

Gryphons' Lair
Issue 70 – November 2022



October brought us another jam-packed month for the Gryphon Football Program. This month we wrapped up our 2022 Football season, brought together many alumni for events, and organized our annual 'Think Pink' fundraiser in support of breast cancer awareness.

A special shout out to Gryph Nation for the support at our home and away games this season. For our first two home games, we had a recorded attendance of over 13,000! And you could always hear the cowbells ringing in the stands at our away games. We truly have the best fans in the nation.

Although our football season has ended, we look forward to highlighting our off-season activities to our readers as we begin the process of preparing for the 2023 football season.

Enjoy issue 70 of the Gryphons' Lair!



Game 6 – McMaster

Friday, October 7th marked the inaugural 'Highway 6 Bowl' between the Gryphons and the McMaster Marauders. This game was played under the lights and our squad rocked their 'black out' uniforms for the special occasion.

It was a close contest between the two teams for the first three quarters, but ultimately McMaster pulled away in the 4th quarter with the final score being 41 – 12 in favour of the visiting team.

We look forward to the Highway 6 Bowl being an annual event and hope to bring the trophy back to Alumni Stadium in 2023!

The honorary captain for our Friday Night Lights game was George Bortolato. An alumnus of the program, George was a Defensive Back who played for the Gryphons from 1988 to 1991. George graduated with a Bachelor of Applied Science degree. He currently works in the beverage industry and lives in Burlington with his wife Cheri and

his two children Grady and Holden. George is an active board member on the Friends of Gryphon Football committee and successfully runs an annual FOGF golf tournament that helps raise money to support the football program, most notably in the form of scholarships for players. Thank you George for everything you do for the program and the University of Guelph.

Read the full game recap [here](#).

| <u>Players of the Week</u> – Game 6 vs. McMaster | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Offence | Kaine Stevenson |
| Defence | Scott Murray |
| Special Teams | Eric Stranz |



Pictured: Donavin Miloy



Pictured: George Bortolato (Honorary Captain)

Game 7 – Laurier

For the last away game of the season, the Gryphons faced off against the Laurier Golden Hawks. This contest was arguably one of the best performances by the Gryphons throughout the season, as they tallied three turnovers in the first half. [Siriman Harrison Bagayogo](#) recorded a pick-6 to put the Gryphons in the lead into halftime.

In the second half, the Gryphon's couldn't maintain their lead and fell 38 – 25 against the Golden Hawks.

Read the full game recap [here](#).

| <u>Players of the Week</u> – Game 7 vs. Laurier | |
|--|--|
| Offence | Cameron St. Kitts-Park |
| Defence | Brandon Ferigo |
| Special Teams | Braeden MacDougall |



Pictured: Siriman Harrison Bagayogo after his pick-6 against Laurier



Pictured: Sito Berrio

Game 8 – Carleton

The 2022 Gryphon Football season came to an end on home turf on Saturday, October 22nd. The red, black, and gold battled against the No.10 ranked Carleton Ravens, with the final score tallying 35 – 24.

Our honorary captains for the final home game were Brett McCallum and Dr. Alrick Daugherty who are two former captains representing the 1992 Yates Cup Championship team. After graduation, Brett and Alrick both continued their football careers. Brett as an assistant coach for the Gryphons, and Alrick as a player, winning back to back Euro Super Bowls for Sweden. For the past 19 years, Brett has been a firefighter in Hamilton while Dr. Daugherty is a chiropractor and owns his own clinic in Brantford.

Game 8 also served as our Seniors Game where we honoured our graduating players. On behalf our coaching staff, players, alumni, and entire program, thank you to these eleven outstanding men for your positive impact towards the team. We wish you all the

best with your journey after graduation and look forward to seeing you at Gryphon Football alumni events.

Graduating Seniors:

- From Brampton, Ontario #5 [Juwan Jeffrey](#)
- From Brampton, Ontario #6 [Clarke Barnes](#)
- From Montreal, Quebec #18 [Anthony Hall](#)
- From Montreal, Quebec #21 [Kwame Osei](#)
- From Bois-des-Filion, Quebec #29 [Siriman Harrison Bagayogo](#)
- From London, Ontario #32 [Richard Morris](#)
- From Markham, Ontario #51 [Matthew Famurewa](#)
- From Guelph, Ontario #60 [Connor Burke](#)
- From Richmond Hill, Ontario #65 [Spencer Masterson](#)
- From Ayr, Ontario #70 [Eric Stranz](#)
- From North Vancouver, British Columbia #83 [Jake Bennett](#)

