

SPORTS & LEISURE

Ex-Jay Tony Fernandez pays visit to Georgetown

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

Former Toronto Blue Jays' star shortstop Tony Fernandez visited the area over the weekend, but he wasn't here to take in the team's season-opening series against the Minnesota Twins.

The four-time Gold Glover, who played in five Major League All-Star Games and was a key cog in the Jays' squad that won the 1993 World Series, was making a pitch of a different variety during his brief stay here.

Fernandez, 48, is now an ordained minister based out of his south Florida home and had speaking engagements in Kitchener on Saturday and Sunday, ruling out a trip to the Rogers Centre to catch any of the three games.

He was a guest in the home of Halton Hills' residents Paul & Faye Cartwright, proprietors of the Sports Celebrities Marketing firm that handles the public appearances of Fernandez and dozens of other former professional athletes.

"I would like to get down to a game, but there just isn't the time for it," he

said while greeting some awestruck youngsters at the Glen Williams ball diamond.

"I didn't get to Dunedin (the Jays' spring training home in Florida) this year so I can't say much about the new players, but I know that developing young talent is the key to success. If you don't have a strong farm system— which distinguished the Jays when I played— it's difficult to compete with organizations like the Yankees who are able to develop young talent in their system and also go out on the market and get the players to make the team even stronger."

Fernandez is still active in baseball through his foundation, running clinics for youths at both the beginner and elite levels. But most of his time is spent with the Tony Fernandez Foundation and his ministry work, which has brought him to Africa on several occasions.

His annual fundraising golf tournament that draws many former Blue Jays' teammates to help needy children in his native Dominican Republic will be held at Angus Glen on Aug. 18. For more info, email paul@sportscelebs.com



Twelve-year-old James Vezina gets some batting tips from former Toronto Blue Jays' great Tony Fernandez in Glen Williams last Friday. Fernandez, a Blue Jay on four different occasions, is now an ordained minister and was in the area for a pair of speaking engagements.
Photo by Eamonn Maher

Several local players still in the hunt for hockey glory

It's been over a month since the Georgetown Raiders were eliminated from the Jr. A playoff picture, but there are plenty of local connections still in contention for post-season championships.

The Oakville Blades, who knocked the Raiders out of the playoffs for the fourth straight year, have advanced to the Ontario Junior Hockey League's Buckland Cup championship series and lost the opener of the best-of-7 matchup to the Wellington Dukes 5-2 on Sunday.

Game 2 will be played in Oakville Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

Former Raider Mark McGowan provided the heroics for the Blades in game six of their semifinal series with the Kingston Voyageurs, scoring the overtime winner

to force a deciding contest Friday, which Oakville won 5-0.

Georgetown native Craig Rylett is the backup goalkeeper for the Dukes and has appeared in two post-season games thus far.

In Ontario Hockey League playoffs, Georgetown's Trent Cull guided the Sudbury Wolves to a stunning first-round sweep of the Ottawa 67's in his first year as head coach there. And former Christ the King student Michael Sgarbossa of Campbellville played a large role in the upset win for Sudbury, collecting four goals and eight assists in the series.

The Wolves will now face the Mississauga-St. Michael's Majors in the next round beginning Friday at the Hershey

Centre at 7:30 p.m.

The Majors swept the Belleville Bulls and their two local residents, centre Andy Bathgate and defenceman Stephen Silas, out of the post-season in four straight games.

Bathgate, a 19-year-old Pittsburgh Penguins' draft pick, led his team with 25 goals and 35 assists in 64 regular-season contests, while Silas, 18, a fifth-round selection of the Colorado Avalanche, was the Bulls' top-scoring blueliner with two goals and 34 helpers, playing in all 68 games.

Local resident Justin Rasmussen, an 18-year-old centre, had a goal and an assist in 14 regular-season starts for the top-ranked Majors but didn't see action in the Belleville series.

Georgetown's Liam Heelis was his usual feisty self for the Western Conference-champion Owen Sound Attack in its triumph over the London Knights in six games. The 20-year-old overage forward had two goals and an assist in the series and added 18 penalty minutes for the Attack, which awaits its second-round opponent.

Next up, Owen Sound could face the Windsor Spitfires, who have Georgetown Raiders' starting Michael Nishi serving as the backup in their opening-round matchup with the Erie Otters that is headed for a seventh game tonight (Tuesday) in Windsor. Former Raider Anthony Luciani had seven goals through the first six games of the series as an overager for the Otters.



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