

Gryphons' Lair

Issue 63 – April 2022

A new month means that we are just one step closer to the 2022 Season. We are really proud of our players, coaches, and community members for being so active in the off-season and for giving us some great content with which to fill this newsletter.

This newsletter is written each month by various coaches, and a member of our Lang Innovation Team. If you are an alumnus or FOGF member who would like to be featured, or know someone that has a great story to share, please reach out to us by emailing Bill Brown at brownw@uoguelph.ca

A reminder that the Virtual Gala is on April 22nd, 2022, and tickets can be purchased [online](#). FOGF Gold members will receive a separate email invitation with code to redeem for 1 ticket per person. The silent auction website will go live on April 14th. In addition to the great auction items, you can also purchase a game worn [Gryphon helmet](#). Please note that these helmets are for display purposes only and not to be used for competitive sports. 100% of the profits from helmet sale will go back into the Gryphon Football Program.





Enjoy issue 63 of the Gryphons' Lair.

What Happened in March?

The Band is Back Together

On March 10th, it was announced that Pat Sheahan will be joining the Gryphon coaching squad as the new Offensive Line Coach. Coach Sheahan brings over 30+ years of coaching experience and will be a great addition to our team.

“This is an exciting move for the Gryphon Football Program and especially exciting for me. Not only do I get to work with my father who is one of the football greats, our program just got significantly better. It is a big step forward to acquire a person of his stature, and it’s coming at a time when we weren’t sure how we were going to replace Mike MacDonald, who gave so much to this program.” Head Coach Ryan Sheahan

Welcome, Coach!

Read the full story [here](#).

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



*Pictured left to right: Pat Sheahan and Ryan Sheahan
Photo Credit: Laurel Jarvis*

HeForShe Event Recap

Gryphon Football is proud to be a sponsor for the [HeForShe](#) movement in partnership with the Gordon S. Lang School of Business and Economics and the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences.

HeForShe is a solidarity campaign for the advancement of gender equality, initiated by United Nations. On March 16th, this hybrid event brought together U of G students, faculty and community members for a keynote address by Diversity and inclusion advocate [Dr. Hadiya Roderique](#).

To cap off the night, the scholarship winners were announced, congratulations to all award winners!

*Rachel Provis, The Dr. Hadiya Roderique Resilience Award (Bachelor of Commerce Student)
Emma McNeill, The Dr. Hadiya Roderique Resilience Award (Bachelor of Engineering Student)
Smitten Apparel, The HeForShe Impact Award
Rowan Hughes, The HeForShe Ally Award*



Pictured left to right: Curtis Woodmansey, Anthony Hall, Kwame Osei, Jared Beeksma

Precision Passing Academy

Over the March Break, a select number of high school students were invited to attend our ‘Precision Passing Academy’ and learn from our Gryphon coaches. Students from grades 9 – 12 who play either the Quarterback or Receiver position spent their week off school to improve themselves as players and prepare for the next level of play, whether that be University or College level.

Watch the recap [here](#).



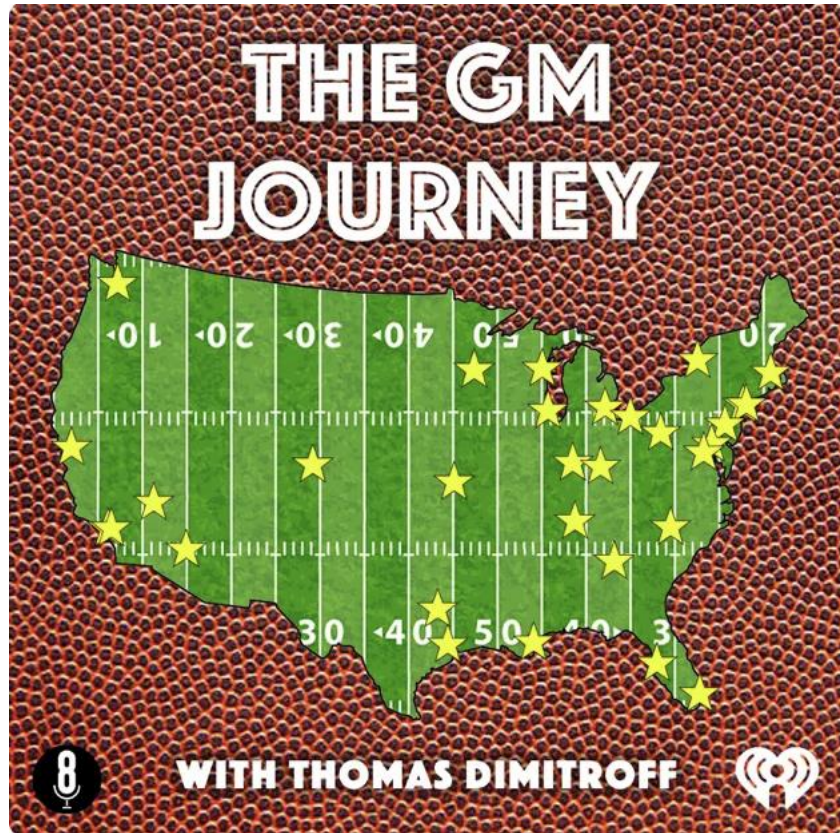
Coach Ryan Sheahan sharing the QB secrets with the next crop of QB prospects

Thomas Dimitroff Launches Podcast

Congratulations to Thomas Dimitroff who launched his podcast 'The GM Journey' earlier this month. Dimitroff will be travelling across the United States to speak with various General Managers within the NFL.

