

Barbs settle for tie against long-time rival Oakville

By John Reich

The Aurora Barbarians senior men's team hosted their longtime nemeses, the Oakville Crusaders, on Saturday, facing the Halton Region club for three games at Fletcher's Fields.

In the first team matchup, both clubs were coming off their first wins of the season the week before and looking to add some points on the table for what is turning into a very competitive season in the Ontario Premiership.

The Crusaders offered up a veteran team that would pose a challenge for the very young squad fielded by the Aurora club.

Mishandling on the opening kickoff undermined the Barbs as Oakville gained possession in the Aurora half. Despite a stalwart defensive effort, it resulted in the first try of the game going to the visitors less than five minutes into the match.

The Barbarians were able to respond soon after on a kick and chase touched down by winger Michael Neely. Kicker Mark Denton was unsuccessful on the conversion from the sideline. Shortly after that, Jesse Walker scrambled in for his first of two tries on the day and, upon the conversion by Denton, Aurora was ahead 12-7. And so it remained until halftime.

The second half saw the home team pick up momentum early and score again ten minutes into the half on a try by second row forward Paul Ciulini that was converted by Denton giving the Barbs a 19-7 lead. But a series of penalties against the Barbs put Oakville in a position to add a penalty kick and a converted try to draw the game close at 19-17 with about twenty minutes to go. With the edge in play swinging back and forth, Walker put in his second try on a nifty sidestep move and despite the touch down under the posts, in the run-up for the conversion, the wind displaced the ball from the tee and Denton's kick failed to go over the crossbar leaving the Barbarians with just a 24-17 lead.

With ten minutes remaining, the Crusaders worked some more of their extended possession magic and were able to score a try and their kicker slotted a tying conversion to make it 24-24.

Both teams had chances in the final minutes but neither could come away with points leaving the game knotted at 24 on the final whistle.

In the second team match-up The Barbarians development side returned to a familiar pattern, struggling through the first half but pouring it on in the second to 32-17. Scoring for the Barbarians were Derek Haines, AJ Luongo, Eric Godwin and Conner Chowen, each with a try with James Hulbert adding three conversions and two penalty goals.

The third team game saw the young Barbarians put in an enormous effort both offensively and defensively matching Oakville try for try, but they were unable to take any points from conversions or penalty goals to lose 21-15.

Scoring for Aurora were winger Brad Legere with two tries and prop Nick Szabunio with one.

The Barbarians men's team takes next weekend off to join the rest of the rugby community at Toronto's BMO field to watch Canada's National Team take on Scotland in an International match.