

Caledon athletes in pre-season gridiron training ? Football getting ready to move outdoors for spring session

By Brian Lockhart

They're tough, they're fast, and they take a thumping and do it all over again on the next play.

With the start of summer league football just more than a month away, gridiron athletes are working through the pre-season with indoor training and plan to move outdoors in a couple of weeks.

With no established summer football organizations in Caledon, local players have the option to move to other centres with many choosing to sign on with the Orangeville Outlaws of the Ontario Minor Football League.

Many players go to other centres with experience from playing football at the high school and Caledon has a lot of talent that hone their skills in the fall session at the collegiate level.

For Mayfield Secondary School student Zach Pembry, football was a sport he was interested in playing after being a fan and watching professional teams on television.

"My Dad looked around and found out about Orangeville, so I joined up," he said of his start playing with the bantam team.

He now is a second-year Varsity Division player and slots in as a wide receiver on the squad after switching to an offensive position after starting his career on defence as a cornerback.

"I talked to the coach and said I wanted to try offence," he said, adding he likes playing both. "I like to catch the ball and follow through. I've been successful on both sides."

One thing that draws players to football is the excitement of playing a contact sport and the fact that they rely on each other to make a cohesive unit that can compete.

"I like the hitting," Zach said, "I like my teammates and there is a brotherhood about it."

Brennan Annett is another Mayfield student who plays the fall season in high school then sweats it out in the summer heat with the Orangeville team.

Brennan is now in his third season with the Outlaws and his second year with the Junior Varsity Division squad.

"My friends told me I should play," he said of how he got started in the game. "I thought it was a good sport. I like watching it."

"My friend already played here and told me it was a good league," he added, explaining why he likes the summer league. "I had a good start in high school football. It's off season, so it's a good way to stay in shape."

The Grade 10 student specializes in playing on the defensive squad rotating between cornerback and safety positions.

"I think this is going to be a really good year," he said of how his JV is looking in the pre-season. "We've got a really good team."

The Outlaws had a stellar 2013 season, sending two teams to the OMFL championships and returning with bantam title.

The OMHL has expanded this season with 63 registered teams in six divisions that hail from 20 different centres.

The Club started their pre-season training program in the dome at ACTS Fitness more than a month ago.

Five divisions of players who will be taking part in the 2014 summer football season were going through the paces of agility training during their first outing as a club since the winter football camp.

For the first few sessions, most players didn't even touch a football. This was more about conditioning and getting back into a football frame of mind.

After winning the championship last season, many bantam players who were on that team have now graduated to the junior varsity level, so that may be the squad to watch this year.

The Ontario Minor Football League has expanded for the second year in a row. New teams include squads from Scarborough, Oshawa, Newmarket and Clarington.

The Orangeville squad draws players from a wide area; from Mayfield Road in the south, east to Highway 50, and as far west and north as players want to come as no towns in those areas field teams.

The season is scheduled to get underway May 17.



Wide receiver Zach Pembry catches a pass during pre-season training in the dome at ACTS Fitness. Pembry is one of several Caledon football players who compete in summer league football with the Orangeville Outlaws. Photo by Brian Lockhart