

Field hockey games to watch

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Fair Haven's Zoey Cole (22) fights to steal the ball from Otter Valley's Ryleigh LaPorte (24) during a game in Brandon this past fall.
File photo by Hannah Diction

Field hockey is a sport where the elite one year more often than not stay that way the next.

Schools like Mount Abraham, Windsor, Bellows Falls, Stowe and Burr and Burton seem like they're in the hunt every year for a title.

Teams in the *Rutland Herald* coverage area would love to meet that lofty standard. One of the teams, Otter Valley, was just in the Division II state championship game in 2019.

Let's take a look at some matchups to watch this fall for the four teams in the Herald coverage area, Otter Valley, Rutland, Fair Haven and Springfield.

BF at Springfield, 9/3

Springfield is a program looking to build something. Going up against a rival team that has built something great will only help them in that process.

Bellows Falls is the first team on the Cosmos' schedule, so they'll see right away what it takes to be an elite program in the state.

While Springfield will be the clear underdog, they'll learn a lot along the way.

It is also a neighborhood rivalry.

Rutland at OV, 9/9

Of the three Rutland County field hockey teams, these are the two most historically strong, so the rivalry factor is always there.

Rutland struggled in the abbreviated season last year, but most teams would with Bellows Falls, Windsor and BBA on the schedule. I'd expect them to have a more successful fall in 2021.

Otter Valley was a middle of the pack Division II team in 2020, but the Otters have plenty of talent coming back to make a jump this fall.

Both teams are plenty motivated to prove something, which makes for a great matchup.

Springfield at FHU, 9/15

This will be their second of two matchups this fall, as Springfield plays Fair Haven twice in its first three games.

These are two clubs looking to build a consistent winner, so both would love to build some early-season momentum and grab the win here.

OV at FHU 9/29

Under coach Allison Resnick, Fair Haven is trying to lay the groundwork for a successful program.

It's nice to have moments where you see some of that hard work pay off and the Slaters had one of those last fall when they tied Otter Valley in a game in October.

They played two other times in 2020, both Otter wins, but Fair Haven will remember that tie.

This will be the first of two meetings between the county rivals.

BBA at Rutland, 10/4

Rutland and BBA have played their fair share of competitive field hockey games over the years, so this one is always circled on the schedule.

The Bulldogs have been the more successful of the two programs in recent years, making trips to the D-II title game twice in three years, but outside of an abnormal season last year, Rutland has been no slouch in its own right.

By this point in the season, both rivals will have a good idea where they are and how their stretch run will go.

FHU at Granville, 10/6

One thing we missed last fall due to the COVID situation in the region was cross-state matchups.

Fair Haven and Granville are a short trip over the New York border, down NY-22A, from each other and they'll meet up in early October for a non-league contest.

The Golden Horde play in the ultra competitive Adirondack-Wasaren League in New York, meaning the Slaters will be meeting a team as battled-tested as they come.

This is a nice change of pace matchup for Fair Haven as it enters the homestretch of its regular season.

OV at Middlebury, 10/7

As someone who covered the game, I know firsthand how intense the playoff matchup between these two schools was last fall.

It took two overtime periods for someone to score, but Ryleigh LaPorte sent her team into the next round with the game-winner.

Hard-fought losses like that sting and I'm sure that feeling didn't go away easy for the Tigers.

There was only one Otter senior on that 2020 team, so the cast of characters could be largely the same when the late regular season rematch happens in October, this time in Tiger territory.