

Gryphons' Lair  
Issue 72 – January 2023

Happy New Year! January 2023 marks the 72nd Issue of the Gryphons' Lair newsletter. Looking forward to continuing our monthly updates to our readers about everything happening with our Gryphon Football Community!

As we reflect on 2022, the year was filled with many events, football games, community get-togethers, and more. Thank you to our alumni, parent group, coaching staff, players, support staff, and community members for being a part of Gryphon Football Family and for contributing to our program!

Check out this [recap video](#) of 2022 that was put together by our Media Crew.

We hope that everyone was able to have a relaxing and restful holiday with their family and friends. Check out this [holiday video](#) that we shared over the break, it sounds as if some of our players might have a career in singing after football...



*Pictured left to right: Kumail Khilji, Julian Iamundo, Ben Lancaster, Tommy Bourikas, Parker Walsh, Braeden MacDougall*

Wishing you all the best in 2023. Enjoy issue 72 of the Gryphons' Lair!



## **POP Holiday Party**

Thank you to our incredible Parent Group for organizing a wonderful Christmas party for our Gryphon Football community on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. We had a wonderful turnout of over 125 parents and players, and it was great to be re-connected with one another.

All guests were encouraged to bring non-perishable food items that could be donated to the local food bank. Thank you to everyone who contributed. We were able to make a wonderful donation to the Guelph Local Food Bank prior to the holidays. Special shoutout to [Tommy Yanchuk](#) and [Clark Barnes](#) for dropping off the donation!



*Pictured left to right: Clark Barnes, Tommy Yanchuk*

## **Gryphons Spread Holiday Cheer at Local Elementary School**

Something that is a very important part of being a Gryphon Football player is giving back to the community. Many families attend football games at Alumni Stadium, and so we make sure that we take the time to give back to the ones who support us and cheer us on!

A few of our players spent some time at local elementary school in Guelph before the holiday break. The morning was spent playing games in the gym and reading kindergarten students. It was incredible to see the smiles on the students' faces and the excitement and buzz within the school.

Thank you to [Vyshonne Janusas](#), [Parker Walsh](#), [Max Barber](#), [Kwame Osei](#), [Ben Lane](#), [Devynn Cromwell](#), [Anthony Hall](#), [Gianni Green](#), and [Braeden MacDougall](#) for being a part of this special day at John Galt Public School!



*Pictured: Students from John Galt Elementary Schools and Gryphon Football Players*

### **Kwame Osei Volunteers with Big Brothers Big Sisters Organization**

A special shoutout to 5<sup>th</sup> year player [Kwame Osei](#) for being the *December Spotlight* feature for the Big Brothers Big Sisters Organization. Kwame and a fellow U of G student co-led a school mentorship group this past semester and were recently featured as volunteers. Well done, Kwame!

Read the news release [here](#).

### **Kian Schaffer-Baker Invited to Workout with NFL Teams**

Congratulations to Gryphon Alumni, [Kian Schaffer-Baker](#) for earning himself more invites to workout with various NFL Teams. To date, Kian has worked out for the Jacksonville Jaguars, Pittsburgh Steelers, Indianapolis Colts, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Las Vegas Raiders, and Minnesota Vikings. Congratulations, Kian!

Read more [here](#).

### **Gryphons Supporting Gryphons**

Great to see our Gryphon alumni community supporting each other! Gryphon Alumni Brian Cluff and fellow Gryphons attended the *Ho Ho Hopewell* charity event run by Andrew Oosterhuis.

#GryphonPride



*Pictured left to right: Drew Davenport, Hainsley Guthrie, Brian Cluff, Andrew Oosterhuis*

### **Gryphon Alumni – Tavius Robinson Feature**

Last month, we featured Tavius as our *Alumni of the Month*. To learn more about his journey to Ole Miss, check out this [great article](#) from the Daily Journal.



### **2022 Gryphon Athletic Scholarship Event**

Congratulations to the athletes that were recognized at the Scholarship event hosted by the Guelph Gryphon Athletic Department. It was great to celebrate all the varsity athletes at the U of G who received a scholarship. Congratulations to all recipients!

See below the list of athletes from the football team that received a scholarship.

