



A 13-5 win in Cobourg over the host Saxons clinched the TRU 'B' senior men's division playoff championship for the North Halton Highlanders. Team members (front, from left) are: Norm Monkhouse, Marcus Sherry, Nick Blazanko, Josh Pederson, Rob Lefler, Carl Chan, Ben Krige, Iain Singleton. Back row: Will Mann, Curtis Vanstone, Andrew Finley, Brad Murphy, Jason Walker, Jake Bayard, Jacob Faber, captain Sandy Black, Brent Vanderlaan, Ryan Bell. Submitted photo

Highlanders grab TRU 'B' title

The North Halton Highlanders are putting a bit of a dynasty together in the Toronto Rugby Union.

After a mediocre regular season, the Highlanders gelled in time for the playoffs and advanced to the TRU senior men's 'B' final, in which they came back to defeat the host Cobourg Saxons 13-5 late last month to emerge as the 2015 Russell Regional Shield Champions.

It's the second straight TRU 'B' title in a row for the Highlanders and their third in the past four years.

The Cobourg team was heavier in the pack

and pushed the Highlanders hard, but in the second half, led by a gritty performance from the team captain Sandy Black, the visitors clawed their way back into the lead.

Centre Andrew Finley scored a try, stretching to reach the goal-line on a second effort as he was being tackled, and fly-half Ben Krige's kicking game was exceptional as he converted Finley's try and another two penalties.

The Highlanders' under-18 boys' team also had a great finish to the season, capturing the TRU Tier II Champions Cup with a thrilling 24-22 victory over the Oakville Crusaders.

Bland comes through for Rivermen

After aggravating an old knee injury in the opening game of the tournament, Georgetown's Travis Bland turned out to be a secret weapon for the Six Nations Rivermen in their run to the President's Cup championship on the weekend in St. Catharines.

Bland, 29, injured his knee

in the Rivermen's round-robin-opening 14-4 win over Alberta's Rockyview Knights last Monday and missed the next two games, but the righthanded forward returned to record four points in Six Nations' 12-10 win over Onondaga Redhawks in the semifinals.



TRAVIS BLAND

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New portable mound opens up many options for HHMBA

By Eamonn Maher
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The Halton Hills Minor Baseball Association recently purchased a new portable pitching mound to be used for bantam and mosquito league games.

The final tournament took place last month, so the new mound won't see play this year, but HHMBA league executives can see the implications for what the additional mound means for the 2016 season.

"What we can do now is we'll be able to host tournaments to use as fundraisers," said HHMBA president Larry Fitzgerald.

"Before buying the portable, the only other diamond was at Fairgrounds 1," Fitzgerald continued, talking about the other diamond in Halton Hills that is suitable to host bantam or mosquito level games.

The ability to operate a second diamond for bantam or mosquito contests is what will allow the HHMBA to host tournaments next year, which could become an important source of revenue for teams in older age groups, most significantly for rep teams where travel costs can become exorbitant.

But it isn't all good news. The league hasn't played a game with the mound yet, but they have tested it, and while the mound was marketed to them as portable, it simply isn't portable in practical terms.

"When the house league kids put it up it took a half hour and six kids to set up," said Dee-Dee Haynes-Ridley, director of umpires and secretary for the HHMBA.

The long set-up time means games could be delayed from starting if the mound has to be removed or set up when switching between league levels, for example between bantam

and pee wee.

"It'll be primarily based at Trafalgar Sports Park," said Fitzgerald talking about the impracticality of moving the mound.

In the bigger picture however, the decision to buy the mound wasn't made simply to host tournaments; it was necessary to accommodate the league's growth.

"Because our numbers are growing in the older group, we had to make the purchase," said Haynes-Ridley, regarding the registration surge the HHMBA experienced in 2015 in the older age range.

"I'll be honest. I was prepared for it to go down a little bit in the first year," said Fitzgerald, regarding the 2015 numbers. "Registration absolutely blew us away."

In 2015, registration with the HHMBA increased by about 10 per cent from 2014. The creation of the new Halton Hills Minor Baseball Association [HHMBA] was a result of a merger between the Georgetown Baseball Association and the Acton Minor Baseball Association in winter 2015.

For more info, visit www.haltonhillsminorbaseball.com.



Checking out the new portable pitcher's mound at Trafalgar Sports Park (from left) are Luke Hubbard, Kyle Gough, Ross Kelleher, Duncan Scade, Jacob Gill. Submitted photo

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