

Wolfpack teams have high hopes for season ahead

By **Jim Stewart**

There's a distinct chill in the Fall air on Labour Day 2024. The CFL's classic rivalries, pitting the Argos against the Ticats at Tim Hortons Field, and the Blue Bombers battling the Roughriders at sold-out Mosaic, are in the consciousness of Canadian sports fans. Family barbecues and return trips from the cottage are completed. Within this Long Weekend context, thousands of students in Caledon are preparing to return to school.

The convergence of these early-September traditions is a signal that high school football season is right around the corner.

As the final day of Wolfpack training camp wound down at the East Caledon high school on Wednesday afternoon, Robert F. Hall Senior Football Head Coach Jonathan Beresford surveilled the situation on the field and liked what he saw as over 85 athletes vied for positions on the school's junior and senior football teams.

The veteran coach explained how Hall has transitioned from a Tier 2 football program to a Tier 1 program that lost a heartbreaker to Suzuki Secondary School at the ROPSAA Tier 1 Finals last Fall.

?We won two Tier 2 championships as we re-grew our football program. We went to the Tier 1 Finals last year with very few guys having played summer football. Heading into this season, we had 37 guys who played in the Brampton Bulldogs or Peel Panthers programs. We're building a positive relationship with both clubs and now our graduating players are being recruited by OUA football teams.?

Two of Beresford's senior players spoke glowingly about the leadership of their Head Coach.

Grade 12 Centre and Co-Captain Tyler Fagan elaborated on Coach Beresford's qualities.

?He's a great guy. Really motivational. He lives an hour away from our school, but he's always here ready to lead us and help us be better players.?

Grade 12 Linebacker and Co-Captain Mason Burke amplified his teammate's remarks.

?Coach loves the sport. We'd run through a wall for him. He's taught us to be there for the group.?

Both senior student-athletes also appreciate playing sports at Robert F. Hall Catholic Secondary School.

Fagan attributed the success of the Wolfpack's athletics program to quality of coaching.

?Our coaches are so dedicated and they know what they're talking about. The players respect their knowledge.?

Burke offered a broader perspective to explain the success of the sports teams at Hall: ?It's a winning culture, not just at the school, but in the Region. The sports culture is really good in Peel. You're heavily involved in sports from the day you're born in Peel.?

Fagan, a leader on the Wolfpack's offensive line, embraces not only the sports culture at Hall, but the responsibilities that come with his pivotal position.

?There's always pressure at Centre. I make the calls regarding defensive formations. I really like to put a [defensive lineman] on his back.?

Burke, a rangy linebacker and Wolfpack hockey player in the Winter season, agreed with his teammate's love of the hard hitting connected with football.

?I love the contact. At linebacker, you have to know what you're doing, too, and call plays. It's about building community with the guys on the field and the guys on the whole team.?

Both Captain Burke and Captain Fagan have set lofty goals for the 2024 football team. Burke feels the Wolfpack ?needs to get back to the Finals and we need to get better so we have a better result this season in the championship game.?

Fagan reflected on last year's narrow loss and offered a recipe of better success: ?Everyone needs to focus on the playbook. Everyone needs to be focused. We need to execute better and everyone has to trust their teammate?that he knows his routes and responsibilities.?

Burke and Fagan's outstanding focus during our sideline conversation, with almost 100 senior and junior football players and coaches going through drills as a backdrop, is a testament to Coach Beresford's lofty expectations at this year's training camp.

Beresford did his own professional coaching development this summer.

?I attended the UT Training Camp as a Guest Coach. The Blues are becoming a much better program. They beat the Waterloo Warriors to start the season. We have at least six guys this year that are competing for OUA scholarships.?

Under Coach Beresford's inspirational leadership, the Hall Wolfpack football program is on the rise and creating post-secondary opportunities for its players like Co-Captains Tyler Fagan and Mason Burke.