

Advantage Rugby aims to get high schoolers recruited

By Jake Courtepatte

Rugby players in York Region looking to make the jump to the collegiate level will have the chance to do so in front of recruiters at the end of the month.

Advantage Rugby, run by the coaches of the under-18 boys Aurora Barbarians team, will host its inaugural High School Player Showcase on April 30, held at the Aurora Sports Dome.

"This is a great idea", said Graham Brown, former CEO of Rugby Canada and current President and CEO of U Sports.

"Opportunities like this give student athletes the visibility, appreciation and reward they deserve."

High schoolers will have the chance to show what they are made of in front of coaches from McMaster, Queens, Guelph, Seneca, Trent, Toronto, Concordia, Georgian, Brock, and Waterloo, through a series of tests.

"Connecting prospective student athletes with varsity coaches is our goal for the showcase; we want kids to understand the development opportunities that exist and for coaches to be able to identify talented players," said Director of Rugby Development, Sandy Townsend. "We are delighted to be hosting this Showcase for high school rugby players across the province, connecting players with coaches and promoting the varsity development pathway is what this event is all about."

Players will not only have the opportunity to perform in front of the province's top recruiters, but meet and greet as well, and learn about academic programming to assist them in choosing the right school.

"The U Sports, OUA and OCAA are great development pathways for future national level talent," said Ryan Stickle, Advantage Rugby founder. "We want to identify student athletes who are capable of playing at that level and get them into programs that best assist their progress inside and outside the classroom."

"Many people are familiar with the term 'combine' from other sports, and we are trying to do the same here with our Showcase. We know that a full ride scholarship for rugby is not possible in Canada, but many colleges and universities do have smaller financial awards available and we think kids in York Region are as good as any around the province."

Townsend said the response so far has been "amazing."

"Every coach we've reached out to supported the idea, and we anticipate an excellent turnout of coaches and players," said Townsend. "We have extended invitation to every College and University rugby coach in Ontario; this is an all-inclusive event we want to grow each and every year!"

The event is open to any and all high school-aged boys and girls interested in playing OUA/OCAA rugby. For more information and to register, visit www.advantagerugby.ca, or email advantagerugby@outlook.com.