#### *2022 Scholarship Recipients:*

Miles LaFoucade  
Vyshonne Janusas  
Nick Partchenko  
Yunus Larry  
Daniel Hocevar  
Alex Gordon  
Ben Lancaster

Ettore Casati  
Sam Lack  
Spencer Kennedy  
Richard Morris  
Kumail Khilji  
Connor Miller  
Juwan Jeffrey  
Devynn Cromwell  
Eric Stranz  
Spencer Masterson  
Curtis Woodmansey  
Mitchel Schechinger  
Braeden MacDougall  
Curtis Ball  
Spencer Kennedy  
Kwame Osei  
Jack Cobb  
Connor Miller  
Ethan Pyle  
Matthew Famurewa  
Max Barber  
Zach Powell  
Ryan Ogilvie  
Yusuf Al-Khaldi  
Isaiah Smith  
Seamus Milligan  
Scott Murray





*Pictured left to right: Nick Partchenko and Brian Cluff  
Nick is the recipient of the Brian Cluff Excellence Scholarship*



*Pictured left to right: Pat McGrath (Gryphon Alumni) Spencer Kennedy, Stu Lang  
Spencer Kennedy is the recipient of the 2015 Yates Cup Scholarship*



*Recipients of the FOGF Scholarships*

*Pictured left to right: Bill Brown, Eric Stranz, Brian Cluff, Miles La Foucade, Curtis Woodmansey, Vyshonne Janusas, Su Lang, Spencer Masterson, Sarah Garrett*

### **District 10 Awards – Hosted at Alumni Stadium**

We celebrated the incredible football talent from the local secondary schools in Guelph at the District 10 Awards on December 12<sup>th</sup>.

Congratulations to all high-school athletes who were honoured as All-Stars, and to the major award winners!

#### *Major Award Winners:*

Marco Piccioni – Nick FitzGibbon Award (MVP)

Cam Snook – Lineman MVP

Ethan Godinho – Offensive MVP

Peyton Cummings – Rookie of the Year

Cam Hewitt – Defensive MVP



*Major Award Winners*

*Pictured left to right: Ethan Godinho, Cam Snook, Marco Piccioni, Cam Hewitt, Peyton Cummings*



*The Nick FitzGibbon Award - MVP*

*Pictured left to right: Nick FitzGibbon and Marco Piccioni*

### **Mike O'Shea Signs Contract Extension with Winnipeg Blue Bombers**

Congratulations to Mike O'Shea for signing a 3-year contract extension as Head Coach for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers.

Mike has had a very successful coaching career and has brought the team to three Grey Cup appearances with wins in 2019 and 2021.

Read the full article [here](#).



## **Gryphon Women's Flag Football**

Congratulations to all players and coaches from the Guelph Gryphon Women's Flag Football Team on a very successful season! It is incredible to see the growth of women's football within our community and we are proud that our very own players are committed to being a part of this growth!

Check out this [video](#) that highlights the Women's Team and the coaching staff.

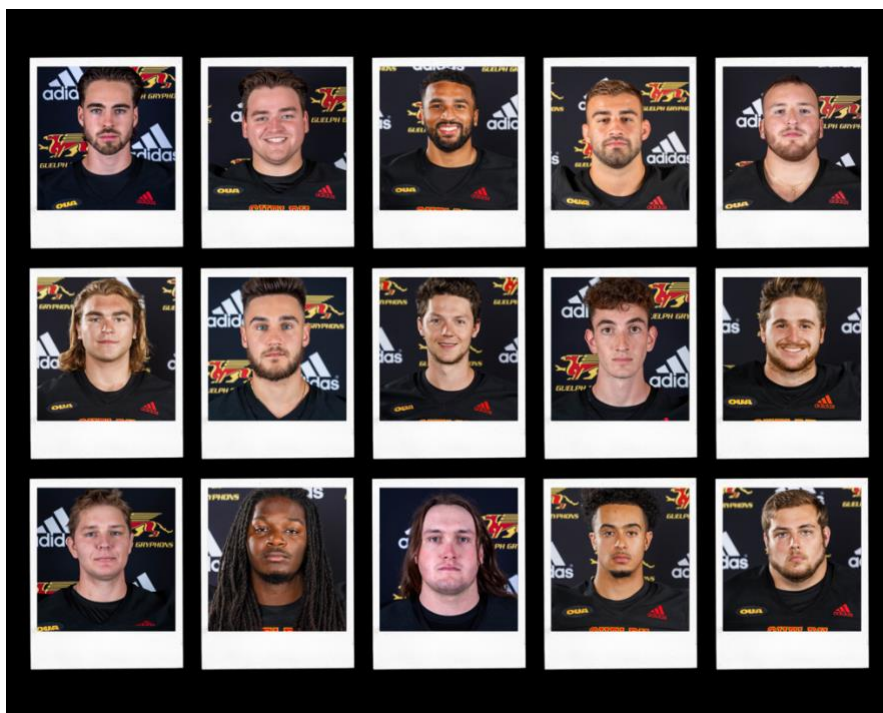
## **2021 – 2022 Academic Award Winners**