Listeners can look forward to hearing about topics such as NFL strategy, management, leadership and more.

Listen [here](#).



Celebrations:

Five Gryphons Perform at CFL Regional Combine

[Jared Beeksma](#), [Eric Stranz](#), [Jeremy Kapelanski-Lamoureux](#), and [Simon Chaves](#) attended the CFL Regional Combine hosted in Waterloo on March 10th. Congratulations to all athletes on your performance and especially to Jared Beeksma, who [advanced](#) to the National combine.

View the regional combine results [here](#).



*Pictured Left to Right (Top): Coach Dennis McPhee and Coach Donnavan Carter
Pictured Left to Right (Bottom): Uriel Kalegna, Eric Stanz, Jared Beeksma, Simon Chaves, Jeremy
Kapelanski-Lamoureux*

CFL National Combine

[Kiondre Smith](#) and Jared Beeksma attended the CFL National Combine in Toronto on March 25-27. An impressive performance by both athletes and we wish you all the best in the CFL Draft!

“It was great to meet everyone who were deemed the best players in the country. I enjoyed the opportunity to compete against elite competition. I made it clear to teams that I deserved to be there and that I would be an asset to any organization. The interviews were easily my favourite part of the combine. They allowed me to showcase my football knowledge and personality so that teams would know the type of player they would be getting if they chose me. Overall, a great weekend full of competition, new relationships, and self-improvement.” – Kiondre Smith

“I was really excited about the opportunity to showcase my skills. It had always been my dream to play professional football so having the chance to make this dream a reality was surreal. The hard months or prep were definitely worth it.” – Jared Beeksma

View the national combine results [here](#).

Read the press release [here](#).



Pictured: Jared Beeksma



Pictured: Kiondre Smith

Spencer Kennedy – Scholarship Recipient

Congratulations to 3rd year receiver, [Spencer Kennedy](#) on receiving the Hospitality, Food and Tourism Management Alumni Association Scholarship. This award is given annually to a student who has a at least a 70% in their last two full-time semesters and is involved in extracurriculars at the U of G. Congratulations, Spencer – this is very well deserved!

Read more about the scholarship recipients [here](#).



School of Hospitality, Food & Tourism Management...

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The LANG School of Hospitality, Food and Tourism Management congratulates Spencer Kennedy for receiving the 3rd year 2021/22 HAFA HFTM Alumni Association Scholarship! ...see more



Stu Lang Inducted to Gryphon Hall of Fame

It goes without saying, Stu Lang is the heart and soul of the Gryphon Football program. We are very excited to share the news that former Gryphon Head Coach, Stu Lang is being inducted into the [Gryphon Hall of Fame](#) in the builder category.

Official Announcement of Induction

Entering the 2022 Gryphon Hall of Fame, in the 'builder' category, is Stu Lang - a man who has forever changed the University of Guelph for the better with transformational gifts made through his charitable foundation, The Angel Gabriel Foundation. Over the past decade, Stu and his wife, Kim, have together gifted more than \$50 million to the University of Guelph, supporting a wide variety of areas on campus. Some of these historical donations made to the University include a \$21 million donation to the U of G business school (now named the Gordon S. Lang School of Business and Economics, named after Stu's late father); an \$11 million gift to U of G's Ontario Veterinary College; and a \$10.5 million gift to the Gryphon football program in the form of a state-of-the-art Pavilion at Alumni Stadium.

Stu's decorated career in the business world saw him take a lead role in the family business, serving as President of CCL, Label International - the largest label making corporation in the world. The family business, which started as Lang Lamps back in 1951, has now grown to a multi-billion dollar company with CCL Industries listing annual revenues of \$5.3 billion (CDN) in 2019. Stu joined the family company in 1982, but prior to that, enjoyed a standout eight-year CFL career where he was a five-time Grey Cup champion with Edmonton. Stu's passion for football led him to the University of Guelph in 2009, when the nearby resident (Puslinch) volunteered as a receivers coach with the Gryphon football program. One year later in 2010, Stu would take over head coaching duties of the Gryphon football team, marking the beginning of a phenomenal six-year stretch for the Gryphon football program (2010-to-2015), which was capped off by the Gryphons capturing the 2015 Yates Cup.

Coach Lang's impact reaches far beyond the product on the field during his six seasons as head coach. Stu's vision to make Gryphon Football the best program in the country has driven him to bring together a wide variety of stakeholders associated with Gryphon football. He has provided endless support of the Parent of Players group, created strong connections with Alumni through the development of the Friends of Gryphon Football Program and has engaged community through charity fundraising and support of the HeforShe movement. In 2022, Stu's latest game-changing investment was completed, with the Gryphon football program opening the doors on the team's new, state-of-the-art Performance Centre. This project is the latest in a long list of incredible upgrades to the University of Guelph's football stadium.

