Gryphons' Lair Issue 87 April 2024

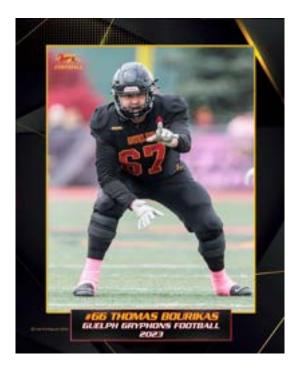
Greetings and welcome to the April issue of The Gryphons' Lair newsletter!

As the season approaches, our focus sharpens on preparation, strategy, and the collective effort to "Leave your Mark". Stay informed with team news and insights straight from the field, ensuring you're up to speed with all things Gryphon Football. Let's get ready for the season together.

Sit back, relax, and relish in the pages of Issue 87 of the Gryphons' Lair!



Inside The Locker Room - Player Perspective



Hey everyone! This is <u>Tommy Bourikas</u>, a 4th-year offensive lineman, writing to you from inside the locker room. The shared feeling among the guys right now is excitement. We have been in the gym and field house, lifting and running nonstop for the last 3 months. Coach Charette is helping us

become faster and stronger. Finally, we saw the fruits of our labor last Thursday when we had a joint practice with the Laurier Golden Hawks. After the practice, the guys noticed two things. Firstly, the work over the last 3 months has paid off. We were flying around, making plays on both sides of the ball. Secondly, we are becoming a team.



Integrated Practice vs Laurier

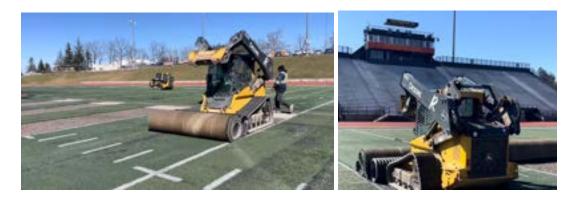
As a 4th-year player, I can confidently say this is the tightest I've seen the Gryphons. Coach Surya has given us new knowledge and confidence, and competing with the Yates Cup finalists this past Friday has proven it's paying off! The boys are fired up for this upcoming season and can't wait to fight and win on Saturdays. Lastly, before I sign off, from me and the whole team, thank you to all the alumni and fans for your unwavering support. It's time to put the Gryphons back on the map!

GO GRYPHONS!

Tommy Bourikas

Updates on Field and Scoreboard Construction

Construction is underway for a new field and an updated scoreboard. This upgrade is going to enhance our facilities even more. We can't wait to see our players taking on the new field! At this point in time, Ritchfield is finishing the fine grading and leveling. The shock pad will be installed next. Check out these behind-the-scenes photos.





Guelph Gryphons Bowl For Kids' Fundraiser

On Tuesday March 19th, Big Brothers Big Sisters Guelph organized a Guelph Gryphons Bowl For Kids' Fundraiser at Splitsville, Guelph. The Gryphon football players were thrilled to contribute to the event. Together, the Gryphons raised \$4,807 to support children and youth in the Guelph community!



Pictures include Players: Riley Brackenberry, Julian Lamundo, Nick Guardiero, Alex Gordon, Daniel Hocevar and Coach Alex Charette

He for She

On Tuesday evening, the Gordon S. Lang School of Business, School of Engineering and Gryphon Football hosted the 7th annual HeForShe gender equality event.

Saadia Muzaffar, founder of Tech Girls Canada and co-founder of Tech Reset Canada was the keynote speaker. Saadia is also an author and passionate advocate of responsible innovation,

decent work for everyone, and the prosperity of immigrant talent in STEM. Her keynote was thought-provoking and inspiring and looked at the intersections of business leadership, sports and inclusion. After the keynote, Dr. Julie Vale, School of Engineering, Mark Surya, Head Football Coach, and Kristina Kupferschmidt, a computing engineering PhD student continued the conversation, sharing their experiences and advice on how we all move forward as in this work and as allies.

Each year, HeForShe-inspired awards and scholarships are presented: the Gender Empowerment Scholarships, Ally Scholarship, and the Community Impact Award. This year's award recipients are Morgan Lunney, Katherine Haines, Yuha Khan and DENSO Manufacturing Canada.

