

Toronto Varsity Blues sign SMK football stars



By Jake Courtepatte

The University of Toronto just bolstered their football roster with a trio of Aurora talents.

Cameron End, Nolan Lovegrove, and Matthew Vassos, who all helped the St. Max Kolbe Mustangs to the YRAA championship game last season, signed their commitments Monday to play football for the Varsity Blues program next season.

“Just having a group of athletes like these three coming into the program is going to mean a lot in changing the direction of our football team,” said Blues coach Joe Cappiello. “I saw a couple of their games live last season, seeing them in action and talking to (Mustangs head coach) Joe Gaudio, they're the type of guys we want to change the culture of our team.”

End, a linebacker, won defensive MVP for the Mustangs in only his sophomore year. He has since become a staple on the Mustangs' line, leading the St. Max defense to allowing just over three points per game in the last YRAA season.

“U of T showed a lot of interest, and that's what I was looking for,” said End. “It's the best opportunity for me to continue my career academically and, football-wise, to do the best of both worlds.”

Vassos, a defensive back for both the Mustangs, peaked the interest of a number of OUA programs, and found U of T to be the right fit.

“They're program just fits me,” said Vassos. “I love their coaching, I love the facilities, and they showed the most interest in me, which played a big role in choosing the school I go to.”

On the receiving end of many catches from QB Ben Langlois last season, Lovegrove, who primarily took the field as a wide receiver, appreciated the interest the Blues program saw in his work.

“Of the schools that were looking at me, they showed me that I was going to be able to reach my full potential there, which means a lot. It's just a great opportunity right at my doorstep, and I had to take it.”

The rarity of three athletes from one high school signing at a single university in the same year does not go unheralded. All three signees recognize and appreciate the opportunity to continue working with the same boys they have grown up beside on the gridiron.

“We've all been together for most of our lives,” said Vassos. “Basically we're just continuing the legacy we started off with.”

End called what they shared “a brotherhood.”

“We're all trying to improve ourselves individually, but it really helps when we're working at it together. We want to be the best and compete against the best, and being able to stay together really gives us the best opportunity.”

The Blues, who have not won an Ontario Yates Cup championship since 1993, have revamped their program this season with a new staff and a new outlook.

“We got new coordinators, new facilities,” said Cappiello. “We're bringing in the guys that are going to utilize that to its full potential. These are the guys that are going to rebuild the program for the next five years.”

End said he appreciates the commitment to change he sees from the Blues program.

“I really like who they brought in. I know the coaches pretty well, I've had one of them at camp before, I think they're the right guys to do the job, they're heading in the right path.”