

Local trainer goes far afield with top-flight fastpitch teams

The athletic therapist for Georgetown Jr. A Raiders' hockey and Halton Hills Jr. B Bulldogs' lacrosse took his services farther afield this summer for a couple of fastpitch teams competing in world championships, winning one of the tournaments and coming up just short in the other.

Andrew Groombridge, who has been with the Raiders for 13 years and was on the Bulldogs' Founders Cup Canadian championship team in 2010, first traveled to Torino, Italy last month for the World Masters Games with the Toronto Gators.

The Gators, owned by flamboyant Toronto litigator Jack Fireman, won two ISC world fastpitch titles in the mid-1990s and took a

team made up mostly of players in their fifties to the ISF-sanctioned World Masters games to play in the 35-&-over men's division, including legendary fireballer Darren Zack.

The 52-year-old Groombridge's biggest challenge was to find ice every day to satisfy the team's needs in the steamy conditions, but the Gators had little trouble cooling off their opposition's offence, going 7-0-1 on the week to take top spot. Their only blemish was a 0-0 tie in the opening game against New Zealand, which was curfewed after five innings.

"The opening ceremonies were something I'll always remember. It was pretty nifty," said the Sarnia native, who has accompanied nu-

merous teams that have won Canadian, Ontario and U.S. state championships in football, hockey, lacrosse and fastpitch/softball.

He was also named the Ontario Junior Hockey League's inaugural trainer of the year recipient in 2012.

Upon returning to Canada, Groombridge only had a few hours at home before heading off to the Quad Cities area with a team from Clifton, N.Y. named the New York Gremlins for the ISC World Championship held in Moline, Illinois.

The Gremlins lost 1-0 in 10 innings in a controversial finish to the Six Nations Hill United Chiefs from Ohsweken, Ont., in the final.



ANDREW GROOMBRIDGE

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