FACILITIES

- *High Performance Centre*
 - *An athletics training facility designed specifically with football players' needs in mind*
- *Video Scoreboard*
 - *State of the art scoreboard installed at the new field*
- *Turf Field*
 - *Improvement from grass playing surface geared towards improved player performance*
- *Pavilion*

- *Three level building housing a 3300 square foot locker room, players' lounge, offices for coaching staff, rooftop patio, floor to ceiling windows overlooking field in the team meeting room/event lounge, therapy room with hot and cold tubs*
- *Lang Way*
 - *Gathering place before games, housing Champions' Corner that lists national champions at U of G Gryphons. Mini playing field for children, concourse that's used as a gathering space before games.*
- *Celebration Corner*
 - *Houses Jeremiah Junior (canon) that celebrates touchdowns on gameday field, and a large bell that is rung on field goals*
- *Performance Centre Expansion*
 - *New project designed to enhance the previously designed performance centre with the goal of providing Gryphon Football players additional facilities to train for excellence*

ALUMNI

- *Friends of Gryphon Football*
 - *Developed to engage and attract alumni*
 - *Membership program that generates \$30 000 annually to support the football program*
 - *Gala Dinner \$30 000 - \$40 000 of revenue generated annually to support the football program*
- *Captains' Lunch*
 - *Annual event that recognizes former Gryphon Captains*
- *Order of the Gryphon*
 - *Annual dinner honouring those who have donated over \$50 000 to Gryphon Football*
- *Team of the Decade Recognition*
 - *A way to recognize Gryphon Football Players who were voted the best in the decade by their peers*
 - *Members recognized at a bi-annual Team of the Decade dinner*
- *Glory Bowl*
 - *Annual Alumni football game at homecoming*
- *Honourary Captain*
 - *Recognizes playing achievements of alumni by providing them an opportunity to participate in the coin toss on game day*
- *Distinguished Alumni Award*
 - *Honours one alumni yearly for his contributions to Gryphon Football and subsequent contributions to society after graduation*
- *Honour Jersey*
 - *Recipient is an alumnus who is honoured for his playing ability. The recipient is selected by the Friends of Gryphon Football Board of Directors and is announced at the Gala Dinner*

SCHOLARSHIPS

- *Triple Victory Project*
 - *matched donations of \$1 million for an endowed Gryphon Football scholarship*
- *2015 Yates Cup Scholarship creation*
- *Jean Hewitt Scholarship*
 - *supports students to participate in Me to We*
- *HeforShe Ally Scholarship*
 - *Given to a U of G student demonstrating commitment to gender equality*
- *25% of net revenue from the Pavilion goes to Women's sports*

ADVANCEMENT TEAM CONTRIBUTION

- *Spring Training at IMG Academy in Florida*
 - *Committed to facilitating a trip for the team to Florida every 4 years to the world class IMG Academy*
- *Social Media & Marketing*
 - *Believes in the importance of strengthening our fan base through targeted marketing.*
- *Team Building Events*
 - *Provided players and coaches with the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities over the years including paintball, Wonderland, go karting*

FOOTBALL

- *Yates Cup Championship 2015 (final season as Head Coach)*
- *Four consecutive 7-1 seasons (best season record ever for Gryphon Football)*
- *39 wins and 19 losses over his career*
- *3 Yates Cup appearances in 4 years*
- *20 consecutive home game wins (record for Gryphon Football)*
- *4-5, 2-6, 7-1, 7-1, 7-1 regular season as Head Coach*

Stu, you have made an incredible impact to many and we are thrilled to celebrate you in the upcoming celebration on [Saturday, June 25th](#).



Featured Player:

Our player feature for the month of April is 3rd year Defensive Lineman, [Curtis Woodmansey](#). Many great siblings have come through the Gryphon Football program, and Curtis and [Coulter Woodmansey](#) are no exception.

Curtis' older brother, Coulter played for the Gryphons from 2016- 2020 on the Offensive Line and the brothers were able to play 1 season together in 2019.

“My brother and I grew up competing with each other, so to have the opportunity to practice and play together in 2019 was pretty special.”

In addition to Coulter paving the way of being a Gryphon, Curtis was introduced to the program by coach Brian Cluff.

“When I played for Team Ontario in Grade 10, Coach Cluff was my coach and made me a better player during that time and so he was a real factor in my decision to come to Guelph. And on the academic side of things, I want to become a veterinarian and with the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC) being right in Guelph, it was an easy decision.”

For those that aren't aware of the process, [applying](#) to the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program is quite extensive. U of G has the best program in North America and it is extremely

competitive. In addition to having top marks in your last 2 years of full-time study, you must have reference letters and considerable experience.

Curtis is currently in his 3rd year of the Bachelor of Science Program, majoring in Animal Biology and minoring in zoology. Some types of classes that Curtis takes include *Structure of Farm Animals*, *Quantitative Genetics*, and *Agricultural Animal Physiology*. In addition to being a full-time student-athlete, Curtis also works at horse farm that does standard bred racing at the Mohawk Casino, outside of Guelph.

Although the pandemic took away a football season in 2020, it allowed Curtis to really focus on his schoolwork with the extra time in his schedule.

“Online school was tough but having the support of our teammates and coaches made it so much better. We all managed because we stayed in constant contact, through Zoom and other online platforms. But now I am happy to be back with my teammates in person and we are ready to win that Vanier in 2022.”

Looking back at Curtis’ football journey, he came ready to work in 2019 and battled his way to the dress roster. After not playing the first 2 games, he dressed for the 3rd game of the season and continued to do so for the remainder of the regular and post season.

“My very first game and second play I got a sack, and that was a big moment. My teammates cheered me on, and it was nice to see that my hard work had paid off.”

And speaking of hard work, these players dedicate hours to their craft as a player and as a student. Not only during the season, but throughout the entire year.