Gender Empowerment Scholarship

Each year Stu and Kim Lang and the Angel Gabriel Foundation support two scholarships of \$5,000 each, to a female Lang business student and a female U of G engineering student who have demonstrated a positive impact and significantly contributed to empowering or reducing barriers for women and girls in the business and Engineering communities.

Read more about the recipients of the awards here.

Gryphons <u>Carter Islip</u> and <u>Miles La Foucade</u> The Award Winners and Stu Lang



The Gryphon Football team support He for She Coach Mark Surya taking questions

Combine Ready: 3 Things to Know About Kaine Stevenson

Note: Four Gryphons attended the 2024 CFL combine, with one of them being invited to the National CFL Combine: Kaine Stevenson.



It went exceedingly well for Kaine Stevenson on Friday at the University of Waterloo. The Guelph Gryphons' receiver played at his listed position and at running back at the CFL Invitational Combine and as the day got into its late stages, the five-foot-10, 207-pound, Windsor Ont. native was achieving separation on the field and in the eyes of the CFL personnel in attendance.

His name was already penciled in as one of the eight that would move on to Winnipeg next week for the CFL Combine presented by New Era (March 19-24). Then, in a late-day one-on-one against Regina defensive back Jackson Sombach (who also advanced to Winnipeg), Stevenson appeared to lose a step and went down in a heap.

Read more of the CFL article here.



Scott Murray and Kaine Stevenson at the National CFL Combine



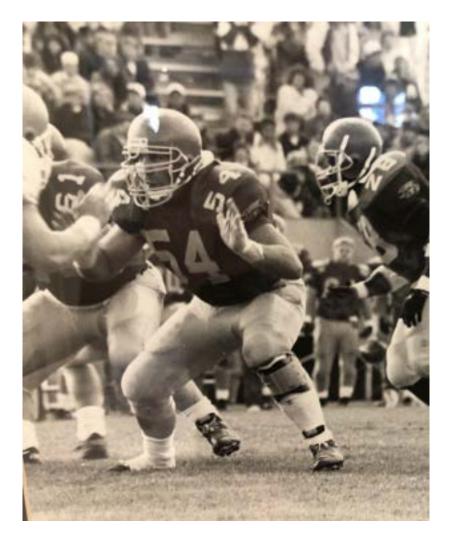
Gryphon Football Dual Athlete Wins Bronze Medal in Wrestling

<u>Mitchel Schechinger</u> plays Right Guard for the Gryphon Football team and also won a bronze medal at the Usport Wrestling championship held at UofG in the 125kg division. This dual sport athlete had a stellar end to the wrestling season. Congratulations Mitchel, your football family is incredibly proud of this achievement.



Frank Panos arrived at the University of Guelph in August of 1988 as a defensive end (DE). He stood at a lean 6'3 and weighed 248 lbs. He recalls his three-week training camp as grueling, with memories of climbing the stairs of East Residence with sore legs, attempting to sleep through his roommate Zonk's snoring.

After starting every game at defensive end in his rookie season, Guelph faced a challenge as four out of five starting offensive linemen graduated. Coach McNally summoned Frank for a meeting to propose a move to the offensive line. Frank responded, "Whatever is best for the team, coach." Soon, Panos became a part of the Herd, eventually reaching about 285 lbs. Frank cherished the brotherhood and friendships forged from playing on the offensive line, fostering lifelong connections with his fellow Herd players, whom he still keeps in touch with today.



In 1990, Frank was appointed captain, and he was part of the Yates Cup-winning team of 1992. Since his days at Guelph, Frank has been involved in coaching football. He has coached high school football since his playing days, spent a decade coaching CIS football, enjoyed 14 years coaching in the OVFL (winning 3 provincial championships with The Toronto Thunder), and presently serves as the defensive coordinator of the Sr. St. Michael's College Kerry Blues.

In addition to his coaching endeavors, Frank is engaged in real estate, property management, and investments. He resides in Toronto with his wife Tracy and their three children: Alexandra, Frank Jr., and Adele. A proud supporter of Gryphon football and a lifelong Gryphon himself, Frank remains an integral part of the great-looking Herd and a valued member of FOGF.



Frank Panos with fellow FOGF member Brian Cluff at a HERD gathering last season.



