

# Acton youth fills in for Jays' star

By **EAMONN MAHER**  
Staff Writer

With star slugger Jose Bautista out of the lineup over the weekend due to an ankle injury, the Toronto Blue Jays called up an eager prospect from Acton to try to fill the void.

Wearing a Jays' uniform with fake facial hair and sunglasses as a tribute to his favourite player, seven-year-old Curtis Hopkins threw out the ceremonial first pitch prior to Friday's game against the New York Yankees at the Rogers Centre in front of about 34,000 spectators.

With the crowd roaring with anticipation, Hopkins hurled a Bautista-like fireball that nearly sailed over the head of Toronto ace starting pitcher Ricky Romero standing at home plate.

"They didn't put me on the mound—I was standing in front of it— but I know I could have thrown it to (Romero) from the mound," assured the Grade 3 student, who was interviewed by a number of media outlets and had his picture taken "a whole lot" by impressed fans.

After the ceremony, Hopkins was escorted by Romero into the Blue Jays' clubhouse to meet Bautista, who led the Major Leagues in home runs last season with 54, setting a franchise record.

"(Bautista) asked me how this all came about, where the idea came from," said Hopkins "Then he gave me two of his bat-

ting gloves and two signed balls. He was really great to me."

Last fall, when trying to think of a costume to wear for Halloween, Hopkins's mom Michaela suggested he dress up like a Toronto Blue Jay, his dad Jason's favourite team.

"Why don't I dress up like Bautista?" replied Curtis.

The costume was a Halloween hit in Leathertown. Sporting a full Jays' uniform with Li'l Bautista on the nameplate, complete with the Dominican Republic native's trademark sunglasses and thick black beard (initially coloured in with makeup, but black lipstick holds up better in the heat), costumed Curtis and his father attended a game in Toronto last month against the Pittsburgh Pirates.

"After that, the Blue Jays approached us and invited all of us down for Fan Friday against the Yankees so Curtis could throw out the first pitch," Michaela said. "He was treated like a star and the players were so amazing to him."

Previously a soccer player, Curtis has now taken up baseball as his sport of choice, playing rookie ball for the Georgetown Eagles.

As for his newly found celebrity status, the articulate youngster is enjoying every minute of it. Global Television just called to do a feature interview and his next Rogers Centre appearance is set for July 30— Jason's birthday— when the Texas Rangers come to town.



A Halton police officer takes photos of a Ford Focus after a longboarder collided with the vehicle early Friday. A 21-year-old Halton Hills man is in hospital with life-threatening injuries. (Inset) The longboard lies on the grass nearby.



Photos by David Ritchie

## Man, 21, suffers serious injuries

A 21-year-old Halton Hills man suffered life-threatening injuries when he was hit by a car while riding a longboard in Georgetown early Friday morning.

The collision happened just after midnight at the intersection of River Dr. and Mountainview Rd. The man on the longboard was riding eastbound down a hill on River Dr. when he collided with a Ford Focus driven by a 19-year-old Georgetown woman who was making a left turn on a green light.

It is unknown if the man, who wasn't wearing a helmet, was standing or lying down on the longboard— an oversized skateboard— at the time of the accident.

The victim was initially transported to Georgetown Hospital then later airlifted to Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto with critical injuries, police said. The driver of the Focus wasn't injured.

Halton Police had roads closed off in the area of the collision for several hours for investigation.

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