

# Positive attitude, strong baseball knowledge make Griffin a hit with his players

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And while Griffin's team came up just shy of its ultimate goal, his work with Guelph did not go unnoticed as he was named the OUA coach of the year.

"We knew it wasn't going to be a quick fix, but we put in the work and had the patience to see it through to the point that we're a

championship contender," Griffin said. "I loved my time (at Guelph) and to have the opportunity to get the baseball program back to the level of success it had previously, and the opportunity to coach at the university level, it was an exciting challenge."

It's a challenge Griffin's Gryphons have met. Guelph has in-

creased its win total every season under his leadership — from four to six to nine in his first three years (earning him his first OUA coach of the year award), to a breakthrough 15-victory season in 2012.

"His positive attitude, first and foremost, comes through. He has the aura of a coach you want to

play for," said Gryphons catcher/first baseman Justin Interisano, who hit .525 with seven homers and 24 RBI in 21 games. "He has a ton of baseball knowledge and he's a fun guy to be around."

Griffin attributes part of the team's success to a close-knit coaching staff. After helping his dad coach Oakville A's bantam and midget teams for several years, Griffin wanted to assemble a group that he knew well and could trust. He reached back to his playing days and brought in former teammates Marc Walton, Alex Hawley and Shawn Boyle. Griffin, Walton and Hawley still play together with the A's senior team and Griffin said the coaches' close relationship rubs off on the players. Interisano agrees, saying the Gryphons "all get along like brothers."

Griffin wasn't expecting coaching to be a part-time endeavour, but it did entail more than he first anticipated. Though the season is only a month and a half long, it is a year-round commitment.

"That was the one thing I didn't fully understand, how much work there is away from the field," said Griffin, a Grade 4 teacher at St. Mary's Catholic Elementary in Oakville. "Meeting with students

and parents, it's a good opportunity as a coach. When a kid comes in, we have a chance to do some baseball stuff and see what they're like as a player but you also get to know them a little and see what they're like character-wise."

And character is one thing Griffin knows he can count on from his players as they try to take the next step toward the school's first OUA championship. In each of the past two seasons, Guelph has lost a one-run decision to the eventual champion in the playoffs. This year, Laurier needed a two-out run in the top of the ninth to edge the Gryphons 3-2. Another heart-breaker followed in the semifinals. Guelph took a 2-1 lead in the top of the 12<sup>th</sup> against Brock, only to have the Badgers score twice in the bottom of the inning.

"The guys fought hard in both those games," Griffin said. "They've got nothing to hang their heads about. These setbacks and disappointments won't be things that set the program back."

Then, with the new season still 10 months away, Griffin adds, "If anything, it will be what motivates them to work that little bit harder next year."

Always thinking ahead.



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## Soccer players named OUA all-stars

Oakville's Paterson Farrell and Tommy Hong have been named to the Ontario University Athletics men's soccer all-star team.

Farrell, a fourth-year midfielder for McMaster, earned a spot on the West Division second team while Wong, a second-year forward for Queen's, was named to the East Division second team.

Farrell had four goals in 15 games, boosting the St. Thomas Aquinas grad's career total to 20. McMaster finished second in the OUA West Division with a record of 11-2-3.

Hong, a T.A. Blakelock grad, started 10 of 12 games and scored twice for the Gaels. Queen's went 6-5-3 to finish third in the East Division.

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