

Buffalo Can/Am 7s:

Charlotte

by Lex MacCubbin

Buffalo, NY

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In an exciting overtime match, the Charlotte (NC) Rugby Club topped the Buffalo Old Boys 16-12 to win the third annual Buffalo Can/Am 7s.

The tournament featured eight teams in two four-team pools. After round-robin play, teams were placed into brackets and played for Cup, Plate and Bowl trophies. Several hundred spectators turned out on an ideal day, with sunny skies and temperatures in the mid 70s.

Prelims

In pool play, Charlotte defeated the Syracuse Chargers, Buffalo Old Boys II, and Lockport by a combined score of 89-0. The Buffalo Old Boys were equally dominant beating Fredonia, the Nasty Boys and the Genesee Creamers by a total of 78-0.

Charlotte bested the Nasty Boys in one semifinal, 18-4, while Buffalo struggled to get past long-time rival, Syracuse, 12-8 on a last-minute try by Doug Miller.

Final

Charlotte, already a qualifier for the Eastern 7s Championship, was the favorite going into the final. They were led by Paul Kenney and George Miller, who had already scored five tries apiece.

Buffalo was confident playing before the hometown fans with a backline containing current Rugby-East Under-25 wings Terry Nashwinter and Mike Augustine, and former Rugby-East center Jim Walier.

In the opening minute, Buffalo was trapped deep in its end but after a series of second phase possessions, Nashwinter sprung loose for the unconverted try, 4-0.

Shortly after the restart, Buffalo moved the ball downfield on a break by Jim Walier, but was stopped by the cover defense. From the ensuing scrum, Chuck Mosey darted weakside and scored. Again the conversion was no good, 8-0.

Play bogged down until late in the half when Buffalo won a lineout in Charlotte's end. Walier, who had been playing the linkman all day, dummed and burst through a surprised Charlotte defense to score.



East Junior all-star Terry Nashwinter of the Buffalo Old Boys tries to sidestep Charlotte defenders in the final of the 1992 Buffalo Can/Am 7s. Charlotte came back from a 12-0 deficit to win in overtime, 16-12. (Photo - Gene Adams)

The conversion was off and Buffalo led 12-0 at halftime.

Second Half

In the second half, Charlotte began to pressure Buffalo with relentless ball movement. Buffalo defended well initially, but at the three-minute mark they were called for a high tackle. Charlotte set up a penalty play that looked like a basketball out-of-bounds play with four players stacked behind the penalty taker. On the tap, players dashed in every direction and after a series of switches and fakes, George Miller ran in untouched and then converted his try, 12-6.

Moments later, Paul Kenney stripped a Buffalo ballcarrier, blasted his way through the defense and touched down under the posts. Miller's conversion tied the match, 12-12. Fulltime ended with the teams struggling for possession at midfield.

Overtime

Nearly the entire first overtime was played at midfield, but late in the period, Charlotte flyhalf Rick Avate threw a long football pass to the left. Buffalo was quick to react and tackled the initial ballcarrier, but Charlotte's support was there and John Yanerio crashed over for the winning try, 16-12.

Charlotte		Buffalo Old Boys
Yanerio	1	Jablonski
Kenney	2	Lawrence
Robke	3	D. Miller
Lindley	4	Mosey
Avate	5	Walier
Jones	6	Augustine
Miller, G.	7	Nashwinter
Referee: Mark White (NYSRC)		

Plate Division

In the Plate final, the Nasty Boys put on a dazzling display of ball handling and speed as they ran a tired Syracuse Chargers team into the ground in a 26-4 win. The Nasty Boys, an all black side from Toronto, were led by Desmond Johnson who scored a try and 3 conversions, while Clayton Dawkins, Orville Reid and Kurt MacInosh each notched a try.

If the Nasty Boys keep playing 7s and learn some tactical skills, they could easily become a dominant 7s team as few sides can match their overall speed.

Bowl Division

In the Bowl final, the Genesee Creamers jumped to an early lead, but the rigors of playing five matches with eight players finally caught up with them. Buffalo II scored three converted tries to grab an 18-14 victory.

Jeff Calabrese, who had a try and three conversions, led the Buffalo II attack, while Bob Palmer and Paul Yemma each scored a try.

Thanks

Special thanks go to the excellent referees organized by Paul Clift. Thanks are also due to Mike Dahm and Doug Miller for their efforts with the concessions and tee-shirts.

The Buffalo Can/Am 7s is held each year the last weekend in June and is part of the Friendship Festival, a week-long celebration of music, food and family activities. For more information about 1993's tournament, contact Lex MacCubbin, 25 W. Hazeltine Ave., Kenmore, NY 14217.