

Stewarttown teacher Jim Ridley was named Canadian Amateur Baseball's Manager of the Year in 1983 after leading the Canadian Juniors to a bronze medal at the World Youth Friendship Games. Ridley can be seen front row and centre surrounded by his players in the team photograph.



Leemington won the championship trophy at the Centennial Atom tournament held in town this week. Leemington was pitted against the Nellis Construction Major Atoms in the final match and Leemington came out on top 2-0.

Jim Ridley's always looking for talent

by Robin Insoce

For most summer sports fanatics this time of year marks a time to think about what might happen during the summer but for Jim Ridley it is a time to begin work on what he hopes will be a world championship for Canada.

For ten months of the year the ten year Stewarttown school teacher and Milton resident works hard teaching students the finer points of basketball, volleyball or whatever sport he might be teaching in his gym classes.

But, if a teacher life isn't hectic enough, Jim works just as hard on weekends, evenings and two months in the summer as a Canadian scout for the Toronto Blue Jays and also as the manager of the Canadian Youth (under 18) Baseball team.

Since the Jays' inception in the 1977 season Jim Ridley has worked for Canadian Scouting Director Bob Prentise and the Jays searching throughout Ontario and Canada for possible Major League talent.

Now, managing the Canadian Youth Team at the World Championships has been added to his busy schedule. In his first year with the team, he led them to a bronze medal, a first ever for Canada, at the World Friendship Youth Games in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

For his efforts on behalf of the country Ridley was named Canada's Amateur Baseball Manager of the Year.

Jim Ridley began his baseball career in the Western City Ball League in Toronto and was scouted by no less than seven Major League teams including the Milwaukee Braves, Detroit Tigers, New York Mets, Cincinnati Reds, Kansas City Athletics, Chicago White Sox and the New York Yankees.

In 1962 Ridley signed a contract with the Milwaukee Braves even though he wasn't yet the legal age of 21. Jim Fanning was the number one scout with the Braves at that time, Ridley remembers "and my parents liked Jim." At that time Bob Prentise was with the Detroit Tigers and Ridley turned him down.

From 1962-65 Ridley played 'A' class ball in the Braves organization. He made stops at Binghamton, Greenville, Waycross, and Sarasota in the rookie league. It was in Sarasota that he was teamed in the outfield with Cito Gaston and Carl Morton. "I'm the one that didn't make the major leagues," adds Jim.

That may be why he is interested in helping the Canadian kids make it to the big time in baseball. "I'd like to see a Canadian have a career in the majors," admits Jim, "that's why I do what I do."

After the 1965 season Ridley returned to Canada and played for five years in Quebec before coming to Ontario. In 1972 he started

teaching at Stewarttown and joined the Toronto Maple Leafs.

For the next couple of seasons he was the playing-manager with the Stratford Kraven's Knits and in 1975 managed the Guelph Forums.

Ridley recalls, "We made it to the finals in all four years and finished first three times." He adds, "We won the championship twice."

As a player Ridley described his bat as his forte claiming a couple of batting titles along the way.

It was 1973 that Ridley got involved in scouting acting as a sub-scout for Prentise and the Detroit Tigers. When Prentise joined the Jays in '76 Jim wasn't far behind.

His job with the Jays is that of a Southern Ontario Niagara Region and special assignment scout.

Last year Ridley took in the Canadian Midget and Junior championships in Moncton and Three Rivers checking for talented players that may be possible for the Blue Jay organization.

In the summers of 1978 to 1980 Ridley had the opportunity to ride the buses in Western Canada as a coach with the Medicine Hat Blue Jays.

He joined the team immediately following the school year and returned to Stewarttown with a day or two to spare. Not much time for a holiday.

In Medicine Hat Ridley had the opportunity to work with such names as Lloyd Moseby, Gino Petrelli and Dave Shipanoff, a Canadian pitcher the Jays have signed.

His experience as a scout paid dividends last year when the Jays lent his services to the Canadian Amateur Baseball Association to manage the under 18 youth team at the world championships. The result was Canada's first ever medal in world play.

Ridley had the chance to mix both his scouting and managing talents in selecting last year's Canadian team. Ridley had several of the best under 18's in Canada sent to him from the ten provinces and it was his choice as to which of the 43 in camp would wear the red and white of their country.

Those he selected paid off. From June 28 to the end of July last year Ridley worked with the group of players he had selected to the team with the championships the goal.

It was a successful tourney for Canada as they finished the eight team round robin event with a 6-1 record and in a three way tie for top spot.

They lost to Taiwan and the United States in the play-offs and finished with the bronze.

The highlight of the tourney for Ridley was a thrilling 5-4 win over the United States in round robin play. "It was the greatest game I've been to in my life," admitted Ridley. He recalls, "It was Saturday, July 9, my birthday. After two innings we were down 4-0 and after six we were still down 4-1." He adds "In the top of the seventh with two out it was still 4-1 (seven inning games). Two walks and a single brought Canada to within two and Soo Greyhound and Quebec Nordiques draft choice, Wayne Groulx of Welland, capped off the win." Ridley remembers, "He hit it so far I lost it in the clouds, a 450 foot homer that was six inches fair."