Read the full game recap [here](#).

| Players of the Week – Game 8 vs. Carleton | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Offence | Juwan Jeffrey |
| Defence | Devynn Cromwell |
| Special Teams | Kristian Stewart |



Pictured: Juwan Jeffrey and his Mother



Pictured: Clark Barnes and his family on Senior Day



Pictured left to right: Spencer Masterson and Jake Helfrich



Think Pink Fundraiser

Every year, Gryphon Football, Gryphon Parents, Alumni, Students, and Staff, raise money in support of cancer research. Leading up to gameday, our players collected donations across campus and at the tailgate on October 22nd, our POP Group sold pink attire. This year, we were able to raise \$6137 in support of breast cancer. Thanks to the Lang Innovation Team who matched donations up to \$2500, a grand total of \$8,637 dollars will be donated to [HopeSpring Cancer Support Centre](#).



Brandon Ferigo - Feature in Guelph Today

Congratulations to Gryphon linebacker, [Brandon Ferigo](#) for his feature in the local Guelph newsletter, Guelph Today. Brandon had a standout season with the Gryphons and was a critical component of our defence.

Read the full article [here](#).



Jake Reinhart Retirement from CFL

As noted in last month's newsletter, Jake Reinhart has announced his retirement from the CFL. We encourage our readers to check out this amazing [article](#) written about Jake's impressive 9-year career as a long-snapper.



Team of the Decade Dinner

The Gryphon Teams of the Decades honour some of the finest football players who have suited up for Gryphon Football since the 1950's. The Friends of Gryphon Football selection committee was responsible for selecting players based on career statistics, awards, and input from coaches and players of that decade. In 2017, we had our first Team of the Decade dinner to commemorate these outstanding men. This is a tradition we will continue every two years, and each team of the decade member is invited to join us for the celebration.

After a hiatus due to COVID-19, we were able to officially honour the 2010 Team of the Decade at Cutten Fields on October 20th.

Many thanks to Bill Brown, Sarah Garrett, and Jessie Kennedy for coordinating this event and to Justin Dunk for being our MC. The evening was an opportunity for Gryphon legends to come back together and share some memories from their time as players. Throughout the night we were able to hear some highlights from a panel of four Gryphon alumni who won a Grey Cup during their time in the CFL – [Jake Reinhart](#), [Jeff Finely](#), [Alex Charette](#), and [Blaine Schmidt](#).

Stay tuned for an exciting announcement about how we will be honouring the Teams of the Decades via a display at Alumni Stadium.



'84 Vanier Cup Champions in Attendance



*Pictured: Players from the **Team of the Decade** from the 1950's and 1960's*

Gryphon Vision Football Features

The week prior to each home game this season, a video was shared highlighted a certain aspect of the Gryphon Football Program. During the month of September, we featured Gryphon player Anthony Hall, and the [dynamic duo](#) of Coach Ryan Sheahan and Pat Sheahan.

This month, we focused on the success of our program's out-of-province recruiting. Offensive Coordinator, Mark Surya chatted about the wow factor of our facilities and how we put an emphasis on developing the entire person when they come to the U of G.

Watch the full video [here](#).

Our final feature of the game highlighted Gryphon player, and senior, [Clark Barnes](#). It is a big year for Clark as he enters his draft year for the CFL. In this video, Clark talks about playing with Gryphon legends, [Kian Schaffer-Baker](#) and [Kiondre Smith](#).

Watch the full video [here](#).

1992 Yates Cup Champion Reunion

On Saturday, October 22nd, we were able to bring together players from the 1992 Yates Cup Champion team for our last home game of the season. Many stories were shared, and it was great to see so many players return to their alma mater to celebrate the 30th anniversary of winning the Yates Cup!



Featured Player

[Isaiah Smith](#). A name that many of our readers will be familiar with. A rookie running back who earned Player of the Game honours not once, not twice, but three times during the 2022 football season.

Smith is a Burlington native who attended Aldershot High School. There was no football team at his school, so he played for Burlington Central. Isaiah also played for the Burlington Stampeders Rep Program, at the junior, senior and varsity level. Throughout his upper years of high school, Smith met Coach Surya at Team Ontario and almost immediately got hooked on the idea of becoming a Gryphon.

For Isaiah, the U of G checked off all the boxes. And what was at the top of his list for choosing a post-secondary education was a school that offered a Kinesiology/Human Kinetics program.