“A typical day for me in the Fall semester is getting up at 6am/7am and start studying and head to classes and labs. I show up to the stadium around 3pm for meetings, get taped and head to practice. We usually end practice around 8/8:30, and I head to the library for an hour, and then head home and do it again the next day.”

And it doesn’t end when the season is over. The team has training at 6am in the offseason and this group is currently enjoying the new [training facilities](#) that opened earlier this year.

“It’s unbelievable. Everyone is getting so much better. The new turf allows us to improve our footwork. We can all workout together and it’s such a great environment. It is the best gym I have ever been too.”

In our conversation with Curtis, we talked about the 2021 season highlights and the momentum going into the 2022 season.

“That first game against Western was amazing, it was quite the battle and a highlight of the 2021 season. But as great as it was, I don’t feel satisfied. Losing to Western in the semi-finals left a bad taste in my mouth and it’s pushing myself and my teammates to work hard in the spring and summer to prepare for the 2022 season.”

Curtis plans on taking a couple of courses in the summer and staying in Guelph to train with the team.

All the best Curtis with your football goals and your career aspirations of becoming a veterinarian, we are rooting for you!



Pictured left to right: Curtis and Coulter Woodmansey



Pictured left to right: Brian Cluff and Curtis

Featured Alumnus:

Wildman? Check. Yates Cup Champion? Check. Team Canada Bobsleigh? Check.

We are very excited to highlight Orion Edwards as this month's Alumni Feature.

Orion played for the Gryphons from 2013 – 2017 as a Defensive Back and wore #34 and #7 throughout his 5 years. One of the key factors in his recruitment process, was in 2012 when he was in the stands as a fan and witnessed one of the most epic comeback games in Gryphon history. For those that are unfamiliar with this game, John Casasanta wrote about this particular game in the [March newsletter](#).

“I came down to Guelph to watch the semi-final game in 2012 against Queen's. I was watching in the stands with my brother and Guelph was getting crushed. I told my brother ‘let's go, let's beat the traffic and head home.’ However, my brother said ‘let's just give it 2 more minutes, you never know what could happen.’ Next thing you know, the game went to OT and the Gryphons won the game.”

“I remember watching that game and thinking to myself that this was a prime example of the defensive group I want to be a part of. They never gave up; they battled and were so determined. I've played with teams before that when things got tough, they crumbled. But what I saw with Guelph, especially on the defensive side, is that they were tenacious and knew I wanted to be a part of that.”

In addition to the culture and the community aspect at the U of G, Orion was really interested in the academic offerings. Orion graduated from the Bachelor of Arts Program, majoring in Criminal Justice and Public Policy. He noted that the level of support available, such as the [Student-Athlete Mentorship program](#) was important to help him develop and thrive.

“The University of Guelph has the ideal combination of academics and athletics, and I knew that it would be a place I could thrive as a young man. I wanted to grow as an athlete, student, and person.”

In addition to being a standout on the field, Orion made sure to get involved in the community to build his resume to help with career options after university. Thanks to a connection from Doug Plug, Orion was able to work part-time in a group home in Guelph and get 3 years of experience in social services.

“The experience that I gained in that job has given me a huge step up when applying to other positions post-graduation. I am very appreciative of the connections through football that gave me this opportunity.”

Another highlight of Orion's career was being a part of the 2015 Yates Cup Champion squad. After coming off a tough loss in 2014 to McMaster, the determination and drive to claim that trophy in 2015 was strong than ever.

“After we lost that game in 2014, Coach Lang took a picture of the scoreboard and put that photo in the weight room with another pic of McMaster holding the Yates Cup. It was an interesting

type of motivation, but I can tell you it worked. Seeing those photos every day reminded us just how much we wanted to win.”

“I remember talking to my teammate Derek Drouillard after a speech that Coach Lang gave the night before the game and saying ‘no way we are losing that game’ I don’t know why but there was just a feeling that we were coming out on top.”

And a battle it was, but the Gryphons claimed victory in 2015 over the Western Mustangs and took home the Yates Cup Trophy.

Unfortunately for Orion, the next season was spent on the sidelines as he recovered from ACL reconstruction surgery after injuring his knee at the East West Bowl.

During his recovery, Orion’s sister came to Guelph help him through the healing process and one day they watched the movie ‘Cool Runnings.’ His sister encouraged him to look into the sport of bobsleigh after football because the skillset in terms of strength, power and dynamics are similar to football.

Flash-forward to 2018, Orion spent some time interning in Seattle with Athletes in Action, which is a program that integrates faith and sports.

“In 2018, I came to the realization that my football career was over, but I still had some athletic potential and wanted to do another sport. I reached out to Coach Lumsden, who was the Running Back Coach for the Gryphons during the Yates Cup win, and his son Jesse was a Bobsleigh Olympian. I asked Coach about the experience and if he thought it was something I could do.”

After some initial research into the sport and training sessions, [Orion](#) tried out for the National Team in 2019. He just completed his 3rd season with Team Canada Bobsleigh and is working towards a goal of making the 2026 Olympics in Italy.

In addition to training for the Olympics, Orion currently works for the Rocky View School Board as a school support worker in Calgary, Alberta.

When asked about the challenges he faced with his ACL reconstruction, and the decision to move on from football, Orion’s advice is as follows:

“Recognize adversity not as a hardship, but as a tool to spark creativity.”

Congratulations, Orion on your many accomplishments and we hope to be cheering you on in the 2026 Olympics!





