

## Aurora Barbarians running at full capacity and can't be more excited

All systems are a go as the Aurora Barbarians are excited to be back to running full competitions and leagues this year.

"We are already at 175 registered members, which is ahead of normal years around this time," said co-president/treasurer of the Barbarians Khalil Ajram.

"That's without high school rugby really starting back. A lot of our registrations are under the age of 14. We have lots of new coaches coming in. We have over 30 coaches again this year. Overall we can't wait to get back on the field April 12."

Registrations are currently open until positions are filled. Ajram said U14, U12, and U10 teams have almost reached capacity.

This past year, Ajram indicated the pathway to rugby has changed. Previously, players would register for the sport beginning at the age of 16.

Now, players are registering for rugby under the age of 10. Last year, the Barbarians saw 30 U10 players in the system, the highest the club has ever seen.

Since the loss of the sport over the course of the pandemic, the Barbarians have seen the increase in demand. Last year, 80 players participated in the Aurora Sports Dome, running drills and buying into the club's latest strategies.

Hopefully, with the help of the return of high school rugby, more players will register into club level rugby.

In club-level rugby, there are, of course, unique incentives.

The Barbarians are preparing to send players to Tampa Bay, Fla., for the Tropical 7s this year.

The Barbarians, who are in partnership with other local clubs, are sending six teams under the name "Canadian Misfits." Across all four U18 girls' teams, one boys' team and one senior men's team attending, over 30 players locally from Aurora will be travelling; the most the club has ever sent abroad.

Locally, Ajram said the club is also gearing up to host a major tournament in Markham, July 2.

"We're hosting The Great North 7's, on July 2 at Fletchers Field in Markham. That tournament there is a one-day tournament and will have over 70 teams from across Ontario," Ajram said.

"We already have four Barbs teams entered."

As rugby continues to pick back up where it left off and more, Ajram said the club is also going to introduce another program for players 18 and up.

Working in collaboration with the Town of Aurora, the Barbs are offering the Mixed Ability program.

Inspired by other pilot clubs, the program is a non-contact league, available to anyone of all abilities to promote inclusion in the game. Ajram hopes to have 50 registrants for the program.

The message of this program is clear: rugby is for everyone.

Interested in registering or to contact the Barbarians? Please head to [abrfc.ca/](http://abrfc.ca/).

**By Robert Belardi**