Meet Max Barber, a key player in the University of Guelph Gryphon Football program, standing out as a defensive tackle.



Currently in his second year pursuing a degree in Economics and Finance, Max wears number 95 and is swiftly making his mark on the field. His decision to join the Gryphons was influenced by several factors: a fondness for the city of Guelph, the strong academic support network led by individuals like Lindsay (Academic Coordinator), the quality of the athletic facilities, and positive feedback from high school friends who previously joined the program.

Hailing from Hamilton, ON, Max has now settled into his role on the team. Initially, transitioning into the university team was a mix of excitement and nervousness. However, connecting with other defensive line players and first-year teammates helped ease the transition, allowing him to fully embrace his new surroundings.



This year, Max's ambitions are team-focused. He aims to continue improving his skills and to be a dependable teammate, emphasizing the importance of unity and reliability. One of his standout memories so far has been the team gala, an event that celebrates the Gryphon Football community, bringing together current players and alumni in a meaningful way. For those considering joining the Gryphon Football team, Max offers some great advice: "Stay open to learning and remain true to yourself". Highlighting the importance of balance, he encourages future players to value their unique qualities alongside their athletic commitments.

As Max Barber progresses in his university football career, his journey reflects the values of the Gryphon Football program: commitment to both academic and athletic excellence, and the importance of community and personal growth. We are incredibly proud to have Max on the team!



Max Barber #95



This month's alumni spotlight is Bill Vastis, a former Gryphon who left a lasting legacy both on and off the football field. As a dedicated defensive end wearing number 68, Bill's journey with the University of Guelph Gryphon Football team is filled with memorable moments and pivotal experiences.

One of Bill's favorite memories on the field was a triumphant victory over Western in the critical 1996 playoff game, a match broadcasted on TV and played on Western's turf during the Yates Cup year. However, it's not just his achievements on the field that have stayed with him over the years. In 1995, Bill made a life-changing decision by asking his wife to marry him right on the football field, intertwining his personal milestones with his Gryphon football journey.

Despite the setback of not receiving the lineman of the year award at the 1995 banquet, a chance encounter with two fathers in the bathroom led to an unexpected mentorship in finance. Their encouragement and guidance prompted Bill to pursue a career in finance, marking the beginning of his successful 27-year journey as a senior portfolio manager.

Bill's perseverance and dedication to the team were ultimately recognized when he received the lineman of the year award in 1996, voted by his teammates. This accolade, after five years with the team, symbolized the respect and acknowledgment from his peers, marking a high point in his Guelph career.

Now, as an alumnus, Bill finds great joy in engaging with the Gryphon community through the annual scholarship awards. Alongside his wife, he has initiated a scholarship in his mother's name for female athletes, dubbed the Sotirea Grit Scholarship, to honor her memory and support student athletes. This initiative came to life just before the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside another scholarship aimed at providing financial aid to football players in need. His daughter, a University of Guelph commerce graduate, joined his wife in hosting these scholarships at the event, making it a family affair and continuing the legacy of giving back to the community.

Bill credits his time at Guelph with providing him not just a direction in life but also a sanctuary during one of his most challenging times—the loss of his mother. His journey from a Gryphon athlete to a mentor and active program alumnus is truly appreciated.

Brian Cluff, Bill Vastis and Pat Tracey Pose with the Yates Cup

Brent Dallimore, Chris Camboia and Bill Vastis rest between series

Brian Cluff, Jeremy Oxley, Chris Camboia, Brent Dallimore, Dave Gemin and Bill Vastis



FOGF member Dan Crabbe may be sitting short-stacked at the FOGF Charity Golf tournament, but lo and behold, his and Frank Tersigni's tireless efforts over the years have significantly contributed to FOGF's donations to various charities. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Dan and Frank for their unwavering dedication in supporting Gryphon Football and our local community. Your exemplary representation of our program is truly commendable.



FOGF and HERD Member Dan Crabbe Invites you to this year's Poker Tourney at the Football Pavilion on April 27th.



Welcome to GFB – 100. Welcome back to the April Edition of GHB-100. With that said it's time to get back to work. 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 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 Ontarion'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 Ontarion. If you see an image that you would like me to send, please contact me and I will be sure to send a larger image with better resolution to you, so with no further to do let's begin.