Featured FOGF:

This month's FOGF Feature is Ryan Sydor. Growing up in Guelph, Ryan chose to attend the U of G for his post-secondary education and study within the Bachelor of Commerce Program, majoring in Marketing.

“Gryphon Football was what you read about in the papers, driving by, and seeing the stadium, there was such a prestige. It was a good university, good program and I enjoyed the recruiting process, it was the right choice for me to make.”

Ryan's' football career started off strong with a Yates Cup win in 1996 against Waterloo. Even though winning that game was an incredible moment, Ryan mentioned that what was even more special, was the group of friends that he got to experience that moment with.

“The guys still call me by nickname from '96. Some of the best memories I have are from training camp. We would sit there and make jokes and laugh all day. Sometimes we would have pulled muscles, not from football but from laughing at the stories and jokes we would tell each other. The vibe within a lockerroom is something special, it's all about the cohesion of bringing people together. When you graduate and move onto your career, you want to work at a place where everyone contributes towards the greater good, a place where everyone is valued for their contribution. And that is what you got from the lockerroom, and something you can try to emulate in your professional lives.”

It was evident it on our conversation with Ryan that still feels connected to the Gryphon Football Family and something that has helped alumni and others to stay connected is being a part of the FOGF (Friends of Gryphon Football) membership program.

“I love what Bill Brown is doing with the FOGF membership. He is the glue of the program, and it helps keep us in touch. There are so many friends that I have re-connected with from my days playing football, and other people at football games and events - there is such a big community within Gryphon Football.”

Ryan was a part of group that created a scholarship for the Yates Cup Team, and one day he read about the FOGF membership in the monthly newsletter and realized that there was another opportunity to constantly stay connected. He also noted that he wanted to wear the swag and to be able to walk around town and wear his gryphon hat proudly!

In addition to the Yates Cup victory, another highlight in Ryan’s football career, was the win against York in the 1996 season, a game that he can still remember clearly to this day.

“We were getting destroyed by York, loosing something like 24-0 at the half. We didn’t believe that we were good yet, and we weren’t playing to the best of our ability. Despite a terrible first half, there was a sense of calm from the coaches. The message from the coaches was ‘we’ve seen what they are doing, so here is what we are going to do to win the game.’ The coaches were confident in the game plan and it gave us as players the strength to execute. We ended up winning 27-24.”

This notion of calmness and not reacting emotionally has stuck with Ryan throughout his management career, as this skillset is so crucial when you are leading a team. His career journey started in Guelph after graduating, where he spent a year in Guelph working at the Guelph Business Enterprise Centre as a youth business advisor helping folks under 30 start businesses. Ryan headed out of the Royal City after a year and moved to Toronto to work in politics at Queen’s Park. After a few other career positions, he now lives in Burlington with his family and his currently working for Sales Force.

“Working in tech and going to Sales Force was the greatest career change that I made. The company was looking for people with software experience, and I didn’t have any. However, I had an MBA and football experience. The hiring team knew that given my experience, I was coachable, was tough and can stick it out during tough times.”

A challenge that Ryan had to overcome during his university days happened during his 3rd year as a Gryphon. He dislocated his elbow and was on the sideline for the entire season. It was this moment and this situation that acted as a reminder that there are limitations with football and Ryan had to make sure to focus on what could happen after football, career wise.

Ryan started an organization on campus called ACE, the Association of Collegiate Entrepreneurs.

“There is no time in your life that there was so much progress and optimism as when you are in university. And I don’t know if you appreciate it when you are in school, or if you recognize it,

but I hope students learn to understand the extent of how powerful and special the time of university is. You have an option to make yourself better and make your mark. The feeling I had at the University of Guelph is that anything is possible.”

The opportunities within university and especially at the U of G and the football program can really change a person’s life. When chatting about why the U of G is so special, Ryan noted 3 of his favourite things:

1) Environment – I just love the campus, and it is my goal to go back and teach. There is nothing like a fall day walking down Winegard (A path through the U of G campus)

2) Football – the facilities. It is the coolest university football team in Canada. Being a part of this team is a fantastic opportunity for players with all the resources.

3) Rich Tradition of Success- Many alumni are so supportive of the program

Thank you, Ryan for chatting with us and we look forward to seeing you wear your Gryphon swag proudly at a game in the 2022 season.



Pictured left to right: Charlie, Rhonda, Scarlett, Ryan



Pictured left to right: Ryan and his daughter Scarlett

Tweet of the Month:

The tweet of the month goes to Doug Pflug, the creator of the Gryphons Lair Twitter account.

Doug used this account to highlight events and news within the Gryphon Football Program and we cannot thank him enough for his continuous dedication to help elevate our program. Thank you, Doug for your support and we wish you all the best in retirement!



