandenHoek graduates from the Mayfield SS Mavericks to the OUA Brock U. Badgers

By Jim Stewart

Mia VandenHoek's remarkable athletic career at Mayfield Secondary School is drawing to a ceremonious end.

In addition to competing for the Mavericks Basketball and Wrestling teams in her senior year, Captain VandenHoek led the Senior Girls Rugby team to another undefeated season and its second consecutive AAA OFSAA championship earlier this month in Caledon.

Prior to her dynastic team's efforts on the rugby pitch, the Grade 12 Honor Roll Student committed to the OUA Brock Badgers and will be studying biomedical sciences at the university's main campus in St. Catharines in September.

Mayfield's Assistant Senior Girls Rugby Coach Rhys Manning has had the opportunity to witness first-hand the qualities of his Captain over the past two championship seasons. Manning, who is a member of the English and Co-op Departments at Mayfield Secondary School, delineated Mia VandenHoek's exceptional athletic traits.

"She is tenacious. She has a strong attention to detail and a desire to be better."

In addition to her athletic talents, Manning noted that VandenHoek is a successful student at Mayfield because she is "dedicated and hard-working."

What impresses Coach Manning the most is Captain Vandenhoek's "willingness to do the hard work; she thrives in those areas. She is a vocal leader on the field, but she supports those things with her actions." Coach Manning recalled a key performance moment from the 2023 season that demonstrated the enduring qualities of his Rugby Captain: "Mia plays the game with edge and ferocity, while being controlled and precise in a lot of her skills. In the second game of the [OFSAA] tournament, against a strong opponent in Ursaline College, the game was close and well-contested.

To open the scoring, and to set them on their way to the semis, Mia worked her way through three opposition players, outmuscling her way to a try up the middle of the field. It was a try scored by will and desire."

The will and desire to be better as a student-athlete—to which Coach Manning referred—was also evident in VandenHoek's replies to our interview questions:

Caledon Citizen: What qualities did you demonstrate in your sports season to earn Student-Athlete of the Week honors?

Mia Vandenhoek: "The qualities that I demonstrated through this year's sports season were leadership, enthusiasm, and inclusiveness. I always strive to have a positive impact on the people who come to play rugby, to grow the sport, and build the rugby community."

Caledon Citizen: What were your key statistics and performance moments from the 2022-23 season that you are most proud of?

Mia VandenHoek: "The key stats I am most proud of is going undefeated for two years in a row and winning back-to-back OFSAA championships. I am also very proud of all of the hard work and effort that all my teammates put in all season long."

Caledon Citizen: In addition to your high school sports teams, what other community sports teams do you play for and at what level?

Mia VandenHoek: ?I play club rugby for the North Halton Highlanders. I also play for Team Ontario and I have been selected for U18 Team Canada East.?

Caledon Citizen: How would you describe yourself as a student at Mayfield SS? To which sports teams and clubs do you belong? Honor Roll?

Mia VandenHoek: ?I am a very involved student at Mayfield. I belong to the basketball team, the wrestling team, and the rugby team. Outside of sports, I work for the Athletic Association. In addition, I have been on Honor Roll over the last two years for my academic achievements.?

Caledon Citizen: What are your post-secondary plans regarding prospective academic and athletic destinations?

Mia VandenHoek: ?In the new school year, I will continue my studies at Brock University for biomedical sciences and I plan on playing on their Varsity Women's Rugby team. Long term, I hope to play on the National Women's Rugby team.?

Caledon Citizen: Who is your role model in terms of the person you admire the most?

Mia VandenHoek: ?The person I admire and look up to is Sophie De Goede. As the Captain of the Senior Women's National team, I think she is a great inspiration to show girls in rugby that your hard work can pay off.?

Caledon Citizen: How do you feel about being nominated as the Caledon Citizen's Student-Athlete of the Week?

Mia VandenHoek: ?I am very grateful to have been nominated as the Athlete of the Week and I am very excited to continue to grow as an athlete!?