

2012 MARFU Collegiate Womens All-Star Report

The 2012 MARFU college all-stars season opened in May with camps at James Madison, Kutztown, and LaSalle. Players new to the program were present at every camp, and both Kutztown and LaSalle were new venues. Players from all divisions were present: Collegiate DI-DIII, Women's club, and for the first time in my MARFU tenure, high school athletes. Our focus for the year was continuity in contact.

The final camp was held in Baltimore, June 9th. The camp concluded with a scrimmage. It was, all players agreed, not the prettiest rugby. Determined to improve, players met in Glendale, CO June 12th, where they began a grueling 2-a-day practice schedule. The ladies received a special coaching session Wednesday afternoon with Pete Steinberg, US women's national team coach. At the session's end, Pete remarked that their continuity skills were quite good and we felt confident going into our first match.

We faced Pacific on Thursday and had a good game. Cheryl Johnson of West Chester stood out on both offense and defense at wing, earning her an MVP for the weekend. We were still working out kinks on overall defense however, allowing Pacific to match our tries and eventually pull ahead. We ultimately lost this match, 27-12.

There was no time to wallow in defeat, as we faced off the next afternoon against South! Friday morning, we woke early and headed out to an unscheduled practice session to fix our defensive gaps. From the first whistle, the game was an exciting one! Well-matched for the second year in a row, MARFU and South exchanged tries. Penalty count added up, giving South an extra 3 on the board. Gabby Dixon of Longwood easily outsped the South's wings, saving us several South tries. Despite a long lightning delay, MARFU came back out second half with fewer penalties and high intensity, as did South. MARFU had the ball on the 5m line when a turnover ended the match, a heartbreaking 10-7. Outstanding play from captain and MVP Jennifer Van of University of Virginia set the standard.

I was incredibly proud of the progress this team made over the all-star season. Most improved awards went to Alisha Martin of U. Maryland and Emily Fulbrook of Fairfax Police High School. That being said, the entire team really moved their rugby up a level. This was felt by the players, who sent many kind emails and cards to the coaching staff. I truly feel that the all-star program is a benefit to the players who make it, the players who don't, their home clubs, the coaches, and to USA rugby as a whole.

Thanks to MARFU for their unwavering support of the program. Thank you to our hosts: Chesapeake women, LaSalle, Kutztown, and JMU. Thanks to coaches throughout MARFU, who encouraged players to come out. I had one of the best coaching teams I have had the pleasure of working with and I thank all of them: Roshna Wunderlich (JMU), Brenna Costello (DC Furies), and Leslie Joyce (Chesapeake).

Though the 2012 squad did not win their matches, their game play and attitude reminded me why I love coaching and why I love this game.

Sincerely,

Kate Nichol, Head Coach