Gryphons Lair
@GryphonsLair

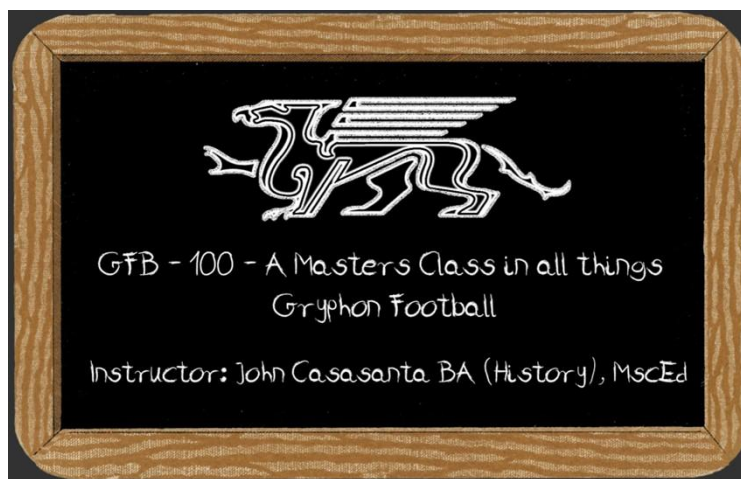


Hey #GryphonNation as you know I'm retiring at the end of semester & moving to Boblo Island. This twitter account will no longer be updated. Please go to @GryphonFB for all news. It's been a pleasure sharing my #GryphonPride with you #GoGryphonsGo #AlwaysAGryphon



2:30 PM · Mar 9, 2022 · Twitter Web App

Gryphon History Lesson:



Welcome to GFB - 100. I am your instructor John Casasanta, your resident Gryphon Football historian. GFB -100 is a master's class in Gryphon Football 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 Gryphon Football. Don't hesitate to contact me with any of your own facts or stats to add to this segment each month. Please forward any information, stat, story to me at jcasasan@uoguelph.ca. The monthly goal is that you find this section informative, and I look forward to sharing with you all. So, without further ado let's begin.

This month's lesson is part 2 of a 4-part series of the greatest comebacks in Gryphon Football history. When researching these games, one constant had stood out over all others - these comebacks all led to an appearance in the Yates Cup. I hope you enjoy reading this series as much as I enjoyed putting it together. Mr. Nigel Downer, 2000 WR Graduation Class, please focus on the discussion, stop playing the class clown. Where will these hijinks and shenanigans get you in life? What do you want to be a stand-up comic or something? Starring in numerous podcasts and television commercials? Come on man, act appropriately and learn something while you're here.

Our series shifts and now focuses on the 2007 Gryphons. Coming off a 2-6 record in the 2006 season that saw the Gryphons lose some very close games, that season's record was not indicative to the talent level of this young and exciting program. Although 2006 was not a successful year with regards to the regular season record, several impactful and program changing events occurred coming into this season. Number one, the Gryphons had promoted full time assistant coach, Grey Cup Champion, 7-year CFLer and former Gryphon All Canadian, Kyle Walters, to the Head Coach position. As Head Coach, Kyle was able to lock down one of the most promising recruits in the province, Guelph's own Nick Fitzgibbon. Nick was a 2006 OUA Rookie of the Year, 2-time All Canadian and newly named Honour Jersey award winner. Some may also argue that the influx of Niagara-born players starting in 2006 also contributed to the excitement surrounding the Gryphons but that's another story altogether.

With 2006 in the rearview mirror, the Gryphons were poised to make some noise throughout the 2007 season. We were a little slow coming out of the gate, dropping the first week match up to Ottawa. Week 2 wasn't much better losing to Queen's. Maybe all the excitement was unwarranted, but this group kept it together and worked harder each week. The season's first win came in week 3 with a lambasting of York 47-7. Things got really interesting the following week when, as Dudley Brown would say, "the Purple Bastards" pulled into town for Homecoming. In front of 10,000 screaming Gryphon fans, the young upstart Gryphons ran over the Mustangs, pulling out all the stops, scoring on a fake field goal and riding a hot Special Teams Unit to a 31-17 victory.

Suddenly, the Gryphons were 2-2 and living up to the promise of this exciting young team. Week 5 saw us go above 500 with a win against Waterloo, but then fall to 500 with a loss to Laurier. Week 7 saw the Gryphons avenge the loss to Windsor from 2006 and clinch a spot into the playoffs for the first time since 1997. In week 8 the Gryphons lost to McMaster by a rouge scored with no time left. The final score was McMaster 37, Guelph 36. Setting up the rematch in the first round of the playoffs, the Gryphons would start their trek to hosting the 100th Yates Cup.

When looking back on this season Kyle Walters recalls a very talented, young hard-working team. This team focused on changing the game with their special teams play and focused on keeping things simple and having fun while doing it. In that first playoff game vs. McMaster, the special teams were a factor. The Gryphons ran back-to-back successful fakes beating McMaster in front of their home crowd and about 30 top recruits, many of whom chose to come to Guelph the following season. The final score Guelph 25, McMaster 21. The road to fulfillment began at McMaster and was now moving to Kitchener, Waterloo where the Laurier Golden Hawks awaited.

Laurier had been one of the top teams in the country with 5 Yates Cup appearances in the past seven years. The crowd was hostile and were ready for a Laurier victory. Early in the game the Gryphons' inexperience in the playoffs seemed to be a factor, as Laurier methodically scored on their first 4 drives of the game, taking an early 24-0 lead. No matter what they did, Laurier could do no wrong as everything was working in their favour. As for the Gryphons, nothing seemed to be working. Coach Walters remembers whispering to then Defensive coordinator Bill Brown, "this could get ugly, if we don't do something they may score 100 points on us." Ian Noble, Laurier's QB, had started the game 10 for 10 and didn't throw an incomplection until the 2nd quarter. The Gryphon Defense started to come to life, making things a little tougher each series. As the 1st half neared the end, Laurier had put together one more drive. Again, marching down the field methodically, but this time the Gryphon Defense responded and forced the Golden Hawks to kick a last second field goal, looking to go into the half up 27-0. What Laurier didn't know along with their obnoxious and rowdy crowd was that first-year receiver Jedd Gardner, a Bachelor of Commerce student from Niagara Falls, was lightning in a bottle. As the FG attempt sailed wide, Jedd caught the missed kick and returned it for a 114-yard TD setting a national record that still stands today. This one play was a 10-point swing in favour of the Gryphons and the start of one of the greatest comebacks in Gryphon history.

