

Barbarians senior men let one slip away



By John Reich

The Aurora Barbarians senior men's team hosted newly promoted Brantford Harlequins for two games at Fletcher's Fields on Saturday.

The young Aurora first team side showed enough talent but not enough poise to hold a late lead and preserve a victory while the second team repeated their heroics from two weeks ago by keeping it close in the first half and running away with the game in the final period.

The first team match-up featured the Barbarians' young revamped team, with only one player over the age of 23, to take on a fired up Harlequin side that, like the Barbs, was looking for its first victory of the season.

The local side weathered early pressure with a strong defensive effort for the first fifteen minutes allowing Brantford just three points on a penalty kick. The Barbs had a try from winger Michael Neely at the 20 minute mark and two more from centre John West in quick succession, both converted by flyhalf Mark Denton to lead 19-3.

However, they gave up two converted tries before the half to carry just a slim lead of 19-17 into the break.

The second half was a seesaw battle with Brantford showing a bit more tenacity. Aurora's Ciaran McSwiggan scored a try midway through the half, however, the Brantford team clawed ahead to a 30-24 score with under 10 minutes to play.

With six minutes left, Neely scored his second try of the game and a solid conversion kick by Denton put the Barbs ahead 31-30. Despite a clean take on the ensuing kickoff and a long clearing kick into the Brantford end, Aurora could not retain possession at the line out and the Harlequins methodically worked the play back the Barbarians' half closing out the game on a hard fought try to win 35-31 on the final whistle.

In the second team game, Aurora faced the wind in the first half but led 17-5 at the break. The second half was all Barbarians as they rumbled in for five tries to win out 52-5. Scoring for Aurora was A.J. Luongo with a hat trick of tries, Josh Ferriera with two and singles by Tom McLeod, Derek Haines and D.J. Dillon. Kicker James Hulbert added six conversions.

The Barbs play next on May 31, when they will be hosted by Markham Irish at Fletchers Fields in a rematch of the 2013 McCormick Cup championship game from last October.