“One of the main parts of my recruiting process, was looking at the academic programs and making sure it offered kinesiology. Once I had confirmed that, next on my list was to evaluate the football program and make sure that I could fit it in with the team.”

The Human Kinetics major falls within the Bachelor of Science Program at the U of G and attracts many students who want to pursue a career in Human Health, especially physiotherapy. During 3rd year, students have the opportunity to work with human cadavers in the lab, which is quite rare for students at the undergrad level. This 8-month lab provides students with hands-on experience working with a lab technician and evaluating and researching every aspect of human anatomy.

“Being an athlete and studying human health is a really interesting cross-over. In addition to having the amazing support of Chis (Dezorzi - Head Athletic Therapist) as he has provided me with a lot of information to help support my injuries but also shares some great resources with me as physiotherapy is a career that I am interested in.”

Our athlete’s bodies go through some intense training and for Isaiah, taking part in an ice bath for recovery was something that he learned about and tried for the very first time in Training Camp.

“My body took some time to get used to the intensity of the games. I’ve really had to learn how to prepare my body for gameday, and also how to recover properly. I’ve gotten a good grasp on it now and have the trainers and staff to thank for all the helpful information.”

Like many rookies, Smith found out that learning the playbook in training camp can be one of the toughest transitions. Isaiah relied on the support of the veterans, [Kwame Osei](#) and [Juwan Jeffrey](#) to guide him on how to memorize the playbook, but also how to read and react to plays on the field.”

All the prep work clearly played off, as Isiah recorded two touchdowns against Windsor, ran for 119 yards and average 9.9 yards per carry. One of the two touchdowns was a 67-yard run.

“After the handoff, I am pretty sure the play didn’t go exactly as planned. I looked to my right and saw the OL blocking the Windsor players. I look to my left and saw open field so I just started running. I didn’t think I was running that fast, so I kept thinking to myself ‘is someone going to catch me?’”

It was a pretty incredible moment for Isiah to score that touchdown in front of 7,000 fans who were cheering him on.

“Celebrating with the team makes it 10x better. As soon I get to the huddle, or to the sideline, I always thank my players. Football is all about the comradery, the love, and the brotherhood. It is always nice to be recognized for what you are doing well, but I always want to make sure that the team morale is always increasing. Personal accolades are great; however, each game is a team effort.”

When chatting about what it means to be on the team and the feeling of putting on the Gryphon jersey for the first time, Isaiah noted that it as a surreal experience to officially be a part of the Gryphon program.

“In high-school, you’re one person of a few hundred, but when I came to Guelph, I was 1 out of 26,000 students on campus. It was eye-opening to step foot on the field during gameday and see the recruits on the sideline, because I was in that exact spot just a year ago. My advice to the incoming recruits is to practise self-regulation. When coming to university, you are going to have to put in the work, but when you do, you are going to start seeing success.”

Thank you, Isaiah for taking the time to chat with us. We can’t wait to see your success continue in the 2023 season!





Pictured: Isaiah Smith and Jake Helfrich



Featured Alumnus

In honour of this being our 70th edition of the Gryphons' Lair, we wanted to highlight an alumni from the 1970 Gryphon Football Program.

We are thrilled to be able to feature John Lesko for this month's newsletter.

What makes John's story about his journey to the U of G so unique is that it all stems from a meaningful connection with the late Fred Dunbar, who was named the Head Athletic Therapist at the U of G in 1968.

"When I was a teenager, I chose to leave school early to financially contribute to my family situation. Essentially, I was working in a job that was the prehistoric version of

Uber, I would run around downtown on my own two feet and deliver food from restaurants. Pretty regularly, I would deliver food to the Hamilton Hurricane Trainer, who was Fred Dunbar, and we became lifelong friends. During our relationship with the Hurricanes, Fred suggested that I write the mature student exam to explore my post-secondary options as well as exploring my options to play post-secondary football. Flash forward, I wrote the exam and got accepted into the Arts program at the University of Guelph. Without Fred's guidance, encouragement and interest in me, I would not have had this opportunity."

John played football at the University of Guelph for four years as a linebacker and a guard under Head Coach Dick Brown. John was a part of the 1970 football team and was the first team to play at Alumni Stadium. When reflecting on his time at the U of G, we asked John about what it was like to play at Alumni Stadium.

