

College Sport

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WGC first XI makes encouraging start

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It is early days yet, but Wellington Girls' College's hockey first XI are showing plenty of promise.

The team sit top of the P1 standings after winning their first two games of the round-robin, having finished fourth in the grading rounds.

The latest of those wins was their most impressive of the season when they beat perennial contenders Wairarapa College 3-1 on Friday night.

It was a performance which young head coach Riley Jennings labelled as their best of the season.

"The scoreline probably flattered us, but we dominated the first half and their [Wairarapa] heads dropped a bit and we put three goals against them.

"They scored once in the second half, but the first half was probably the best I've seen our girls play."

Jennings started working with the team as an assistant coach last year with his mother, Kathryn, the head coach, and sister, Talia, the team's goalkeeper.

Talia left school at the end of last year and Kathryn decided to take a step back, which saw Riley Jennings - who left Wellington College three years ago - step into the head coaching role.

The young team has responded well under their new coach, with Kathryn still lending a hand as an assistant. All this despite Jennings thinking this year would probably



Wellington Girls' College coach Riley Jennings, centre, speaks to his team during the current season at the National Hockey Stadium.



Wellington Girls' College hockey captain Laura Jurgeleit, left, has played a key role in her team's impressive start to the season.

be a tough one in terms of results.

"We lost six or seven year 13s at the end of last year, so we thought this year would be more of a rebuilding year.

"But we've had a big focus on playing good quality hockey and what people see when they watch our games is we can't rely on just a

few players anymore. We don't have the big chunk of year 13 stars we had last year, so we have to play more as a team and that's working out really nicely for us.

"The other thing is the girls seem to be really enjoying it, there is a nice team atmosphere and we always say you're playing hockey

because you enjoy it. If you're not having fun, then what are you really there for?"

The solid start to the season has led to some lofty goals being set.

"We've got the local comp and Wellington Girls haven't done that well in that in the last decade or so, so there's a really big push on

finishing in the top two so we can have a chance at the final and taking out the comp.

"Then the other one is heading off to a tournament in the secondary school tournament week. If we finish top two at that tournament we'll get promoted up to the top tournament next year."

That tournament will be the Jenny Hair Cup in Palmerston North from September 4-8. Wellington Girls' were knocked out at the semifinal stage of last year's tournament by Samuel Marsden Collegiate, who went on to win it and qualify for the tier-1 Federation Cup.

Wellington Girls' got a small amount of revenge for that semi-final loss when starting this year's P1 round robin with a 5-1 win over Samuel Marsden.

Jennings sees last year's P1 champions Queen Margaret College and Wairarapa as the toughest opposition this year. That makes this Friday's match against QMC another stern test of their title credentials. They drew with QMC 2-2 in the grading phase of the year.

And while the team performance always outweighs any individual stars, Jennings reserved special praise for his captain, Laura Jurgeleit.

"We've got a pretty heavy focus on the team, but Laura has scored a dozen goals already in the season, which has really helped us. She has brought the team together well and led from the front."

In other P1 results on Friday, St Matthew's Collegiate joined Wellington Girls' as the only other team to go two-from-two when beating St Mary's College 2-0.

Samuel Marsden got off the mark with a 5-1 win over newly promoted Paraparaumu College, while QMC suffered a somewhat surprising 3-2 loss to Wellington East Girls' College, having gone through grading undefeated.

In the boys' grade, Paraparaumu and Rathkeale College lead the way with two wins each, with Wairarapa, Wellington College and Hutt International Boys' School just in behind.

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