This month we are going to focus on the 2015 Yates Cup Championship season. Some may argue that the 2015 season started when the clock hit zero on the 2014 Yates Cup Championship at McMaster University. Head Coach Stu Lang instructed team photographer Kyle Rodriguez to snap a shot of the scoreboard. McMaster 20 Gryphons 15. The idea was lest we forget. The image of that scoreboard hung in the weight room as a reminder of what needed to be done during the off season.

April/May 2015 saw several Gryphons being recognized for their accomplishments and drafted to the CFL. Rob Farquharson was named the W.F. Mitchell Sportsman of the Year. Dan MacDonald, Cam Walker and Alex Charrette were all selected in the CFL Draft. None of these amazing accomplishments distracted the Gryphons from the mantra of 2015 "Go Beyond". The Captains had made winning the 2015 Yates Cup the team goal for the upcoming season and journey to complete this task had begun.

Training camp started with optimism, it was a veteran group, and the Gryphons were focused on nothing but winning the Yates Cup. The Gryphons opened their season with an impressive 78-7 road win over the Waterloo Warriors and the stage was set.

The Gryphons went 7-1 during the regular season and defeated Carleton in the OUA semifinal to set up the 2015 Yates Cup. Number 2 ranked Western would host the number 5 ranked Gryphons. Western was favoured coming into the game averaging 60+ points a game during the

regular season, but they had yet to play a team with a defense like the Gryphons. Western took a 14-3 lead into the half. But all was calm, Coach Lang simply asked his players; "Do you believe you can win this game?", repeatedly. Each time the answer was the same 'Yes Coach" and each time it was a little louder. Led by Yates Cup MVP, Presidents and Dalt White Trophy winner John Rush the Gryphons defeated Western 23 -17 with a last-minute goal line stance to secure the win and the 108th Yates Cup Championship.

The following week the Gryphons hosted the Montreal Carabins in the Mitchell Bowl, hopes were high, but the Gryphons fell short of the Vanier Cup with a loss to Montreal ending a magical run and one of the greatest seasons In Gryphon history. 2015 was an amazing season that was capped off with the Yates Cup Champions. These Gryphons truly went Beyond and were led by a coach with true vision and knack for predicting the future. Coach Lang promised a Yates Cup Championship and the 2015 Gryphons went BEYOND and delivered. Class is dismissed.



This month's Gryphon Gone Pro is Jared Beeksma. Jared Beeksma went on to play as a linebacker for the Hamilton Tiger Cats after his time at the University of Guelph. Beeksma's journey from collegiate standout to CFL professional exemplifies his dedication and skill. We are so proud of Beeksma for his blend of talent and character.



DID YOU KNOW?



Gryphon Football: OUA Announces 2024 Football Schedule

GUELPH, Ont. – On Wednesday, March 27, 2024, Ontario University Athletics (OUA) released the 2024 football schedule. The Gryphon football team will officially kick off the 2024 season on a Saturday afternoon in late August, with the Carleton Ravens set to visit the University of Guelph's Alumni Stadium on Saturday, August 24, 2024 to kick off the new OUA football season.

Home game #1: Saturday, August 24, 2024 | 1pm (vs Carleton) Away game: Saturday, August 31, 2024 | 7pm (@ Toronto) Away game: Saturday, September 7, 2024 | 1pm (@ Laurier) Home game #2: Saturday, September 14, 2024 | 1pm (vs McMaster) Away game: Saturday, September 21, 2024 | 3pm (@ Queen's) Home game #3: Saturday, September 28, 2024 | 1pm (vs Waterloo) ** Homecoming ** Home game #4: Saturday, October 5, 2024 | 1pm (vs Windsor) Away game: Friday, October 11, 2024 | 7pm (@ York) BYE WEEK IN WEEK #9 (Saturday, Oct. 19)

Oct. 26 - OUA quarterfinals Nov. 2 - OUA semi's Nov. 9 - Yates Cup Nov. 16 - Uteck Bowl (OUA @ AUS) Nov. 23 - Vanier (in Kingston)

The non-combatants for the Gryphons during the 2024 football regular season are the Western Mustangs and Ottawa Gee-Gees.

