

Rugby sevens bronze medal winner a Caledon talent

By Jake Courtepatte

A historic bronze medal win for the Canadian women's rugby sevens team in Rio Monday was made all that much sweeter with some home-grown Caledon pride.

Kelly Russell, from Bolton, was one of the seven women to defeat Great Britain 33-10 in the bronze medal match, in the first Olympic Games for the sport.

Canada was able to avenge a 22-0 loss to Great Britain from the preliminary rounds, regrouping on offence to score six tries in the match: including one from the 29-year old Russell.

It is the second medal won by Russell in international competition in just over a year, having taken gold with the rugby sevens team at the Pan Am Games in Toronto last year.

Now that competition is over, she told Sportsnet's Jeff Blair that she's looking forward to seeing the rowing, beach volleyball and any other team sport.

Russell, whose father Sandy also played the sport, followed in his footsteps by joining the Toronto Nomads club at the age of 14. Since then, she has become one of Canada's most decorated female rugby players, having earned her first cap with the Canadian 15s team in 2007.

The following year, she made her debut with the sevens team in Hong Kong, and went on to become one of the best in the world in both variations of the sport.

Captaining the 15s team from 2011-2014, Russell led the club to a 2013 Nations Cup title, and was named Rugby Canada's Women's 15s Player of the Year the same year.

Russell's younger sister, Laura, has also represented Canada internationally in rugby, most recently alongside Kelly at the 2014 Women's Rugby World Cup. They toured New Zealand together with the squad the same year, and since Laura has taken over for Kelly as Rugby Canada's national 15s team captain.

Russell also has a degree in archaeological anthropology from the University of Western Ontario, leading the Mustangs to both OUA and CIS Championship titles in 2005, OUA silver medals in both 2006 and 2008, and a 2007 OUA gold medal.



Bolton's Kelly Russell (far right) celebrates a bronze medal performance with the Canadian rugby sevens team in Rio Monday. Photo courtesy of Canadian Olympic Committee