

Barbarians avoid relegation with impressive win

By John Reich

The tension was palpable prior to the kick off between Waterloo County Pirates and the Aurora Barbarians at Fletcher's Fields on Saturday with the outcome deciding which club would remain in Ontario Rugby's top tier of competition, the Marshall Premiership and which would be relegated to the Provincial 'B' division.

Waterloo entered the game four points ahead of Aurora in the standings after an impressive 44-8 win at home last week versus Oakville Crusaders while the Barbarians could only read the bad news having a bye on the second to last week of the season.

The Aurora club would need a win and a bonus point while shutting out the County side for no bonus points in order to leap frog into 7th place in the regular season finale. And they got it all with a convincing 24-6 victory.

Waterloo elected to take the strong wind at their backs for the first forty minutes but the Barbarians dominated play throughout the frame with Aurora winger Aaron Holt scoring the only try of the half versus two penalty kicks for Waterloo to close out the half with the Pirates up 6-5. And while the Barbarians lost some of their early swagger in the second half and suffered through a ten minute sendoff of second row Paul Ciulini, a couple of key replacements by Coach Ian McLeod lifted the team.

Replacement scrum half Byron Boville got things going with a two meter plunge approximately ten minutes into the second half. The conversion by Outhalf Bryn Davies put the Barbs up 12-6.

Ten minutes later a long grubber kick by Davies put centre Jon West into position to chase down the ball and score the Barbs' third try. Waterloo attempted desperately to get back in the game taking chances but not able to break the Barbarians' ferocious defense.

With ten minutes left in the half full back Sean Sinel broke free on a smooth exchange in the Aurora backs to give the club the coveted bonus point for the fourth try. The conversion by Davies sealed the game.

Afterwards Coach McLeod praised the commitment of the team.

'We had veterans step up and play when they were needed most,' he said. 'Two of our young guys gave up their university homecoming game to be here. One player flew in from his work placement overseas to take a roster spot. Guys gave up work assignments to make sure we had a team that could save the season and put us on track for next year. That is loyalty.'

The second team match up was a tale of two halves with the wind playing a major role. Aurora's Development side played catch up after Waterloo ran up a large score in the first half with the wind at their backs. The rally fell short, however, with Waterloo escaping with a 31-26 victory.

Ontario rugby now moves into the play-off phase with Aurora competing for the McCormick Cup, symbolic of post season supremacy in Ontario.

The competition is open to sixteen clubs from across Ontario who participate in various leagues. Next week the Barbarians will travel to London, ON, to face London-St. George, winners of the Ontario Provincial League and due to be promoted to the Marshall Premiership for 2015.