History of the Yates Cup

Much has changed in Canadian football since the Yates Cup was first awarded in 1898. The newly formed and grandly styled Canadian Intercollegiate Rugby Football Union (CIRFU), consisting of exactly three schools (McGill, Queen's and Toronto) had been established the previous winter as the first interuniversity league in Canada. The game played was still largely indistinguishable from rugby with 15 men a side. Neither a system of downs nor the forward pass had yet appeared.

The Yates Cup marked its 100th season of competition in 2007. The oldest Canadian intercollegiate trophy in any sport, the Yates Cup is North America's oldest football trophy still being awarded, pre-dating the Grey Cup and the Michigan-Minnesota "Little Brown Jug" by 11 years.

The trophy was presented by Dr. Henry Brydges Yates, a McGill medical graduate in 1893 who had played football while in school. He was a lecturer in bacteriology at McGill from 1893 to 1914, and later served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Canadian Army Medical Corps during World War One. He was the second in command of the No. 3 Canadian General Hospital (McGill) in Bologna, Italy. While overseas, Dr. Yates fell ill with bronchitis, which claimed his life in 1915.

As originally established, the three founding members played home-and-home series amongst each other, and the top team from that competition was awarded the Yates Cup. A post-season playoff was only held if there was a tie for first place, or the second-place team had beaten the leader in a conference game. This arrangement continued when the league expanded to four teams with the inclusion of Ottawa (1905-1912), RMC (1913) and finally Western (1929 onward). The league expanded to six teams in 1968 with the admission of McMaster and Waterloo, and for three seasons the regular season alone determined the champion. As such, there were just 27 Yates Cup championship games before 1971, and a total of 70 to date.

There have been a few interruptions and anomalies in the awarding of the Yates Cup over the years. Intercollegiate play was suspended during the two World Wars, meaning the cup remained unawarded in the years 1915-1918 and 1940-1944. The winding-down of hostilities in 1945 permitted a brief four-game schedule to be played that fall, but no official champion was declared because of the truncated season. In 1964, McMaster used an

obscure technicality in the league by-laws to challenge the league-champion Queen's Golden Gaels to a single-game challenge for possession of the Yates Cup, a display of bravado that resulted in a 63-6 walloping for the Marauders.

In 1971 the establishment of the Ontario Universities Athletic Association saw the football league double in size, resulting in the need for a playoff structure to determine a league champion. Since that time, the Yates Cup has been awarded to the winner of the playoff series. Between 1974 and 1978, the cup was awarded jointly to the champions of the east and west divisions, and in 1979 the Yates Cup final game between east and west champions also served as a Vanier Cup semifinal.

The Western Mustangs can claim a number of Yates Cup superlatives, winning the trophy 29 times, and have hosted the championship game on 22 occasions.

After more than a century, Dr. Yates simple but dignified silver cup now sits commandingly atop a substantial plinth of wooden tiers, proudly displaying the enamelled shields of past champions. Care-worn and a bit unwieldy, the trophy remains the pinnacle achievement of team effort in Ontario university football while embodying the traditions of Canada's oldest surviving football league.

(Source: Ian Speers)

Past Champions

Year	Champion	Year	Champion	Year	Champion
2011	McMaster	1976	Western/Ottawa	1936	Toronto
2010	Western	1975	Ottawa/Windsor	1935	Queen's
2009	Queen's	1974	Western	1934	Queen's
2008	Western	1973	Laurier	1933	Toronto
2007	Western	1972	Lutheran	1932	Toronto
2006	Ottawa	1971	Western	1931	Western
2005	Laurier	1970	Queen's	1930	Queen's
2004	Laurier	1969	McGill	1929	Queen's
2003	McMaster	1968	Queen's	1928	McGill
2002	McMaster	1967	Toronto	1927	Queen's
2001	McMaster	1966	Queen's	1926	Toronto
2000	McMaster	1965	Toronto	1925	Queen's
1999	Waterloo	1964	Queen's	1924	Queen's
1998	Western	1963	Queen's	1923	Queen's
1997	Waterloo	1962	McGill	1922	Queen's
1996	Guelph	1961	Queen's	1921	Toronto

1995	Western	1960	McGill	1920	Toronto
1994	Western	1959	Western	1919	McGill
1993	Toronto	1958	Toronto	1915-18	War
1992	Guelph	1957	Western	1914	Toronto
1991	Laurier	1956	Queen's	1913	McGill
1990	Western	1955	Queen's	1912	McGill
1989	Western	1954	Toronto	1911	Toronto
1988	Western	1953	Western	1910	Toronto
1987	Laurier	1952	Western	1909	Toronto
1986	Western	1951	Toronto	1908	Toronto
1985	Western	1950	Western	1907	Ottawa
1984	Guelph	1949	Western	1906	McGill
1983	Toronto	1948	Toronto	1905	Toronto
1982	Western	1947	Western	1904	Queen's
1981	Western	1946	Western	1903	Toronto
1980	Western	1940-45	War	1902	McGill
1979	Western	1939	Western	1901	Toronto
1978	Laurier/Queen's	1938	McGill	1900	Queen's
1977	Western/Queen's	1937	Queen's	1899	Toronto
				1898	Toronto