The Guelph Gryphon athletic department released the 2021 – 2022 Academic Award Winners and 16 of our players were on that list!

Congratulations to these players who achieved an average of 80% or higher during the 2021-22 season!

[Jake Bennett](#) - Management  
[Connor Burke](#) - Criminal Justice & Public Policy  
[Allister Chase](#) - Management Economics & Finance  
[Simon Chaves](#) - Criminal Justice & Public Policy  
[Daniel Hocevar](#) - Sport & Event Management  
[Justin Jelacic](#) - Landscape Architecture  
[Spencer Kennedy](#) - Sport & Event Management  
[Benjamin Lack](#) - Human Kinetics  
[Benjamin Lane](#) - Political Science  
[Justin Lauzon](#) - Accounting  
[Ethan Pyle](#) - Sport & Event Management  
[Darius Samuels](#) - Criminal Justice & Public Policy  
[Jacob Sherk](#) - Human Kinetics  
[Stephen Taylor](#) - Management  
[Noah Wright](#) – Psychology

Read the full news release [here](#).



## *Featured Player*

6am: Football Practice in the Field House  
8am: Football Lift in the Performance Centre  
2pm: Track Practice in the Field House  
4pm: Track Lift in the Performance Centre

Add in classes and a part-time job at the Athletic Centre, and that will be a typical day throughout the Winter 2023 semester for 3<sup>rd</sup> year Defensive Back, [Devynn Cromwell](#). Not only is Devynn a part of our football roster, but this winter will mark his first official season as a [track athlete](#), thus earning him dual-sport athlete status.

Devynn grew up in Toronto, Ontario and attended Northern High School and then spent his final year at [Football North](#), a high school in Mississauga. Their program strives to provide students both a strong academic opportunity and an elite football experience, allowing students to achieve their academic and athletic goals.

After receiving interest from multiple football programs across the country, Devynn officially committed to the Gryphon Football team in January, 2020. As we all know, the 2020-2021 season was cancelled due to the pandemic, which meant that Devynn and the other commits had to wait an entire year for their rookie season to begin.

Well, it was worth the wait, because Devynn had a standout season, earning himself OUA First Team All-Star honours, USPORTS Second Team All-Canadian Honours and a spot on the OUA All-Rookie Team for the 2021-2022 season. In just 6 regular season games he tallied thirteen solo tackles, six assisted tackles, and seven pass break-ups.

At the end of the 2021-22 season, Devynn took home the Rookie of the Year Award at the Wildman Awards and he was also the recipient of the Scott Yanchus Award (Male Rookie of the Year) at the Guelph Gryphons Athletic Banquet.

When looking back at the 2021 season, Devynn noted that he felt prepared to enter training camp due to his time spent at Football North.

“Training camp was not as much of a shock to the system because I had gone through a very similar style of training camp when I was at Football North. Coming into camp at Guelph, I really liked how the coaches organized our training. Although the days were long, it was nice to be around my fellow teammates all day because that is how you get to really bond with your teammates and see how everyone trains and how they respond to challenging workouts and practices.”

After over 700 days without OUA football, we were ecstatic to be able to host the first game of the 2021-2022 season at Alumni Stadium vs the Western Mustangs. The Gryphons put on quite a show for our fans and came out with a 23 – 21 victory.

“After the first snap of the game against Western, I got my jitters out and then to be honest it really just felt like an intense practice. It was a game to remember, as it was my first OUA University game, my first time playing in over a year, and my first home game. So, to come out with a victory was pretty special.”

In addition to being a busy student-athlete, Devynn is taking a full course load in the Bachelor of Arts program, majoring in Psychology. He also works part-time in the Intramural Office within Athletics.

And if his schedule wasn't busy enough, he decided in Summer 2022 to try out for the Track and Field Team.

