

SAC breaks school record for most participants in CFC prospect game



It's never a bad time to rewrite the history books.

For the first time since its inception, St. Andrew's College saw four members of their football team appear in the second edition of the Canada Football Chat Prospect Game on May 27.

?In 2019, we had one, but, what was quite an accomplishment was these kids were represented right across the country right,? said head coach of the St. Andrew's senior football team Marcello Lio.

?There were 70 boys chosen? So, you would imagine with all of the high schools across the country, you're lucky to have one. We had four representing St. Andrew's. Out of all the high schools in the country, there was only one other high school that had more than four.?

The event, which was held at TD Place in Ottawa, was recorded and aired to all Canadians thanks to TSN.

In its first year in 2019, 13 players went on to sign NCAA scholarships.

All four participants from St. Andrew's College were exceptional in this game.

Here they are:

Nathan Pahanich Hometown: Guelph, ON 6'5/ 255lbs Age: 16 Offensive Tackle

Soccer was actually Nathan Pahanich's first love. But between the ages of nine and 10, he enrolled in football and immediately slotted in as an offensive lineman.

With the Cambridge Lions, he quickly realized that he was the better player on the field. He began taking training more seriously. He needed to go somewhere that would maximize his potential and that's when he found SAC.

Through the Saints' excellent football program came the opportunity of a lifetime. When Pahanich received the email he would be participating in the CFC Prospect Game, he said the feeling was surreal.

?It was pretty surreal, seeing myself on TSN. That's where you see your heroes watching the CFL and stuff. It's crazy I had the

opportunity," Pahanich said.

"You really only had two days of practice to go through everything. The mental challenge was the biggest thing. Everyone there can play football, we knew that. But it was adjusting to schemes, to coaching styles, and knowing what they expected of us and wanted from us. Then going through it and playing on TV."

Pahanich was named the best offensive lineman throughout the game.

It was a moment he won't forget.

Whether it's a Canadian or American school, Pahanich wants to go to the school that will also provide him a high-level education.

Last week, Pahanich received his first Div. 1 FCS full scholarship offer from the University of Central Florida in San Antonio, TX.

Ioanni Micholas Hometown: Halifax, NS 6'2/305lbs Age: 15 Offensive Guard

Football has been a part of Ioanni Micholas' life. He began playing the sport in the second grade while living in Halifax, NS.

As he continued to play over the years, he received a message on Twitter from Marcello Lio.

Micholas was always curious about enrolling in a prep football team. When he learned more about SAC, he didn't need to visit Aurora. He immediately said yes.

It has been a tough transition for Micholas. Without his family, he said there were a lot of learning curves since arriving two years ago.

"I had never even been to a sleepover before, so it was my first, five-month sleepover," Micholas said.

He arrived as a defensive tackle, but transitioned into a guard during his time at SAC. So, when he received the message he had made it to the CFC Prospect Game at such a young age, it was an incredible feeling.

"I saw the email and I just called my dad. I was so happy. I was at a friend's house for the long weekend. I was ecstatic, I couldn't wait," Micholas said.

And after taking part in the game, Micholas compared the experience to the Pro Bowl.

"It's what I would imagine, what the Pro Bowl is like. You have all of these great players trying to showcase themselves? I think the environment was also cool. I got to know the people on the other team and my team," Micholas said.

Micholas, much like Pahanich, wants football to take him to a good school. He plans on going into medical school and he needs a good biology program.

Ashton Watson Hometown: Newmarket, ON 6'1/165 lbs. Age: 17 Running Back/Wide Receiver

Ashton's father used to play for the Toronto Argonauts farm team. He comes from quite the football family, with his older brother currently playing for Wilfrid Laurier University.

Instilled into his blood from a young age, Watson has been playing football when he was six years old with the Newmarket Bucks. Then he began playing with coach Lio, for the Metro Toronto Wildcats and then transferred over to the Durham Dolphins.

In 2019, Watson stopped playing summer football and made the move to St. Andrew's College.

Formally known as a running back, Watson switched over to wide receiver this past year. He feels with his weight, he would make a better wideout and feels this move will give him the best chance to go pro.

When Watson first got to Ottawa and stepped out on to the field, he had immediately felt like he was part of the CFL.

?It was a great atmosphere to be in. I felt like I was in the CFL for a second. Playing in a stadium like that with great competition it gave me the chills for sure. I went into game mode right when I stepped foot. I was in the zone,? Watson said.

?It was a great feeling and I hope to feel that feeling once again.?

In the game, Watson scored a touchdown but, unfortunately, fractured the bottom of his foot in the middle of a punt return. He is now recovering at home.

Watson is currently planning on graduating at SAC. He is not sure what he is going to do next, but he said, he will figure it out soon.

Anthony Lio Hometown: Aurora, ON 5'10/190lbs. Age: Quarterback

Anthony Lio has always been the all-round athlete. He played soccer growing up and even basketball at St. Andrew's. But when he began playing football between the ages of six and seven, he loved it from the get-go and immediately began playing quarterback.

His father, a former quarterback himself, taught Lio everything he had needed to know about the position. When his father got the job at SAC in 2019, Lio applied and was accepted in the same year.

Fast-forwarding to Grade 11, Lio made the move to head down south to play football at Woodberry Forest School, in Madison, VA.

?One of the biggest things I learned down there is staying in the pocket and keeping pocket presence in when pressure arises,? Lio said.

When he received the email to participate in the CFC Prospect Game, Lio was grateful for the opportunity and he was happy all of his preparation and work had paid off.

Lio went into the Prospect Game and threw two touchdown passes along with one rushing touchdown in just two quarters of play.

?Even during the game after I came off after the first quarter and I came in the third, I was having a lot of fun here,? Lio said.

?I kept riding it off of my successes. The offensive coordinator I had was very good. He was very good at putting me in a position to make a play and have a good opportunity. It was Tom Flaxman, the offensive coordinator at Queens,? Lio said.

Lio currently has offers from the University of Waterloo and Queen's University.

By Robert Belardi