

York football players touch down in Texas in international competition



By Jake Courtepatte

They say that everything's bigger in Texas.

That certainly rings true for six high school football players from across York Region who got the opportunity to experience their sport on its biggest stage, facing the best of the best in North America.

Five members of the St. Andrew's College Saints varsity squad were joined by the solo representative of Villanova College, junior James Kypreos, in suiting up for Team Canada and Team Ontario in the 2016 International Bowl Series in Dallas.

A collaboration of USA Football and Football Canada, the two-week series comprised of practices, activities, and games combines to form the world's largest annual international football competition.

There is a reason the sport is called 'American' football, though: the American squads won all three matchups with the provincial squads of Alberta U-16, Ontario U-17, and Kypreos' team, the Ontario U-18s.

'Team USA was one of the most elite teams I have ever played against,' said Kypreos, a defensive end. 'Although I felt that I played well and competed against the other team, they were far better than the majority of Team Ontario.'

Limited by provincial guidelines, Kypreos' team met a significant challenge in facing the US U-18 Selects, drawn from across the nation.

'Our defence played well, but our offence struggled to gain momentum throughout the game. Unlike Canada, where each team usually has a few good players who stand out, Team USA seemed to have taken the best from every team in the country. It was a very tough game!'

Kypreos, an Aurora native, joins the ranks of Marquis Richards (Villanova College '15) who represented Team Canada in the 2015 U-19 International Bowl and Team Ontario in the 2014 Canada Cup, as well as Roman Grozman (VC'11) who represented Team World in the 2011 U19 International Bowl.

Adding to the allure was a venue that the 200 or so athletes will not soon forget: each game was played at AT&T Stadium, home of

the Dallas Cowboys and some of the NFL's most significant moments.

"Playing at Cowboy stadium was also a great experience," said Kypreos. "It is much bigger in person, and so well kept."

Joining Kypreos on Team Ontario was Saints DL Cayne Lander, while OL Lucas Ferreira and TE Wells Karabin took roles on the Team Ontario U-17 team. Lander impressed with a quarterback sack in his game, and Karabin had a reception almost turn into a touchdown against the USA U-17s.

Saints offensive linemen and grade 11 students Gregor MacKellar and George Hutchings participated as members of Team Canada U18, playing prominent roles in victories over both the US U-19 Selects and the US U-18s.

Kypreos said the whole experience gave him a better look at his future in football.

"I feel that I got great coaching and some looks from universities throughout Canada and the US," said the grade 11 student. "I think that I came out a better player after the experience. My goals in football are to hopefully give myself a chance to play at the University of my choice; playing football and getting a great education would be truly amazing."