"I remember during the first year we were at the stadium, we stayed in bunk beds under the bleachers throughout training camp. We literally spent every hour together as a team. The combination of the facilities, the players that respect each other and the coaching dynamic lead to a great team spirit. Coach Brown was a tremendous inspiration to everyone and Fred Dunbar was the essential glue that encouraged the camaraderie we shared. The team atmosphere was to build a determination to do well."

After graduating from the U of G, John continued his education and went to Teachers' College in London. He then accepted a teaching position at Bloor Collegiate in Toronto as a History Teacher and Guidance Counsellor and eventually progressed to Special Education Department Head and Guidance Head at Chinguacousy Secondary School in Brampton. In addition to his 31 years of teaching, John also coached football, rugby, girl's archery, and girl's volleyball. He led the teams to success as they won the Senior Football Championship at Lawrence Park C.I and Boy's Senior Rugby Championship at Chinguacousy. The Girl's Archery Championship at Bloor was an added bonus due to the hard work of the members involved.

"As a Guidance Counsellor, I made sure to have the students focus on what their strengths were. It was my responsibility to give them information about the programs that were established or developing in their area of interests. I had the opportunity to influence young people through sport and help steer them in the right direction. I think all of my friends and mentors from the U of G who helped me to establish my goals and I hope from their influence I was able to guide some of my own students in their life paths."

At our homecoming game this year, we were able to honor the players from the 1970 football team, to celebrate the 50th celebration of the stadium (which was postponed for two years due to covid restrictions). John was able to return to his alma matter and connect with individuals from the 1970's team, including Brian Riddell, and Richard Burton who both travelled from British Columbia to be at the 50th reunion.

“It was great to be able to be back on campus and celebrate the 50th anniversary of Alumni Stadium. I hadn’t chatted to a few of my teammates in many years, so to be back together and sharing stories was something quite special, I appreciate all the efforts into organizing the event.”

When asked to sum up his experience being a University of Guelph student and Gryphon Football player, John noted that it was ‘life-changing.’

Thank you, John, for sharing these stories with us. We were so glad to be able to welcome you back to campus and we look forward to seeing you back at Alumni Stadium!



Pictured: John Lesko and Greg Scheifele



Featured FOGF Member

Each month, we get the privilege to connect with a member of the Gryphon football community member to hear about their story with the program. We could write an entire newsletter filled with the incredible stories that Gryphon alumni and current FOGF member, Frank Panos shared with us during his interview this month.

Frank was recruited in 1987, and completed his first visit to the U of G with two other friends from high school. Pat Tracey and Coach Dan McNally showed them around campus, but what really solidified his reasoning to come to Guelph was seeing the Gryphons' overcome adversity in the playoffs.

“I went to Western for a party for their last football game of the season. Western beat Guelph 53 – 7. Friends of mine were like ‘why are you going to go to Guelph, they just got destroyed by Western?’ The following week was the first round of the playoffs, Guelph played Western and knocked them out of the playoffs. You can sure as heck bet that I was proud to tell my friends ‘yes I am going to Guelph’. Throughout my 30+ years of coaching football, I use that story to demonstrate that anything can happen week to week.”

Frank came into the roster list as a Defensive End and started in his first year, but eventually moved to the Offensive Line after the team lost some key players at that position. Frank played five full seasons for the Gryphons and graduated from the Bachelor of Arts program.

His family owns Beckers Milk Co., which was previously a convenience store chain and is now a real estate company. The operation was sold in 1996, and the company who eventually acquired ownership would be known as Alimentation Couche-Tard Inc who go under Circle K Branding.

Frank's love of football continued after he graduated from the U of G, as he has been in a coaching position ever since his 4th year of University. Frank coached at York University for ten years, was the Head Coach for the Scarborough senior program and is currently the Junior Head Coach and the Senior Special Teams Coordinator at St. Michael's College School in Toronto.

With a busy coaching career and having three kids, Frank lost touch with the program for a few years, and was reunited back with the program at the FOGF golf tournament in 2021.

“I have a text group chat with George Bortolato, Jim Stewart, Shane Dougherty, and Alrick Daugherty called the ‘Yates Yahoos.’ George had sent a message in the chat asking about who was attending the tournament and it was the constant communication and check-ins with this group that got me reconnected to Gryphon Football.”

We asked Frank if any of the skills he was taught as a player translated into his coaching style and he responded very quickly with a positive ‘100%’.