Groulx was the obvious hero for Canada as he came on to pitch in the bottom of the seventh.

After the game the team presented Jim with a birthday cake to celebrate the occasion. They had already given him his present.

The Canadian side went on to beat Columbia 5-3, Holland 6-2, Korea 7-2, Australia 12-1 and Panama 24-9, losing only to Taiwan 13-3.

According to Ridley, his Canadian contingent had the best bats in the tourney but were weak defensively and competed with fair to average

pitching.

This season Ridley will once again be at the helm as he looks for even better results. He has his priorities set and while he will attempt to improve the team on the field he is hoping to have as much fun as he did last year.

"I had a ball," admitted the Stewarttown teacher, "I loved being on the field."

In an effort to get a better look at the available talent this year Jim is hoping to make trips from province to province on weekends in May and June to do some scouting work before the camp begins in Kindersley, Saskatchewan at the end of June. The team will stay there till the world championships have been completed at the end of July and then it will be back to the business at hand for the Blue Jay scout. He'll spend August attending National finals, possibly looking for future major leaguers or national youth team members.

"I had a taste of it last year," admitted Ridley, "Canada's hosting this year and I want to finish higher." That will be tough. Cuba will once again compete and are always strong.

While the Jays got Jim into the Canadian team Ridley takes great pride in the team and the uniform he wore last year and will wear this time out.

"I'm trained to identify talent," states Jim, "And if I find some I'd recommend it to the Jays but I'm here for Canada, not just the Jays."

Jim Ridley is a dedicated ball man with his talents aimed at producing the best possible players he can in Canada and he couldn't do it without the support of his wife Penny and daughter Shannon, 7, or twin boys Jeremy and Shayne, 6.

Last season Penny travelled with Jim to offer her support and the family will do the same this year in Kindersley. "She understands," claims Jim, "Baseball's my thing." As for the future, Jim isn't sure what's in store. "I'd like to see ball in the Olympics," admitted the bronze medal manager. "And I'd like to be part of it." He doesn't know if he'll remain as a scout or if he'll remain with the Jays system or if he'll remain with the Canadian teams.

Regardless of where Jim Ridley ends up, you can bet that he'll be assessing talent for a long time and putting something back into the game even if it is coaching at a house league level.

One gets the impression from talking with him that he's hoping that some Canadian kid can learn from his experience and make a career for himself in the 'Big Leagues.'

He remembers Sarasota. "He's the one that didn't make the majors." He's hoping his scouting and teaching will give somebody else that break.

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11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

AGE: BOYS AND GIRLS 4 TO 19

FEE: \$20.00 PER PLAYER
\$35.00 PER FAMILY (T-Ball excluded)
\$10.00 T-BALL (shirt is yours to keep)

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REGISTRATION

DATE/TIME: Saturday, March 24th, 1984
10 a.m.-11 a.m.
LOCATION: Cedarvale Community Centre
FEE: \$20.00/person

First come first served for individual and team entrants. Maximum 6 Team Entrants/120 Ladies.

*TEAM ENTRANTS - Person registering for team must have list of players (up to 16 people) complete with names, addresses, phone numbers, birth date and ladies sweater size.

Sunday Morning Games starting June 3rd, 1984. No Long Waitlists.
For more information call 873-1168, 877-3768, 877-2062



Jim Ridley—Stewarttown teacher.



Ridley spent time in Medicine Hat

Golden Agers plan two bus trips

Regular meeting of the Acton Golden Age Club was held on March 6 with 28 members answering the roll call. The meeting was opened with "O Canada" and the "Theme Song" with R.L. (Bert) Davison in the chair.

Mrs. Edna Besley reported that the 20th anniversary dinner will be held at Knox Church on May 18, tickets will be on sale at the next meeting.

Mrs. Helen Waterhouse announced two bus trips that are planned. The first is a trip to Kitchener for the Shrine Circus on April 6, 7 or 8. The second trip is to the "Geritol Follies" at Old Massey Hall, Toronto on July 4. All the Hamilton performances are sold out. Better get your name on the list right away they are going fast.

Mrs. Helen Pickett gave the card report. Cards have been sent to Joe Fuller, Margaret Coppergood, Bea Angerson and Eileen Eberts, who have been in hospital. A card was also sent to Gladys M. Davidson, on the loss of her brother.

Business meeting adjourned at 2:30, the euchre and crokinole were enjoyed. Euchre winners were Helen Pickett 43, Jean Jackson 39, Harry Besley 55, Tony Stroker 45. Crokinole winners were Peggy Wood and Kay Bell 630, Mary McEachern and Joe 430.

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