As I gathered information for this lesson, I was fortunate enough to speak to both Kyle Walters and Nick Fitzgibbon about this game and their memories of the half time. Both said the same thing, "there was a calmness in the dressing room." The message relayed to the team was "hey let's make a few changes on offence, let's fly around and hit everything that moves and most importantly let's have fun playing in the second half." With that simple philosophy, the Gryphons came out in the second half and put together one fun series after another. Just like the first half where Laurier could do no wrong, the Gryphons adopted this same style of play. Everything began to work, a simple off-tackle run to Fitzzy turned into a 60-yard TD run. Gryphon QB, Justin Dunk was key factor in leading the comeback over the Golden Hawks. Every time Fitz or Dunk touched the ball good things happened. Fitzgibbon added 3 more TDs to his total of 4 TDs on the day. Dunk let his feet take over the game alluding Laurier defenders with skill and ease, the overall team speed of the Gryphons was too much for Laurier to handle in the second half. As quickly as we were down 24 points, we scored 38 points and were now ahead 38 – 24. We had scored 38 unanswered points, and when the out-of-town scores were announced and Western was beating Ottawa a realization came over every Gryphon, if we hold on and Western holds on, we will host the Yates Cup for the very first time in the school's history.

But remember, we were young and inexperienced, and Laurier was a veteran filled program with a National Championship under their belt. This group wasn't going to go away that easily. Laurier put together a drive and closed the gap to within one score with only a few minutes left in the game. A Gryphon fumble had given Laurier a chance and put them in a position to complete their own comeback. With 30 seconds left and on 3rd down, Ian Noble looked to connect with Andy Baechler for the potential tying score, but the pass was knocked down by safety Jamie Shaw. Allowing the Gryphons to complete the comeback and defeat Laurier 38-31 in front of 3000 stunned Laurier fans and just about 1500 ecstatic Gryphon faithful. It was truly an unprecedented turn of events.

With the Gryphons securing the win, the following week would make history as Guelph would host Western in the 100th Yates Cup Championship. When I asked Kyle about this game and especially this ending, he said one thing stood out to him and that was that then Laurier Head Coach, Gary Jefferies, came onto the team bus before heading back to Guelph and in the midst of celebration, declaring what we knew and what everyone in the OUA needed to prepare for: "The Gryphons were a team on the rise and one not to ever take for granted. Congratulations!!!!". This game and comeback need to be recognized as a turning point in Gryphon Football history, once this happened the program had turned the corner and was considered a legitimate contender throughout the OUA. It truly was a day to remember and a great day to be a Gryphon.

I want to thank Kyle Walters and Nick Fitzgibbon for their time and contribution to this month's lesson. Kyle and Nick were gracious enough to spend some time with me and helped me re-live this exciting November day back in 2007. What people may not realize is that Nick and Kyle came into Guelph together and then left together, where they partnered up again in Winnipeg, Kyle was Nick's running back coach in the CFL. But like the saying goes, 'Once a Gryphon, Always a Gryphon' and when asked to contribute to this lesson neither man hesitated. Nick Fitzgibbon was named Player of the Game with his 4 TD performance. I hope you all enjoyed today's class. I look forward to seeing you next time when we discuss comeback number 3 of 4 in the series of Gryphon's greatest comebacks. Class is dismissed.

SHOCKER: HAWKS BOUNCED

Underdog Gryphons rally back from 24 points down

By Cameron River
 Raccoon story
WATERLOO

Just how do you blow a 24-point lead?
 The anatomy of a meltdown that monumental will surely be dissected for months to come on Wilfrid Laurier's campus.

Perhaps Laurier's lead was too much, too soon, too easy.
 The Laurier Golden Hawks scored on their first four possessions before Hawks Chris Mamo's stray field goal attempt was returned 114 yards for a mangle by long-legged rookie Jedd Fitzgibbon.

His Guelph Gryphons staged one of the most astonishing comebacks in Ontario University Athletics playoff history: a 38-31 football semifinal victory on Saturday.

That defining moment midway through the second quarter was the beginning of the end for the slack-jawed Hawks.

In all, they surrendered the game's next 38 points, a mind-boggling feat for the 2-1 (worst) squad which was at or near the top of the conference in virtually every statistical category this season.

Think that's bad? The Ontario Goo-Gooes watched their reviously impeccable season go down in flames as they fell 1-6 to the upstart Western Mustangs in the league's other semifinal.

The two upsets mean the conference's sixth (Western) and fifth (Guelph) seeds will be in for the league championship, the Yates Cup, Saturday at Guelph's Alumni Stadium.

"Laurier came out and roared us in the mouth," said Gryphons tailback Nick Fitzgibbon who rambled for 178 yards and four touchdowns.

GUELPH 38, LAURIER 31

Gryphons: Touchdowns by Nick Fitzgibbon (4) and Jedd Gardner (1); five converts and a field goal by Rob Mavor
 Hawks: Touchdowns by Ryan Lynch (3) and Josh Bishop (1); four converts and a field goal by Chris Mamo

Fitzgibbon, a second-year sociology major from Parisville, called Gardner's monster TD return "the spark that lit the fire."