“I've always wanted to be a track athlete and I've always wanted to improve my speed as a football player. I felt that being a track athlete would help with that. The U of G track team has won back-to-back National Championships and has one of the best sprint coaches in Canada, I felt like I could take advantage of that opportunity to train with the best of the best.”

Many of the Gryphon athletes at the U of G play two different sports. Gryphon Alumni [Job Reinhart](#) wrestled for Guelph during his time here, and [Simon Chaves](#) currently holds a spot on both the football and wrestling team. It goes to show that the athletic talent at the U of G is quite impressive!

The interview with Cromwell was recorded in December 2022, and about halfway through our conversation, Head Coach Ryan Sheahan came into the boardroom to tell us about a conversation he had with a recruit the night prior.

“I was on a Zoom call with recruit last night and he asked me if we had a DB on our team that wears #22. He told me that he saw a [video](#) of you (Devynn) benching 345 lbs. I told him that you are one of the hardest workers on our team.”

Coach Sheahan noted as he was leaving the boardroom that Devynn’s hard work on and off the field is being noticed by others and it is having a positive impact on the potential recruits.

It was only fitting that we reached out to Strength Coach Adam Kania for a comment on Devynn’s work ethic in the gym.

*“Devynn’s work ethic since joining Gryphon football is second to none, almost to the point where our conversations revolve around proper rest time and not doing too much. He is constantly pushing himself to be the best at his position (and on the team really) in every run and every lift. He is laser focused on becoming the best version of himself that he can for himself and the team.”*

– Adam Kania, Strength and Conditioning Coach

Off-season training with Coach Kania will get started in early January as our players look ahead to the upcoming OUA football season. As we have officially entered 2023, we look forward to announcing the 2023-2024 season schedule to our Gryphon Football community shortly.

In attendance at the Gryphon Football games for the 2023 season will be Devynn’s parents, Emily and Anthony and his two younger siblings, Keagan and Kai-Lee.

“It’s great to have my family be able to attend all the games and have their support. Even my younger sister got more into the games this past season by making a Defensive sign for me and actually watching the games instead of being on my Mom’s phone. I am very grateful to have them be a part of my football journey.”

Thank you, Devynn for taking the time to chat with us. All the best with your off-season training for Football and good luck at your upcoming track meets!



## ***Featured Alumnus***

Exactly one year ago today we released [Issue 60](#) of the Gryphon's Lair and the *Player Feature* of the month was [AJ Allen](#). It was only fitting to bring back AJ for Issue 72 as the *Alumni Feature*.

AJ wore #52 for the Gryphons as a Linebacker and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree, double majoring in Political Science and Criminal Justice and Public Policy. In his final season with the Gryphons, AJ earned himself OUA Player of the Week, was named an All-Canadian and an OUA First-Team All-Star, and was awarded the OUA Outstanding Stand-Up Defensive Player Award, which is given to the best Defensive Player in the Conference. At the Wildman Awards dinner that celebrated the 2021 season, AJ was awarded the prestigious Ted Wildman Award and the Donald Forster Trophy (MVP). AJ is also a member of the 2010 Team of the Decade.

Although his time as a Gryphon in the OUA came to an end, his football career was far from over. AJ traded in his red, black, and gold uniform for a green and white jersey to play in the CFL for the Saskatchewan Roughriders.

Aside from playing professional football, a big highlight for AJ has been traveling across Canada and connecting with former teammates.



“I got the chance to explore Canada, including cities like Vancouver, Calgary, and Edmonton. I had never had that opportunity to do that before, so being able to travel and see parts of this amazing country with my team was really special. And after every game that we played, whether it was home or away, I was always looking forward to seeing Gryphon alumni and catching up with them. It was also great to play against other guys from the OUA, such as Tre Ford and Tyrell Ford.”

Previous teammates of AJ’s include [Kiondre Smith](#), [Jared Beeksma](#) and [Coulter Woodmansey](#) from the Hamilton TigerCats, [Johnny Augustine](#) from the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and [Jacob Scarfone](#) from the BC Lions.

“There was a week span when [Jared Beeksma](#), [Alain Cimankinda](#), [Kosi Oneyka](#) and [Kian Schaffer-Baker](#) and I were all on the Roughriders Roster. It was amazing and made me smile so much. Being able to play together and practice again like we used to, watching film together, that was really cool. It’s a blessing to be able to say that my friends made it to the pros. It’s a surreal moment to be surrounded by great talent.”