2024 Gryphon football season tickets and single-game tickets will go on sale on June 1, 2024. (online at <u>gryphons.ca/tickets</u>)

For more information on the rest of the 2024 OUA football schedule, visit oua.ca.

The Brotherhood of the Travelling Jersey: An Alumni Connection Across Borders

In the vast landscape of sports, the significance of a jersey often transcends its material form. It becomes a vessel of memories, a link to the past, and a symbol of camaraderie among

teammates. Such is the story behind a particular Gryphon jersey that embarked on an unexpected journey spanning decades and continents, weaving together the lives of former players and kindling the flames of nostalgia.

The tale begins with David MacNeil, a former football player for the University of Guelph Gryphons, whose journey with the team in the early '90s was cut short by recurring injuries. In a heartfelt gesture, he was entrusted with a few older jerseys during a meeting with Kyle Walters, a pivotal member of Gryphons football history.

Among these jerseys was a blank canvas reminiscent of the one MacNeil wore during his playing days in 1991. Inspired by nostalgia and a desire to honor the legacy of the team, MacNeil embarked on a mission to reunite the jersey with its rightful owner, a member of the 1996 Yates Cup team.

Enter Jonathan Coyne, a former Gryphons player who proudly wore the number 50 jersey during the memorable season of '96. Little did he know that years later, a serendipitous connection would be forged through a jersey of his past.

In a digital exchange facilitated by mutual acquaintance Bill Brown, the stage was set for a reunion of sorts—one that transcended borders and bridged the gap between past and present. Coyne, now residing in St. Charles, Illinois, found himself eagerly anticipating the return of a relic from his football days.

MacNeil's email, brimming with nostalgia, struck a chord with Coyne, who graciously accepted the offer to reclaim his piece of Gryphons history. What followed was a heartwarming exchange between two alumni, reminiscing about the camaraderie and triumphs of their time on the field.

Despite geographical distance and the passage of time, the bond forged through shared experiences on the gridiron remained unbroken. Coyne provided his address, extending gratitude for the opportunity to once again hold the jersey.

As plans for the jersey's return took shape, both MacNeil and Coyne harbored hopes of a future reunion, perhaps at a Gryphons game where memories could be shared and bonds strengthened. For Coyne, the prospect of one day attending a game with his son, potentially as both alumni and student, held a special allure—a testament to the enduring legacy of Gryphons football.

It's stories like these—of connections forged, memories preserved, and legacies honored—that remind us of the profound impact of Guelph athletics. The journey of a jersey, from the halls of Alumni Stadium to the shrine of a fellow Gryphon to the walls of an office in suburban Illinois, serves as a testament to the enduring spirit of camaraderie that defines the Gryphon community.

Next month we will continue this story but from the eyes of Jonathon Coyne himself. Stay tuned for another trip down memory lane.



David MacNeil and Jonathan Coyne Connect Through the #50



There is so much going on over the next few months and we hope that you will save the date and commit to these events.

FOGF Spring Camp - Red Black Inter-Squad Game - Friday, April 26th, 2024 12-2 PM @ Alumni Stadium - BBQ to follow supported by POP and Harvey's Guelph. Everyone Welcome. First chance to see the new field and the new spirited Gryphons under the helm of Head Coach Mark Surya.



FOGF Poker Tourney - Saturday, April 27th, 2024 6 PM @ Red Zone - Gryphon Football Pavilion

The FOGF Charity Poker tournament is quickly approaching. The event is set to be held on Saturday April 27th, 2024 at the Red Zone of the Gryphon Football Pavilion. Doors will open at 6:00 pm and the tournament will begin at 6:30 pm sharp. Register at the door for \$40. Food is included! Calling all Alumni, Friends and Parents.



FOGF Endzone Party - Toronto Argos host Hamilton Ticats - Friday, May 31st, 2024 7 PM @ Alumni Stadium

The Boatman's preseason match scheduled for May 31st will take place at the University of Guelph, marking the third consecutive season the team has chosen this venue for their training camp in 2024. Although tickets are not currently available for purchase, we are delighted to reveal that FOGF Gold Members will receive invitations to the FOGF North Endzone Party. Stay tuned as a dedicated email will be sent out to FOGF Gold members in the forthcoming weeks, allowing them to secure their spots for this exclusive and intimate event.



