

# Stouffville boys tackle spots on Ontario team

BY MICHAEL HAYAKAWA  
mhayakawa@yrmg.com

Ben Risi did not entertain thoughts of showcasing his rugby skills for the provincial boys' under-16 team being assembled this summer.

But the 16-year-old Stouffville resident had a change of heart after receiving words of encouragement from a coach from his Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans' junior team.

Risi, along with Spartan teammates Sam Elliott and Cody Scott, took Glenn Tarver's words to heart.

It turned out to be a wise decision as all three players earned a berth on this year's provincial squad. Tarver is also program director for the Ontario program.

"I feel very honoured to have made this team because there were so many good rugby players who tried out," said Risi, who along with Elliott and Scott, will enter Grade 11 in September. "Mr. Tarver told us that he felt we had the ability to play on the Ontario team."

The tryout process, which began June 17, took place at three locations.

Risi, Scott and Elliott went to one held at Fletcher's Field in Markham in which he estimated some 130 hopefuls were in attendance.

"Entering the tryouts and seeing how much talent was there I really did not think I would make the team. It was very stiff competition," Risi said.

The trio made the cut.

Fifty of the 60 players at the second tryout were retained to form two provincial teams that will compete at the nationals in Sherbrooke, Quebec Aug. 6 to 12. They'll tune up with a series of friendlies against a touring team from Great Britain.

"I think one of the main reasons I made the

team was because of the great coaching I've had at Stouffville District. They have taught me so much about the game and encouraged me to get better," Risi said.

"It has been great having two other Stouffville Spartans on the team with me," he said. "First of all it helped when I was at the tryout. And also they put us on a bus for Ottawa over the July 1st weekend and we had a four-day training camp there, so it was nice to have familiar faces on the bus and over the weekend."

Coaching Risi, Scott and Elliott with the Spartans junior boys' team this past year, Rob Edmondson was pleased to see all three players make the squad and feels it will be a great stepping stone for them if they elect to continue to pursue the game at a higher level.

"They're great kids who will give you 100 per cent each game they play. They've grown to learn and love the game and I'm not surprised they all made the team."

"For them to get their names on the list (provincial team), the powers that be (provincial and national team age group coaches) will be watching them," he said.

Introduced to the game of rugby when he was in Grade 9 at Stouffville District Secondary School, Risi also hones his craft at the club level as a member of the Aurora Barbarians, along with Scott and Elliott.

"I think that both (provincial) teams will do well at nationals, we really do expect to come home with gold and silver," Risi said.

Matt Carrick, another Stouffville resident who attends Bill Crothers Secondary School in Unionville, was also selected to the club.

The flanker, was a member of the Colts' team that lost to Stouffville in this year's York Region Athletic Association junior final.



Ben Risi is one of four Stouffville residents playing U16 rugby for Team Ontario this summer.

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