AJ plays Linebacker for the Roughriders and played in 12 games in the 2022 season, logging 6 defensive tackles and 6 special team tackles. Unfortunately, AJ spent 6 weeks on the Injury Reserve List due to a broken left hand.

When asked about lessons that he learned during his time in the OUA and how they translated in the CFL, AJ credits a lot of his work ethic to being developed during his time as Gryphon.

“When I played for Guelph, I was working towards being an Honour roll student, I was a Captain, and trying to be a CFL player. Those goals often resulted in my spending 12-hours a day at the stadium. I was willing to make those sacrifices because I am so passionate about this sport, so I was determined to put in the work to get to where I am today.”

AJ is back in Burlington for the off-season and will be keeping busy by training and preparing for the 2023 CFL season. During his time back in Ontario, he said that he looks forward to connecting with the current Gryphon roster and other alumni. We noted in our last newsletter feature that AJ had picked up the harmonica during COVID and taught himself how to play. He mentioned that the ‘band is getting back together.’

“I picked up the harmonica recently, [Alex Jafs](#) (Gryphon Alumni) is incredible at the guitar, and [Darius Samuels](#) has the voice of an angel. So, we are working on getting together and creating some music.”

Thank you, AJ for staying connected with your Gryphon Football Family, and we wish you all the best for the 2023 season!



## **Featured FOGF Member**

We are sure that many of our readers have heard the expression - *Once a Gryphon, Always a Gryphon*. And that saying could not be truer for Gryphon alumni and FOGF President, Randy Dimitroff.

With the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Gryphon Football Gala planning in full swing, we thought it was the perfect opportunity to chat with Randy about his involvement with the Gala and to give our readers some insight into what they can expect at this year's event!

May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023 will mark the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Gryphon Football Gala. After 3 years, we are thrilled to be able to have this event back in person at Creelman Hall. This event will bring together FOGF members, Gryphon Football coaches, players, family members, friends of the program – ultimately anyone who wants to engage with the Gryphon Football Program. The goal is to raise money to support our student-athletes. In 2021, we were able to raise over \$42,000 for our program.

Every year, we recognize a 'Distinguished Alumni' and an 'Honour Jersey' Recipient. The recipient of the Honour Jersey is a Gryphon Football alumni who dominated on the field during their time at the University of Guelph and was selected by his peers as being one of the most outstanding players to wear a Gryphon jersey. Previous recipients of the Honour Jersey can be found on our [website](#). The *Distinguished Alumni Award* recognizes the achievements of an alumnus who has brought great honour to the Gryphon Football Team through professional, community, and/or personal endeavours following his graduation. The recipient may also have given selflessly of his

time, finances, and energy through volunteer work or philanthropic activities, which may include demonstrating loyalty and commitment to the Gryphon Football Team through his support of the team over the years. The award is given for lifetime achievement and sustained commitment to excellence. Previous award winners can be found listed on our [website](#).

“Attendees for the gala can look forward to a fantastic evening at Creelman Hall, it will include speeches from our award winners, a silent auction, a keynote speaker, and a few special guests will be making an appearance! The purpose of the gala has always been engagement, we are excited to have our senior players attend the upcoming gala and give them a chance to network with our community.”

Randy has been involved with planning the Gala for the last 11 years, and has been the President of the Friends of Gryphon Football (FOGF) program for over 8 years.

“I got involved because I wanted a chance to stay close to the team, to get to know the players personally, and connect with the parents of the players. I had a great time at the U of G when I was there and I want to help the program in any way I can.”

Randy is a U of G alumni and played the QB position and was a part of the 1984 Vanier Cup Team. Much like his time playing the QB position, Randy is still calling the plays and is heavily involved in the planning process for the Gala. We are very appreciate of his ongoing support and dedication to advancing our FOGF membership program.

In addition to coordinating the Gala, Randy supports with planning the FOGF Golf Tournament and is always at every Gryphon Football game. Pretty much if there is any type of Gryphon Football activity, you can always count on Randy being there, most likely wearing a visor – his classic ‘uniform.’

Randy has gotten to know our Gryphon Football roster quite well through various events. This past season, one of our senior players, [Kwame Osei](#) asked Randy and his close friend and Gryphon Alumni, John O’Brien, to stand with him for his Senior Day recognition on the field at Alumni Stadium.

