

CDS teacher inducted into Queen's Rugby Hall of Fame

Country Day School teacher and long-time senior boys' rugby coach Sandy Townsend was inducted into the Queen's University Rugby Hall of Fame at the end of November.

A lover of the sport since his youth, Townsend said he was incredibly 'pleased' to be inducted into his alma mater.

'As I've been saying to people, the reason I became involved over 14 years ago was certainly not to get into the Hall of Fame, but to improve the program at Queen's,' Townsend said.

'I played there and graduated in 1981 and I loved every minute of it. I think by the time I came around and had time in my life around 2006-2007 I wanted to ensure that this generation of players had the same experience that I did.'

The Kingston, ON native has had quite the journey through the sport over the years. Growing up playing rugby in high school in Oakville, Townsend's family moved to Alberta. He would go on to win three national junior championships.

Upon graduation, he deemed it a necessary move to attend Queen's and played for the Gaels winning an OUA medal in 1979 as a 1st XV scrum half.

At the fore of his teaching career, Townsend ended up landing a job in Montreal. He joined McGill University's rugby team and even the provincial team in Quebec leading his group to the 1992 Canadian Junior Championships in Calgary. He also won the 1997 Canada Summer Games.

Following these achievements, 1997 was also the year he came back to Ontario, moved to Aurora and joined The Country Day School.

'Even my first few years coaching here, I didn't have a connection with the university (Queen's) until about 2003 when a student chose to go to Queen's. That also sparked my interest in the program,' Townsend said.

The player, Kai Sorenson, asked Townsend for some more practice time before departing to Queen's and Townsend happily did so. That same year, Townsend would lead CDS to the Senior Boys' rugby championship. Over his career, Townsend would eventually see other past players such as Bryn Davies, Zach Pancer and Keegan Myers all go to the university.

'The motivation to see all of these CDS students go to Queen's, I wanted to become involved in the program again.'

Following the 100th anniversary of rugby dinner at Queen's in 2006, Townsend spearheaded the Queen's Rugby Booster Club in 2007 and became the program's chair for eight years.

This program provided essential financial support to bring in more coaches and staff and also played a part in the construction of Nixon Field (formerly known as Kingston Field).

'I honestly feel like I was just a guy at the right place at the right time. I don't feel like I was the centre of attention at all but just a guy trying to do a good job. Whether I was talking to Queen's or the coaches or the boosters, I was trying to connect people and get them all on the same page,' Townsend said.

'When I look back on it, yes, I did it; yes, I'm proud of it; yes, I'm really happy about it, but I don't think I did anything special. I'm grateful for the opportunity to have done it all and I am incredibly humbled by the achievement.'

Townsend led CDS to another championship in 2007, 2015 and 2017. He also led his boys to the CAIS National Title in 2017.

Aside from being involved with the schools, Townsend has also been a head coach at the Aurora Barbarians rugby club for around 20 years.

He continues to love the sport dearly. He is a dedicated and humble teacher who always wants better for his students and his players.

By Robert Belardi