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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## RUGBY ONTARIO AND TORONTO ARROWS PARTNER TO LAUNCH ONTARIO BLUES - JUNIOR ARROWS ACADEMY

**TORONTO, ON** – Rugby Ontario and the Toronto Arrows Rugby Football Club are pleased to announce the launch of the **Ontario Blues - Junior Arrows Academy**, a program that will provide age-grade Ontario athletes an opportunity to train and learn from top-level provincial, national and professional coaches in an environment designed to prepare them for the next step of their rugby journey.

Jointly-created by the provincial sports governing body and Canada’s first professional rugby union team, the non-residential Ontario Blues - Junior Arrows Academy will act as an extension of Rugby Ontario’s Winter Skills Academy, where selected under-15 to under-18 athletes will receive an additional 26 sessions – 13 technical/tactical, 13 strength and conditioning – from October 2020 to April 2021.

The Ontario Blues - Junior Arrows Academy will operate in three main training areas in Ontario, with athletes placed in regional hubs as a means of offering low player-to-staff ratios and easing geographical burdens associated with such a large catchment area.

“From a provincial standpoint, this partnership provides a clear and direct pathway for Ontario players to achieve their goal of playing for Canada and the Arrows,” said Sean Medeiros, Rugby Ontario High Performance Co-ordinator and Academy Director. “The alignment this program creates will have a massive impact on the Ontario Blues provincial program as a whole. Coach development is also a key focus of this program, as we look to engage identified coaches with Toronto Arrows staff and current national team coaches to help in the development of the next generation of elite coaches in the province.”

The inaugural roster of the Ontario Blues - Junior Arrows Academy athletes features 41 athletes representing 15 Ontario clubs.

“Players were selected based on recommendation from club and school coaches around the province, performance with provincial age-grade teams and Rugby Ontario programming, as well as results from a comprehensive combine testing session,” said Paul Connelly, Rugby Ontario High Performance Manager. “Each hub has a five-member coaching staff, which includes provincial age grade coaches, former professional and international lock Brett Beukeboom and former international bobsledder Adam Blandford.”

“We’re fortunate to have such a large rugby-playing province here in Ontario,” added Cory Hector, Toronto Arrows Academy Lead. “By partnering with Rugby Ontario, we are able to help create a clear pathway for young athletes across the province and beyond. This new pathway, when combined with our Senior Academy announced last year, provides real long-term development for the athletes and contributes to the Arrows’ goals of producing homegrown, domestic talent.”



On top of the in-person training sessions, Ontario Blues - Junior Arrows Academy coaches and players will engage in virtual sessions throughout the duration of the program, allowing for opportunities to provide resources and support in areas such as strength and conditioning, nutrition, and mental performance, as well as to perform video analysis of professional and international game play.

“The Ontario Blues - Junior Arrows Academy will become a critical component to improving the identification and development of Canada’s emerging players,” said Mike Curran, Rugby Canada U18 Head Coach. “Regional academies connected to high-performance programs such as the Arrows will undoubtedly drive the game in our country forward.”

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## **2020-2021 Rugby Ontario Junior Arrows Academy Athletes**

### **East**

Jordy Auger | Barrhaven Scottish  
Santiago Gomez | Bytown Blues  
Russell Greenwood | Kingston Panthers  
Owen McDonell | Barrhaven Scottish  
Ethan Nesbitt | Bytown Blues  
Greg Thomas | Bytown Blues  
Liam Walsh | Kingston Panthers  
Kalle White | Barrhaven Scottish

### **Central**

Liam Arcand | Oshawa Vikings  
Curtis Buss | Oshawa Vikings  
Michael Di Lella | Oshawa Vikings  
Noah Flesch | Cobourg Saxons  
Ben Foote | Oshawa Vikings  
Mark Gilmour | Oshawa Vikings  
Tanner Hubble | Ajax Wanderers  
Tyler Janes | Ajax Wanderers  
Ryan Johnstone | Ajax Wanderers  
Ian Jones | Oshawa Vikings  
Sam LaVasseur | Peterborough Pagans  
Bauer Mercer | Oshawa Vikings  
Mac Reimer | Oshawa Vikings  
Kyran Stillman | Toronto Nomads  
Justin Taylor | Ajax Wanderers  
Graeme Tremain | Toronto Nomads  
Owen Williams | Ajax Wanderers

### **West**

Brendan Black | Crusaders  
Marcus D’Acre | Crusaders  
Adam Doane | Toronto City



Josh Eustace | Brantford Harlequins  
Reid Forthuber | Stratford Black Swans  
Killian Fortier | Toronto Saracens  
Connor Gittens | Crusaders  
Michael Hayes | Crusaders  
Caleb Hickey | Barrie RFC  
Jesse Kilgour | Barrie RFC  
Rielly Kirk | Georgian Bay Titans  
Michael Macartney | Crusaders  
Jake Simmons | Crusaders  
James Webb | Toronto City  
Stephen Webb | Toronto City  
Hudson Young | Crusaders

### **2020-2021 Rugby Ontario Junior Arrows Academy Staff**

#### **Program Staff**

Sean Medeiros – Program Director  
Paul Connelly – Technical Director (Rugby Ontario)  
Cory Hector & David Butcher – Technical Directors (Toronto Arrows)  
Dr. Karen Chrobak – Chief Medical Officer  
Dr. Phil Sullivan – Mental Performance Lead

#### **East Staff**

Adam Blandford  
LeeEllen Carroll  
Aaron McDonald  
Sonny Raina  
TK Rewi

#### **Central Staff**

Brett Beukeboom  
Zach Lamacraft  
Ian MacLeish  
Eric Noyes  
Cam Wilson

#### **West Staff**

Mike Curran  
Scott Hendry  
Adam Maahs  
Patrick Maulson  
Graham Stickler



**About Rugby Ontario:**

Rugby Ontario is the provincial sport's governing body responsible for the organization of rugby in Ontario. Our mission is to establish a stronger identity for rugby in Ontario by promoting the sport's core values and by fostering a culture of inclusiveness and excellence on and off the field of play.

To learn more, visit <https://www.rugbyontario.com/>

**About Toronto Arrows Rugby Football Club:**

The Toronto Arrows Rugby Football Club is Canada's first professional rugby union team.

Competing in Major League Rugby, the team is equipped to compete against top-tier North American club teams, providing emerging Canadian talent with enhanced and more frequent opportunities to hone their skills at an elite level.

For more information, visit <https://torontoarrows.com/>

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