

SPORTS & LEISURE

CtK one of four schools fielding softball squad

By **JON KUIPERJI**
Metroland Media Group

It lost its status as an Olympic sport several years ago, and its popularity in Ontario has taken a hit in recent years.

Now, with a rapidly eroding player base to draw from, might girls' softball be on the way out of Halton high school sports?

Halton Secondary School Athletic Association (HSSAA) convener Darrin Curtis thinks it just might be.

"I don't want to say it's a dying sport," Curtis says. "But it kind of is."

Curtis has plenty of reason to be concerned about the viability of high school softball. Just three years ago, the HSSAA league seemed alive and well with 11 teams. But in 2010, the loop went down to nine squads. Last year, it scaled down even further to six.

Now, just four schools— Iroquois Ridge, Holy Trinity, White Oaks and Georgetown's Christ the King— will compete in the HSSAA girls' softball season that starts this week. Formerly strong programs like T.A. Blakelock, Notre Dame and Georgetown (the latter won nine of 10 Halton titles from 1995-2005) are gone, as are all schools from Burlington and Milton.

Not that there will be a shortage of high school girls in the region still running the bases this spring. The HSSAA's girls' slo-pitch league, which began in 2007 as an alternative to windmill-pitching softball, has since grown from five teams to 15.

But slo-pitch isn't even close to being softball, windmill-pitching enthusiasts lament.

"I really miss (softball)," says Ron Larose, the longtime coach at Blakelock who had to switch to slo-pitch a couple years ago because of a shortage of rep softball players.

"I thought the game was great, and

the kids back in those days loved it. It just died off. It wasn't even a gradual thing. It was kind of like, boom."

The most convincing argument for slo-pitch over softball is that it levels the playing field. Pitching is everything in softball— perhaps even more so than baseball— and any school with two quality arms (pitchers have a limit of 12 outs, or four innings, per game) tended to dominate the sport.

Meanwhile, teams without inexperienced pitchers would either watch their opponents walk around the bases all afternoon or be constantly ducking out of the way of line drives.

"If you have no pitching, there's no point in playing," Curtis says.

At the same time, hitters without rep experience are like lambs being led to the slaughter when they go up to the plate against high-caliber windmill hurlers. That's why Georgetown coach Lori Herteis made the decision to switch to slo-pitch.

"I've seen the kids who don't play rep ball and know they're not going to get a hit," she says. "I had to think about my experience, growing up with fast-pitch and then moving into slo-pitch and loving the game. It's just a better game for the kids. They're going to feel more successful, it's not as intimidating. They'll just have a little more fun."

Larose doesn't blame slo-pitch for the gradual demise of high school softball in Halton, however. He points the finger at all the other options students have these days, noting that the Tigers can't even field a slo-pitch team this season because of lack of interest in the school.

"Girls now play hockey 12 months a year. And there are a lot of girls playing rugby, which wasn't around forever," Larose says.

"I could see one sport suffering, whether it be soccer or girls' softball. It just happens to be girls' softball."

'I don't want to say it's a dying sport. But it kind of is.'

—HSSAA convener
Darrin Curtis



Cheers!

Representing Team Canada for the first time at the recent International Cheer Union World Cheerleading Championships in Florida, Acton's Alandra Telschow had plenty to shout about when the competition was completed. The Canadians finished in top spot out of 11 entries in the All-Girl Elite Team category at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in Orlando, which drew over 200 teams from 70 countries. The Grade 12 Christ the King student occupies a "main base" position in the 24-member Canadian team's routine, a role she had to audition for. Telschow has been with the Georgetown-based Cheerforce Jaguars' organization for six years and competed at the worlds with Oakville's Cheerforce Wolfpack as well for the second year in a row.

Submitted photo

GSC test results

Georgetown Skating Club recently held its high test day and the following skaters passed their tests.

- Harris Tango— Brittany Bates
 - Rocker— Teana Graziani and Danielle Scanferla
 - Paso— Rebecca Sherk
 - Blues— Natasha Gushue and Haley Lambert
 - Killian— Rebecca Sherk and Alexandra Parker
 - Viennese Waltz— Spenser Callaghan
 - Quickstep— Alexandra Parker
 - Senior Silver Skills— Rebecca Sherk
 - Junior Silver Freeskate Part 1— Alexandra Parker
- Following are the results from the GSC's recent Low Test Day for the Spring Skate:
- Swing— Natalie Gago, Marilena Escoto and Jaidyn McFadden
 - Dutch Waltz— Reka Somognyi
 - Baby Blues— Sierra McEwen
 - Willow Waltz— Kyrsten Praught and Key-Ara Northey
 - Fourteenstep— Justine Brooks



James Robart-Morgan of the Acton Skating Club performed the European Dance at a recent High Test Day held at the Mold-Masters SportsPlex. Results for Acton skaters weren't available.

Photo by Eamonn Maher

Preliminary Skills— Gabrielle Pelchat

Junior Bronze Skills— Justine Brooks, Kyrsten Praught and Emma de Vries

Junior Bronze Freeskate Part 2— Danielle Scanferla and Brianna Basha
Intro Interpretive— Rachel Logan
Bronze Interpretive— Rachel Logan

LOOKING FOR SERVICE DIRECTORY?
SEE PAGES 18 & 19 OF TODAY'S REAL ESTATE LEADER