Gryphon Alumnus Royce Metchie waves to FOGF members in the endzone pregame in 2023. FOGF members John Casasanta and Nick Gallo caught the action form the FOGF Endzone Party

FOGF Alumni Awards Luncheon - Saturday, June 1st, 2024 12 PM @ Craft Kitchen and Ale House (The Old Gryph's Sports Lounge above the arenas)

We are delighted to extend an invitation to you for the upcoming FOGF Alumni Awards Lunch, where we will honour two exceptional members of our Gryphon Football community: Dan Wicklum and Dudley Brown.

Honour Jersey Award

Dr. Dan Wicklum LB - Played 1984-1987

Dr. Dan Wicklum's impact on Gryphon Football resonates with excellence and achievement. His remarkable tenure as a linebacker significantly bolstered our team's success. Dan's leadership, exemplified by his recognition as the U of Guelph Athlete of the Year in 1988, alongside his numerous accolades such as the OUAA Allstar, WF Mitchell award, Don Cameron award, and inclusion in the 1980s Team of the Decade, underscores his unwavering dedication and skill on the field.

Beyond Gryphon Football, Dan's illustrious career soared to new heights when he was selected as a first-round draft pick by the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, ultimately culminating in a Grey Cup Championship in 1998. This achievement further solidified his status among football's elite.

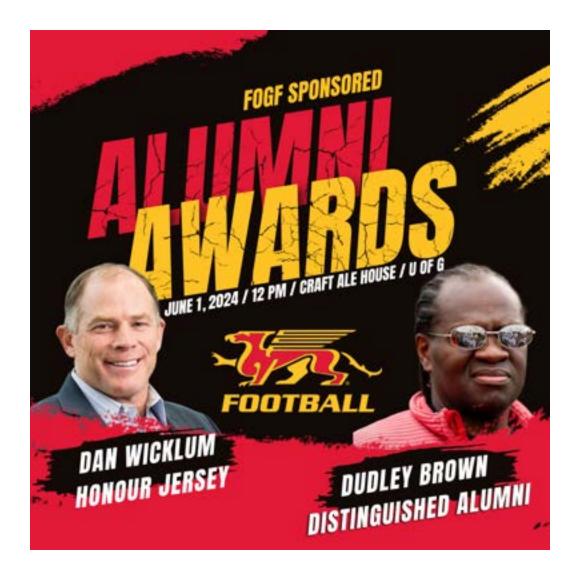
Distinguished Alumni Award

Dr. Dudley Brown DB - Played 1984-1988

Dr. Dudley Brown's contributions to education and scholarship are unparalleled. His recent achievement of earning his Ph.D. in Christian Theology from McMaster University, with a groundbreaking thesis on "The African American Pastor and his Affect on the Civil Rights Movement in the United States," underscores his commitment to exploring complex issues at the intersection of faith and social justice. Dudley's extensive career as an educator, principal and coach, along with his numerous publications and community involvement, reflect his passion for making a difference in the lives of others.

Please join us in celebrating the remarkable achievements of Dan Wicklum and Dudley Brown at the FOGF Alumni Awards Lunch. Tickets are available soon. An email will be sent in the coming weeks. Save the Date

Let us come together as a community to honor and celebrate the enduring legacies of these two magnificent Gryphons.



FOGF Golf Tourney - Friday, July 19th, 2024 12 PM @ Guelph Lakes Golf and Country Club



If you are in a position to help the golf tourney with sponsorship, prizes, gifts in kind, hole activations etc. please contact Bill Brown



FINAL REMINDER: The FOGF Swag email has been dispatched to all FOGF Members. Originally, the cutoff date for orders was March 31, 2024. However, I've decided to extend it to April 6, 2024, granting existing members ample time to place their orders and welcoming new members to join and partake in this year's FOGF Swag benefits. If you're keen on becoming a FOGF member and availing yourself of the coupons for the FOGF store, which will be closing on April 6th, kindly contact Bill Brown.



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<u>here</u>. For questions about the membership, please contact Bill Brown at <u>brownw@uoguelph.ca</u>





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.

Bill Brown YCC '96 '15 FOGF Membership Coordinator Proud FOGF Gold Member since 2017 Gryphon Football