“A lot of the things that we did at Guelph during my playing career, which was a long time ago, still hold true for today’s football fundamentals. I taught my daughter, who is the Centre for the Grade 6 girls football team how to snap using the progression that Coach Cluff taught me.”

At the 1992 Yates Cup Champion reunion, Frank reminisced with Coach Cluff about their snap off that occurred every Friday when they were players. The first one to 10 perfect snaps had to buy the other a sub from Subway. At the time, Cluff had just come out of a training camp with the Ti-Cats and he had a really good long-snap, but Frank claims that he got the perfect 10 snaps every time. Cluff – we will accept your rebuttal if you feel this is not an accurate statement.

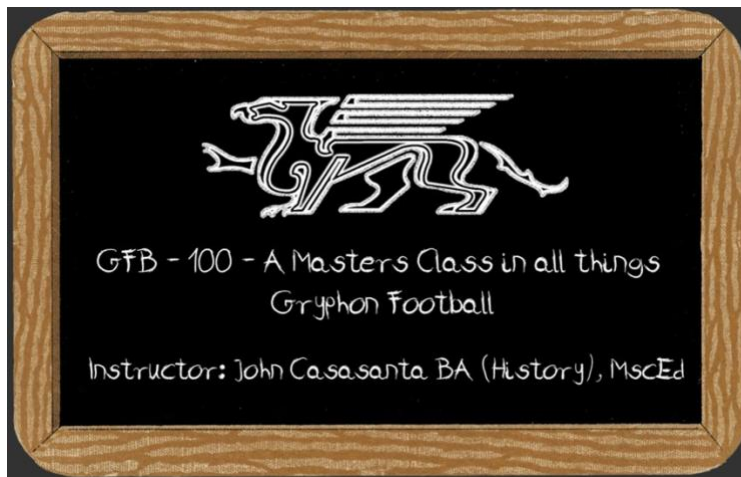
“Just being up in the nest the other weekend, and sharing stories over the years with past players, it was incredible. I wouldn’t have remembered them until someone brought it up. You know when you go somewhere and you just have a feeling? That was the U of G for me, and I am proud to continue to spread the good word about the U of G.”

We are so glad that you were able to reconnect with the program, Frank! Thank you for sharing these stories with us, and who knows – maybe a version of a long-snap competition can be implemented at the 2023 FOGF Golf Tournament?



Pictured: Frank Panos and Family

 **Mr. Casasanta's History Class**



Welcome to GFB – 100. I hope you all enjoyed your first weeks of the new semester. I am your instructor John Casasanta, your resident Gryphon Football historian. GFB -100 is a master's class where we will delve into interesting and historical facts about all things Gryphon Football. Each month I will provide you with an interesting fact about the Gryphon Football program. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any of your own facts or stats to add to this segment each month. Forward any information, stat, story, or correction to me at jcasasan@uoguelph.ca. The monthly goal is that you find this section informative and educational. I look forward to sharing with you all, so without further ado, let's begin.

This month's focus is the origin of the Gryphon. Rob Popkey (92 Yates Cup Champion), your resume looks great, yes you can use me as a reference, please come see me after class when we can talk about this further. Is it ok if I get back to the lesson?

All good Marvel characters have a great origin story. In this case, the Gryphon is no different. Historically the University of Guelph athletics department seemed to have an identity crisis: were we Aggies? Or Redmen? Maybe we should be the Vets? Or even just the Big Red Machine? But leading up to the September season of 1967, the wheels were set into motion to find one mascot that would be fitting of such a fine institution. A mascot that the student body could be proud of. A mascot that would spread fear through the hearts of all other opposing schools. With this mandate in mind the University of Guelph Gryphon was born. Today's lesson will present an excerpt from the Ontarioan dated February 13th, 1969, focusing on the Gryphon's origin story.

In the natural history of the ancients, the name of a rapacious creature was represented with four legs, wings and a beak, the forepart resembling an eagle, the hind, a lion. In addition, some writers describe the tail a serpent. This animal, which was supposed to watch over gold mines and hidden treasures and was the enemy of the horse. The idea that a Gryphon hated the Mustang even in mythological times makes it seem as though we were destined to hate the purple ponies. The creature was consecrated to the sun; the ancient painters represented the chariot of the sun as drawn by Gryphons. According to Spanheim, those of Jupiter and Nemesis were similarly provided. The Gryphon of scripture is probably the osprey, and is now given to a species of vulture. The Gryphon was said to inhabit the Asiatic Sea, this is where gold and precious stones were abundant; when strangers approached to gather these, the creatures leapt upon them and tore them in pieces, thus chastising human avarice and greed.