“I’ve gotten to know Kwame and the other seniors over the last 4-5 years. To have him respect John and me and to ask us to represent him at Seniors Day was outstanding and a big honour. It felt really good to stand beside him and it reassured us that what we are doing as Alumni and with the FOGF program is important.”

We reached out to Kwame to ask him about his relationship with Gryphon Alumni and why he chose to ask Randy and John to stand with him.

*“The Alumni/FOGF members took me as one of their own when I first arrived to Guelph. They have been supporting me and my teammates unconditionally on and off the field throughout my journey at U of G. Since my parents couldn’t make it for my senior day, I felt that it would be valid to ask the Alumni/FOGF members (Randy Dimitroff & John*

*O'Brien) to step in for them because they were practically my support system here in Guelph.” – Kwame*

Thank you, Randy for your dedication to our program, your involvement and support is appreciated, and you have made a positive impact with our players.



*Pictured left to right: John O'Brien, Kwame Osei, Randy Dimitroff, Anthony Hall*



As previously mentioned, I had a small hiatus in December due to the addition of a baby girl in our family. Mom and brother are both doing well. However, no amount of training could prepare me for the surprise of being a girl dad! If anyone out there has any tips on how to make a ponytail in the future, I would appreciate it (right now, I think it involves a Shop Vac and some zip ties?)

The Gryphon Football team returned to training after a few weeks off at the conclusion of our season. As frustrating as the season went, the motivation to not allow it to happen again is high inside the walls of the Stadium Performance Centre. We started off with just three days a week of training and ramped it up to four just before exams began. Training will resume early mornings inside the fieldhouse and gym when the athletes return for the winter semester.



Also in January, for a little added competition in house, the S+C program will be instituting the 1000 lb Club. For those of you who have not heard of this, it's a feat attributed to those who lift a combined 1000 lbs between their squat, bench, and power clean (traditionally a deadlift, however I wanted more of a sport and power component to it). There are strict guidelines that need to be met in order for the athletes to be able to earn a shirt of a different colour than the kits they were given at the beginning of the year.

We've successfully opened up the doors to the Stadium Performance Centre to our local community high school athletes and have been training for four weeks in November and December prior to Christmas break. Athletes are representing schools in our region including Centennial, JF Ross, GCVI, Bishop Macdonell and Our Lady of Lourdes. Most of these athletes are playing some sort of summer ball between the Jr. Gryphons program as well as the Cambridge Lions. If you have an athlete interested in joining the training, we pick things back up January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Information and sign up can be found [here](#).

Finally, a quick note of thank you to student assistant Strength and Conditioning Coach [Kendra Cousineau](#) for all that she has done in helping support the S+C team and preparing the team in and out of competition. Kendra is exploring an opportunity to further her rugby career out west in the winter semester and we wish her nothing but the best as an integral part of our team.

Happy New Year to you and yours and thanks for all your support!



School was out for the holiday break, and so the lesson will continue next month!



This month's Gryphons Gone Pro feature is [Blaine Schmidt](#). His career included an impressive 12 seasons in the CFL with the Edmonton Eskimos, Hamilton Tiger-Cats and the Toronto Argonauts. Blaine was a part of the Grey Cup Championship Team in 1991 with the Argos.

Blaine is a part of the 1980's Gryphon Team of the Decade and we are proud to have him as part of our Gryphon Alumni community!





**Did You Know?**

Did you know that our very own Gryphon Football Running Back Coach, [Nate Kettles](#) will be the Head Coach of the U18 Junior Gryphon Football Team for the 2023 season?

Nate joined the Gryphon Coaching Roster in August 2022 and has a great deal of coaching experience from his time in Calgary. A notable moment of his coaching career was being a part of the coaching roster in 2019 when the University of Calgary Dinos won the Vanier Cup.

Congratulations, Coach Kettles!



## ***Save The Date***

Gryphon Football Coaches Clinic – February 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023

- This 2-day coaching clinic is a great professional development opportunity for football coaches. Attendees will be learning from our Gryphon Football Staff and a few other special guests that will be announced in the New Year. [Register](#) now to secure your spot!

Gryphon Gala – May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023

FOGF Golf Tournament – July 21<sup>st</sup>, 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](mailto:brownw@uoguelph.ca)



## ***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](mailto:brownw@uoguelph.ca) for any celebrations, announcements, or bereavements that you would like us to share.