

Barbarians suffer opening day loss, second team rallies for big comeback win

By John Reich

The Aurora Barbarians senior men's teams travelled to Stoney Creek on Saturday to take on the hometown Camels at Salt Fleet High School to open the 2014 Ontario rugby season.

The first team squad for the Aurora side has been extensively revamped with only eight players back from the 22 man roster that lost in last October's McCormick Cup Championship final to York Region rival Markham Irish.

Head Coach Ian McLeod commenting on the player turnover offered, "We had an outstanding run of eight years with a young team that matured together. It's time to make that happen again and this next generation of young men have the talent and toughness to be champions in their own right.

"Today we showed grit and determination but the experience was lacking. There's no way to make up for that other than to give the boys a chance to play and learn."

Starting with a strong wind at their back, Aurora was able to play competitively and trailed only 12-10 at halftime on a try, convert and penalty kick all from St. Andrew's College graduate Mark Denton who was starting his first game for Aurora's senior men's first team.

Aurora took the lead 15-10 early in the second half on a clever grubber and catch for a try by winger Mike Neely. But that was all the Barbarian scoring as the strong wind and wise boot of Stoney Creek's flyhalf Shawn Windsor penned Aurora in their own half playing defence constantly.

Late in the game, with the score 32-15 in favour of the home team, the Barbs threw everything they had in a final flurry and were knocking on the door only to be surprised by a 90 metre interception try that sealed the game at 37-15.

In the second team match up, the Aurora side weathered the strong wind in their face for the first half as Stoney Creek scored the first 19 points in the game to lead 19-7 at the half, but the Barbarians rallied for 34 points in the second half to win out 41-19.

Scoring for Aurora was Conner Libby with a hat trick of tries with singles going to Conner Chowen, James Hulbert and recent transfer Tyler Neil. Hulbert added four conversions and a penalty goal.

The Senior Men play next on May 24 in their home opener against the Brantford Harlequins.