The one eyed Arimaspi waged constant war with them, according to Herodotus. Sir John de Handevile in his "Travels" described the Gryphon as eight times larger than a lion (Seems right considering our domination over York throughout the years). This version of the Gryphon is common to the realms of the Encyclopedia.

The Guelph edition of the Gryphon originated in the spring of 1966. A softball team was formed that summer which toiled under the novel name of the University of Guelph Gryphons. This name had been suggested by a member of that team, a Mr. Fred

Gilbert. As well as having a successful season, the team familiarized Guelph-ites to what would be the sports title for future varsity squads.

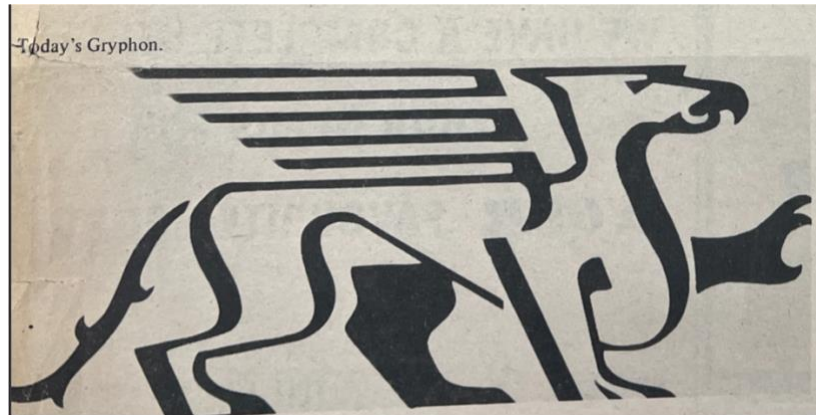
Fred, as President of the athletic advisory board on this campus, suggested that the name be adopted by other teams that fall. After approximately one year's deliberation the Gryphon design as we know it now, was accepted by the same board. The final design being submitted by Mr. W.F. Mitchel, our athletic director at the time.

Regardless of what a Gryphon was, we the spectators no longer felt any embarrassment in labelling our athletes. We no longer had to listen to the mumble of cheers that came from the dubious spectators as *Yea Redmen! Go Aggies! Yea Vets! Go You Big Red Machine! or go U of G*. Now our battle cry is clear, concise, and exuberant. All factions of the University are united as they cheer their Gryphons on. **Go Gryphons Go** thunders thru Alumni Stadium.

I want to thank Patrick Sutherland for his time and contribution to this month's lesson. Patrick was gracious enough to allow me access to the Ontario's archives. I am excited to be able to share 72 years of history with you with the help of Patrick and the staff of the Ontario. I look forward to seeing you next time when we continue our discussion on the origin of the Gryphon, along with looking at the mascots that didn't make the cut. Class is dismissed.



The original Gryphon.



Gryphons Gone Pro

This month's Gryphons Gone Pro is recent alumni, [Jared Beeksma](#).

A standout Linebacker for the Gryphon Football program, Jared is currently on the practice roster for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. Jared was Selected by the Hamilton Tiger-Cats in the fifth round, 46th overall, in the 2022 CFL Draft.

The Beeksma family has been an integral part of the Gryphon Football community, and Jared's parents, Judy and Richard, attended our most recent home game on October 22nd. #ForeverAGryphon



Pictured: Jared Beeksma finding out he had been drafted to the CFL



Did you know that many of our Gryphon football players are also coaches of the Guelph Women's football team? The team competed in a 5v5 format for the months of September and October, and will move to 11v11 starting in January.

Good luck this season!



Gryphon Gala – May 6th, 2023
FOGF Golf Tournament – July 21st, 2023



FOGF Memberships

Interested in becoming an FOGF Member? There are three different tiers to our memberships: Red, Black, and Gold. To find out more information about our memberships and what is involved in each level, please click [here](#). For questions about the membership, please contact Bill Brown at brownw@uoguelph.ca



FOGF Gold Members Brian Cluff, Randy Dimitroff and John O'Brien welcome new FOGF member Tim Quirke (with Helmet) into the membership. Fun Fact: All 4 men are 1984 Vanier Cup Champions.



Share Your News

If you have any news or updates, we would be more than happy to share them in our upcoming newsletter. Please reach out to brownw@uoguelph.ca for any celebrations, announcements, or bereavements that you would like us to share.