

Aurora hosts Rugby Cup ahead of qualifiers



By **Jeff Doner**

International rugby's magnificent Webb Ellis Cup was on display in Aurora last weekend, as representatives from the International Rugby Board, the North American Caribbean Rugby Association [NACRA], Rugby Canada and USA Rugby gathered for a social.

The gathering was on the eve of a big qualifying match between Canada and USA at BMO field in Toronto.

Canada nailed down the win by defeating their American rivals in a hard-fought 13 ? 11 win to secure a berth in the 2015 Rugby World Cup in England and a chance to bring the prestigious cup to Canada.

The purpose of the event was to socialize and give people a chance to see and take photos with rugby's ultimate trophy that is only awarded every four years.

Despite the fact that the two nations were fighting it out on the field the next day, there were only words of encouragement and camaraderie.

?On the field we're very, very competitive and off the field we're for the most part colleagues, we share experiences and we want the game to grow,? said Rugby Canada CEO and Aurora Barbarians board of director member, Graham Brown.

Added Rugby Canada chairman, Pat Aldous: ?What I like about our relationship with our American friends is that the competition is always fierce, but it's also a good friendship.?

And according to vice-chairman of USA Rugby and NACRA member, Bob Latham the feeling was mutual.

?We really are rivals on the field and great friends off it,? he said. ?It's wonderful to be here and I'm confident that we'll both be in England in 2015 and we'll be rooting for you and I hope you will be rooting for us.?

As part of rugby tradition, it is common for teams and groups to gather for a social on the evening before a big match.

?This is what the rugby community is like, it's a bunch of friends off the field and a bunch of rivals on the field and whether you're a club, union or on the International Rugby Board, we all get together and be social,? said Aurora Barbarians president, Tim Brochu.

?It's quite interesting for me as the new president of the Aurora Barbarians to come out and be introduced to and meet all these

people. I don't have an extensive rugby background like all these people do, but it's just a great evening.?

Overall, the local Barbarians saw the event and presence of the Webb Ellis Cup as a positive sign for the growth of rugby in Canada.

?It is taking steps,? Brochu explained. ?It's a game that is growing. We always use these words that ?it's a game for all.' It's an inexpensive sport that really anyone can play, whether you have money or not and I think sports are going in that direction. Many sports are becoming only for people who have money. At the grassroots level we're trying to change that regardless of what you're capabilities are you can play.?

In a show of support for local charity, the evening was dedicated to the run to fight cancer and its supporters in Aurora, with donations being collected throughout the night.