

## Athletics Around Aurora?Sports Shorts

### **St. Maximilian Kolbe Mustangs capture YRAA Senior Girls Rugby 7's title in the ?Battle of Aurora?**

In an All-Aurora Rugby 7's championship game, the St. Maximilian Kolbe Mustangs defeated the Wildcats at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School on Wednesday afternoon. The game was both a testament to Aurora's growing preeminence in York Region high school rugby and an indication of how the Barbarians have supplied a steady stream of quality players to the Town's high schools. The SMK Mustangs' championship squad featured nine Aurora Barbarians.

It was Kolbe's second Girls' YRAA Rugby title in 2024. The Mustangs captured the YRAA Varsity Girls Rugby 15's championship in June.

Rugby Ontario names Barbarians' Co-President Khalil Ajram its 2024 Volunteer of the Year

It was a big week filled with positive news items for the Barbs. The organization's Co-President of Rugby Operations Khalil Ajram was named Rugby Ontario's Volunteer of the Year.

Coach Khalil is a potent and positive force for the Aurora Barbarians.

### **Barbs' Coach Marco Di Girolamo suits up for the Canadian Classics over-33's in Bermuda Tourney**

Aurora resident Marco Di Girolamo announced his plans to return to the rugby pitch last week.

Di Girolamo, who starred for Team Canada from 1999-2005 on the U17, U19, and U23 national squads, will suit up for the Canadian Classics'a 25-man squad of over-33's competing in the 36th Annual Rugby Tournament in Bermuda.

The Aurora Sports Hall of Famer, who was a significant starter for Team Ontario's U15, U17, and U19 squads on his way to the national team, explained his decision to return to on-field competition.

?There's always been a burning desire to achieve more than I can. It's another opportunity to prove people wrong. Now that I'm back, I realize how much I missed the camaraderie and the hitting. Playing for the Classics gives me the opportunity to see guys I haven't seen for years and we'll just pick up where we left off.?

Di Girolamo has been on a self-described ?hiatus? since 2015 when knee surgeries cut short his playing career. Consequently, he turned his attention to coaching the Aurora Barbarians. His return to active play on the pitch will be another coaching strategy.

?Instead of telling my players what to do, I will now be able to show them how to do it. I'm really happy that my own kids will be able to see me play, too.?

Getting back on the pitch has been a laborious process for the 47-year-old, but he heaped praise on a local medical clinic for helping him prepare physically for the rigors of the Bermuda tournament next month: ?Dr. Gamble and the St. Andrew Chiropractic team keep putting me back together.?

The Canadian Classics' first opponent will be Ireland on November 2 and the tourney features international rugby powerhouses including the USA, Argentina, the UK, and South Africa. The Bermuda tournament concludes on November 9.

**By Jim Stewart**