



Adam Foster



Andrew Filler



Andrew Muncaster



Chris Ruediger



Christian Simone



Darrell Nunns



David Venturi

Whitecaps prepared to play for national crown

■ By Herb Garbutt
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

A team of Oakville little leaguers is taking a page from the Boy Scouts.

From the day the Oakville Whitecaps' 14 players and three coaches found out they would host the Canadian Senior Little League Championship, they have adopted the Scouts' motto. If nothing else, when they take the field today (Friday), they will be prepared.

The players, between the ages of 14-16, began training indoors in the winter, stepping up their workouts from once a week to twice. They brought in a personal trainer to design a workout regimen for them to improve their fitness. They sought out the best competition they could find at tournaments in the United States. They set up a batting cage in the backyard of manager Don Nunns. They even consulted with a sports psychologist to help them calm their nerves on the field.

So, following an afternoon batting practice session on Tuesday, catcher Andrew Muncaster's sentiments were understandable.

"I just want the thing to start," he said.

He'll get his wish today when the Whitecaps face the Ontario representative at 7:30 p.m. at River Oaks Park, the venue for all tournament games. Games start earlier in the day with Atlantic playing Quebec at noon and British Columbia versus the Prairies at 3 p.m.

The round robin continues until next Wednesday, the semifinals will be played Thursday, Aug. 7 and the championship game is Friday, Aug. 8 at 2 p.m. The winner of the tournament will advance to represent Canada at the Senior Little League World Series in Bangor, Maine.

"At the end of the day, we're just playing ball. It's just that the stakes are a little higher."

■ Oakville Whitecaps pitcher Sonu Lall

"You want to represent your town," Muncaster said, "but it's always in the back of your head that if you win, you'll be representing Canada."

The players didn't need help in recognizing the unique opportunity they have ahead of them.

"You only get to do it once," said centrefielder Darrell Nunns. "You'll never get to do something like this again."

It was with that in mind that the players, parents and coaches bought into the commitment required to prepare for the tournament. And that started with a gruelling workout plan. Don Nunns said the workouts were "a lot more intense." Some players have lost as much as 25 pounds since beginning the program in February.

"I'm in the best shape I've ever been in," said Adam Foster, who is often called on for pinch-running duties. "I'm running the bases constantly and it really prepared us for where we are now."

Jonathan Delposo added, "We have a lot more stamina. Playing the field, running, it's way easier when you're in good physical shape. It's just one more thing

you don't have to worry about."

Nunns said that improved conditioning has paid off, citing a tournament in Buffalo where the team played in extremely hot conditions.

The team has also brought in outside instructors to help the team. Nunns had a former pitcher from the Toronto Maple Leafs of the Intercounty Baseball League come in to give pointers to the pitchers. Then there's the backyard batting cage — parents and the coaching staff pitched in to buy it — to help the players at the plate.

"We wanted to give them every opportunity to reach their potential and give them a glimpse of what it takes to perform at the highest level," Nunns said.

And just because Oakville is the host team doesn't mean it is going into the tournament with an inferiority complex as it readies itself to play the five regional champs. Delposo played on a team at a younger level that went to the provincial semifinals, where it lost 7-4 to the team that went on to represent Ontario at the nationals. He says this year's Oakville squad is much better.

"If we get good pitching, we have a chance to compete," said Nunns. "If the pitching holds and the defence holds, there's not a team out there we can't beat."

Having done everything it can to get ready, all the host squad can do is go out and play to the best of its ability.

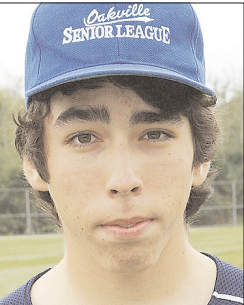
"It didn't hit me until a couple of weeks ago, how big this is," said pitcher Sonu Lall. "But at the end of the day, we're just playing ball. It's just that the stakes are a little higher."



Canadian Senior Little League Championship schedule

DATE	TIME	TEAMS	ROUND
Today	12 p.m.	Team Atlantic vs. Team Quebec	Round 1
Today	3 p.m.	Team British Columbia vs. Team Prairies	Round 1
Today	7:30 p.m.	Oakville Whitecaps vs. Team Ontario	Round 1
Tomorrow	12 p.m.	Team Atlantic vs. Team British Columbia	Round 2
Tomorrow	3 p.m.	Team Quebec vs. Team Ontario	Round 2
Tomorrow	7 p.m.	Oakville Whitecaps vs. Team Prairies	Round 2
Sunday	12 p.m.	Team Ontario vs. Team Prairies	Round 3
Sunday	3 p.m.	Oakville Whitecaps vs. Team Atlantic	Round 3
Sunday	7 p.m.	Team British Columbia vs. Team Quebec	Round 3
Monday	12 p.m.	Team British Columbia vs. Team Ontario	Round 4
Monday	3 p.m.	Oakville Whitecaps vs. Team Quebec	Round 4
Monday	7 p.m.	Team Atlantic vs. Team Prairies	Round 4
Tuesday	9 a.m.	Oakville Whitecaps vs. Team British Columbia	Round 5
Tuesday	12 p.m.	Team Prairies vs. Team Quebec	Round 5
Tuesday	3 p.m.	Team Ontario vs. Team Atlantic	Round 5
Wednesday	2:30 p.m.	Third Place vs. Fourth Place	Page Playoff
Wednesday	6:30 p.m.	First Place vs. Second Place	Page Playoff
Thursday	6:05 p.m.	Winner of 3rd/4th game vs. Loser of 1st/2nd	Semifinal
Friday, Aug. 8	2 p.m.	Winner of 1st/2nd vs. Winner of Thurs. game	Championship

* All games will be played at River Oaks Park



Jonathan Del Pozo



Kyle Paterson



Matt Schwann



Ryan Tobias



Sukhwinder Lall



Will Brandis



Will Cox

ASHL

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