Unless you count missed tackles on returns, the Gryphons (4-4) didn't rely on any glaring Laurier errors to stage their rally.

The Hawks' offence simply wandered into a deep freeze while Laurier's defence surly tired of chasing slippery Guelph quarterback Justin Dunk from sideline to sideline on virtually every play.

Laurier's pivot Ian Noble, who completed his first 30 passes and just 56 per cent of them thereafter, gave a big struggle afterwards.

"(The Gryphons) were really prepared for us. They played a great game. All the credit to them," he said. "They stepped in. They had a bit of a gut-check. That returned (missed) field goal was a big momentum swing."

Head coach Gary Jeffries took some solace knowing his Hawks threatened to tie late in the game before a 219-fans at University Stadium.

After Laurier's tailback Ryan Lynch scored his third



Guelph Gryphons' Nick Fitzgibbon tears through the Laurier Golden Hawks defence. Fitzgibbon ran for 178 yards and four touchdowns.



Did you Know?

Did you know that last year's Football Gala raised over \$42,000 for the program? This fundraising event supports the Gryphon Football program, student-athlete scholarships, team

events and our Football Alumni Advancement initiatives. We hope you can join us on [April 22nd, 2022](#).

POP Feature:

Did you know that our amazing Gryphon BBQ was handmade by one of our previous Gryphon families? Darrell and Zack Korol (Father and Brother of former Gryphon Linebacker, [Luke Korol](#)) purchased the original trailer in July 2015. They custom built the Gryphon BBQ using their own welding expertise in July 2015.

The BBQ uses charcoal and includes a very large cooking area and a rotisserie. Many of our famous hamburgers, hot dogs and sausages have been lovingly cooked on this awesome BBQ, but our tailgate is most famous for the Homecoming Pig Roast! Traditionally, Gryphon Dads, and friends have stayed up all night to prepare, baste and tend to this special feast.

The custom trailer also includes an industrial sized cooler and trailer hitch. You can't miss that it was made special for our Gryphons because of the football helmet on the front and the custom Gryphon cutouts on the sides.

We are so lucky to be able to continue to use this one-of-a-kind BBQ. The Korol family was also responsible for bringing the famous RV. Thank-you to the Korol Family for helping to take our tailgates to the next level!!

-Andrea Lack
POP Co-Chair



Pictured Left to Right: Christopher, Christine, Luke, Darrell, Jacob and Zack

Gryphons Gone Pro:

This month's Gryphons' Gone Pro is Nick FitzGibbon. After having a standout career with the Gryphons, with setting 8 school records, and being a two-time All Canadian, FitzGibbon went on to sign as an undrafted free agent by the Winnipeg Blue Bombers in 2011.

We are exciting to be celebrating Nick at our Virtual Gala on April 22nd as our Honour Jersey Award Recipient.

Congratulations, Nick!



Pictured left to right: Nick FitzGibbon and Ryan Sheahan

#NextGryphon:

Congratulations to the incoming recruits that have committed to the program. We look forward to seeing you on the field for the 2022 season!

NAME	POSITION	HOMETOWN
Gianni Green	DB	Brampton, Ontario
Robbie Keyes-Wilson	DL	Mississauga, Ontario
Mitchel Schechinger	OL	Mississauga, Ontario
Denver Beazley	LB	Waterdown, Ontario
Braeden MacDougall	LB	Windsor, Ontario
Max Barber	DL	Hamilton, Ontario

Training Talk:

As we progress through our offseason training, we have finally been able to safely and effectively string together several weeks of moderate to high intensity training coming off yet another layoff due to government regulations. As such, we found it pertinent to find out what our measurables were individually and as a team as a means for creating a baseline for the rest of our offseason training. Some names really jumped off the page, especially when compared to CFL Regional/National numbers, as well as some CFL numbers. This graphic that was shared by our social media accounts show the top 5 in each of the testing categories:

With these numbers, we have already adjusted certain aspects of our programming in preparation for our spring training camp at the end of the month. As the driving philosophy with training is always transferring to performance, and specifically game performance, I am eager to see how the speed and strength of our players looks despite missing one full month of training.

Further to this, as our incoming recruiting class continues to commit, I am pleased to see their numbers following our programs steadily increasing. The goal is to get these young men as prepared as possible to compete against their teammates for positions on the team this summer. As their new teammates have already been training, some for a number of years, it is pertinent that they get the best chance possible and jump on their teammates program to stay on track.

Finally, some fun: here is the [link](#) to a clip we shared on social media where we demonstrate some age appropriate exercises that the students at John Galt Public School can do during their workout club using bodyweight, bands, and med balls:

Save the Date:

Wildman Awards Ceremony – April 5th, 2022

Virtual Gala – April 22nd, 2022

Gryphon Football is excited to announce that on April 22, 2022, we will be hosting our 11th Annual Gryphon Football 'Virtual' Gala. This is a fundraising event in support of our Gryphon Football program, student-athlete scholarships, team events and our Football Alumni Advancement initiatives. We have a fantastic lineup of incredible speakers and awards this year; you will not want to miss this year's event.

Tickets are \$75 each and will include a tax receipt upon purchase. FOGF Gold members will receive a separate email invitation with code to redeem for 1 ticket per person. [Registration](#) for the event will close on April 21, 2022 at 11:59PM.

FOGF Memberships:

Interested in becoming an FOGF Member? There are three different tiers to our memberships: Red, Gold and Black. 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

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.