Head coach of the Canadian National Under-18 Men's Sevens team Shane Thompson has announced his roster of 12 players headed to the Youth Commonwealth Games scheduled for September 7-13 on the Isle of Man.

"Entering a Canadian age grade sevens team into an international tournament has never happened before," said Thompson. "This is exciting not only for the players heading to the Games, but for the coaching staff as well. It will be a great opportunity to see how our age grade players perform and measure up against international competition."

Thompson based his selections on a series of recent trials and the first ever Under-18 Victoria International Sevens event held in Victoria on July 16th. The international event featured teams from Ontario, British Columbia, the Prairies, Utah as well as national side the USA All-Americans.

The Canadian U18 roster is made up of an even split of Ontario and British Columbia players.

"After seeing the guys in action at the Victoria event, two things really stuck out from the trial. The BC players had a strong understanding of how to play sevens, and the Ontario squad played a front up style with a lot of physicality," Thompson said. "Our formula for success will be based on combining Ontario's physical style of play with BC's ball movement and structure."

Jorden Best (Abbotsford, BC), Nathan Yanagiya (North Vancouver), and Fergus Hall (Victoria, BC) all competed in the Las Vegas Invitational Sevens this past February for Team BC and had their first taste of international seven-a-side rugby.

Justin Douglas (Abbotsford, BC) and Haydn Evans (Terrace, BC) have each been through the BC Elite Youth Sevens program and have excelled at the national level with the Canadian U17 15s team this year.

Cowichan standout Pat Kay was the only player from the BC Under-18 Sevens team selected for the Youth Commonwealth Games. Kay has proven himself at the international level in the 15-a-side version of the game, and was recently selected as the youngest player to the Canadian Under-20 National Team that toured Georgia for the 2011 Junior World Rugby Trophy championship.

Ontario's Conor McCann was named as an All-Star at the recent U18 Victoria International Sevens, scoring several tries in Ontario's undefeated run to the Cup.

"Conor is a great athlete," Thompson added. "He is a confident player and definitely a guy to be on the lookout for. He was a leader for Ontario and I'm looking forward to seeing him play more sevens."

McCann, who also stars for Shawnigan Lake School on Vancouver Island, will be joined by fellow SLS Stag Lukas Balkovec out of Kitchener, Ontario. Standing tall at 6-foot-5, Balkovec

will provide an aerial threat and will be a key asset in restarts and kickoffs.

Thompson and his staff will look to Barrie, Ontario's Byron Boville for his ability to score points with his boot. Boville recently led Barrie Central to the OFSAA A/AA High School Boys Rugby Championship, kicking two penalties in the 6-0 win over Trenton in the final.

Scott Gauer (Mississauga, Ont.) was a standout on the Canadian U17 national team and has proven himself as a leader, captaining the Lorne Park Rugby team. Andrew Battaglia (Aurora, Ont.) has had his fair share of sevens, suiting up for the junior Dog River Howlers, a Prairies-based development program. Lucas Hammond (Toronto, Ont.) has been a standout recently impressing selectors in 15s rugby, while suiting up for the Ontario Junior Blues pogrom.

"We have selected a number of great individual athletes that can perform at the elite level," Thompson said. "Now the challenge will be getting all the players to buy into a team concept. Seven-a-side rugby is about every player on the field buying into that concept and working as a unit."

Thompson will be joined by assistant coach Jeff Williams (Victoria, BC) and co-coach/manager Darrell Devine (Guelp, Ont.) for the competition. The squad will assemble in Toronto on September 1st for a four day camp before departing for the Isle of Man.

Canada will be competing in Pool A at the Youth Commonwealth Games against Australia, Scotland and the Isle of Man. Pool B will be made up of South Africa, England, Sri Lanka and Trinidad and Tobago. Full schedules and tournament details will soon be added to the www.cyg2011.com website.

Canadian U18 Sevens Roster
(Name - Club/Hometown)
Lukas Balkovec - Waterloo County RFC/ Kitchener, Ont.
Andrew Battaglia - Aurora Barbarians RFC/ Aurora, Ont.
Jorden Best - Abbotsford RFC/ Abbotsford, BC
Byron Boville - Barrie RFC/ Barrie, Ont.
Justin Douglas - Abbotsford RFC/ Abbotsford, BC
Haydn Evans - Cowichan Rugby Club/ Terrace, BC
Scott Gauer - Crusaders Rugby Club/ Mississaugua, Ont.
Fergus Hall - Castaway Wanderers/ Victoria, BC
Lucas Hammond - Toronto Nomads RFC/ Toronto, Ont.
Pat Kay - Cowichan Rugby Club/ Cowichan, BC
Conor McCann – Balmy Beach RFC/ Belleville, Ont.
Nathan Yanagiya - Capilano RFC/ North Vancouver, BC

Staff:
Shane Thompson - Victoria, BC
Jeff Williams - Victoria, BC
Darrell Devine - Guelph, Ont.