

## Ex-Barbarian turns to introducing rugby earlier to new generations



**By Jake Courtepatte**

When the Toronto Barbarians merged with the Aurora Rugby Football Club in 2002 to create the Aurora Barbarians, the team brought its history with it.

A piece of that history was recognized last month at a ceremony in Scarborough, when Ian MacMillan joined four others as the 2014 class of inductees into the Rugby Ontario Hall of Fame.

MacMillan had an illustrious career with the Toronto club, playing for fourteen seasons with the Barbarians in the seventies and eighties while wearing the 'C' for eight of them. It was under his leadership that the Barbarians won back-to-back Ontario Sevens titles in 1980 and 1981.

He also made dozens of provincial and national appearances during this time, highlighted by serving as Canada's captain in 1983 - the first Ontario-born player to do so.

MacMillan is no longer as involved with the club as he was during his long-time membership, calling his participation 'on the periphery' as opposed to life-long club members.

One of the activities he still has a hand in is fundraising, continuing to help the organization raise money through non-profit means.

He now serves as the Chairman of the Barbarians' Black Sheep Fund, supporting the Barbarians financially rather than athletically.

The main contributors to the fund are past club members, operating on what MacMillan calls a 'pay it forward' basis.

'There's a charitable component in it,' said MacMillan. 'It's a good thing. It's an opportunity for past members to donate, in essence, back to a club they grew up with.'

As an organization with over six decades behind it, one comes into it with a built-in sense of heritage.

'You trained on Tuesday and Thursday, you played on Saturday' so you ended up hanging out with a bunch of guys and growing up with them,' said MacMillan. 'So it's a way to give back.'

While these alumni may have experienced rugby from an early age and at a high level, many young Canadians are not given the same exposure.

A major component of the Black Sheep Fund is raising money for junior player development. For MacMillan and those working with the Barbarians, the goal is to mimic our Canadian 'hockey culture' - get players involved at a young age.

'They usually get introduced to the game in high school,' said MacMillan. 'Rugby's a culture that exists in many other countries, and it's a growing one in Canada, so we're trying to get them involved at a younger age.'

Still in its growing years, rugby in Canada has not yet been sanctioned as a professional sport as it has in other countries around the world.

So, as with any other privately-funded sport, there are always dues to be paid out of pocket, which could act as a deterrent to a young athlete looking to give the sport a try.

MacMillan said the Black Sheep Fund could be used for means such as coaching staff hires, winter training, and even sending players to provincial and national events - all which play a role in player development.

'Those are the kind of things that we take an initiative on, giving people the opportunity that they wouldn't have otherwise.'  
For more information on the fund, visit [www.aurorabarbarians.com](http://www.aurorabarbarians.com).