

SPORTS & LEISURE

Gator centrefielder 'very determined,' says Guelph Gators' coach

D'Avilar mulling U.S. college offers

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

Although their bid for a national championship title fell just short, it's not likely that the Guelph Gators will be feeling down about it for long.

After going undefeated through the preliminary round and first round of playoffs at 9-0, the Gators, with Georgetown's Hayley D'Avilar playing centrefield, lost 3-1 to the B.C. Renegades Saturday and 1-0 in a heartbreaker Sunday in the semifinal to the Surrey Storm at the 19-team Softball Canada under-18 women's championship tournament in Montreal.

"That's been one of the key factors in our success this year. There are quite a few comedians on our team," surmised Gators' head coach Cathy Butler, whose squad went undefeated to claim the Ontario under-18 title in St. Catharines last month.

"We like to have fun as a group but when it's time to play, they're all business. Some of the girls are going off to school after nationals so this will be our last weekend together."

D'Avilar, who turns 17 later this month, is actually one of the youngest players on the Guelph team and has another year at Christ the King Secondary School before heading off to school herself next fall.

She went 4 for 16 at the national tournament in the preliminary round, scoring five runs while supplying her usual excellent defence in the outfield.

"Hayley has a great attitude and is very coachable, very determined," Butler added.

"She's got great speed on the bases and has good power at the plate, so we usually bat her third or fifth in the order. What sets her apart is her drive to get better and she's always doing extra things to become a better player (such as working with an outfield coach, Bob Osborne of Scarborough)."

But like many of her teammates, D'Avilar's bat couldn't generate much against some top-flight B.C. pitching on the weekend and they were eliminated by Surrey on a single run scored in the seventh and final inning.

Nonetheless, D'Avilar remains a top prospect for the Canadian junior team that will be selected next year and playing for the powerhouse Guelph team has helped elevate her game.

"I've really enjoyed playing for Guelph. It's been my favourite team so far," added D'Avilar, who played for a team in Scarborough last year.

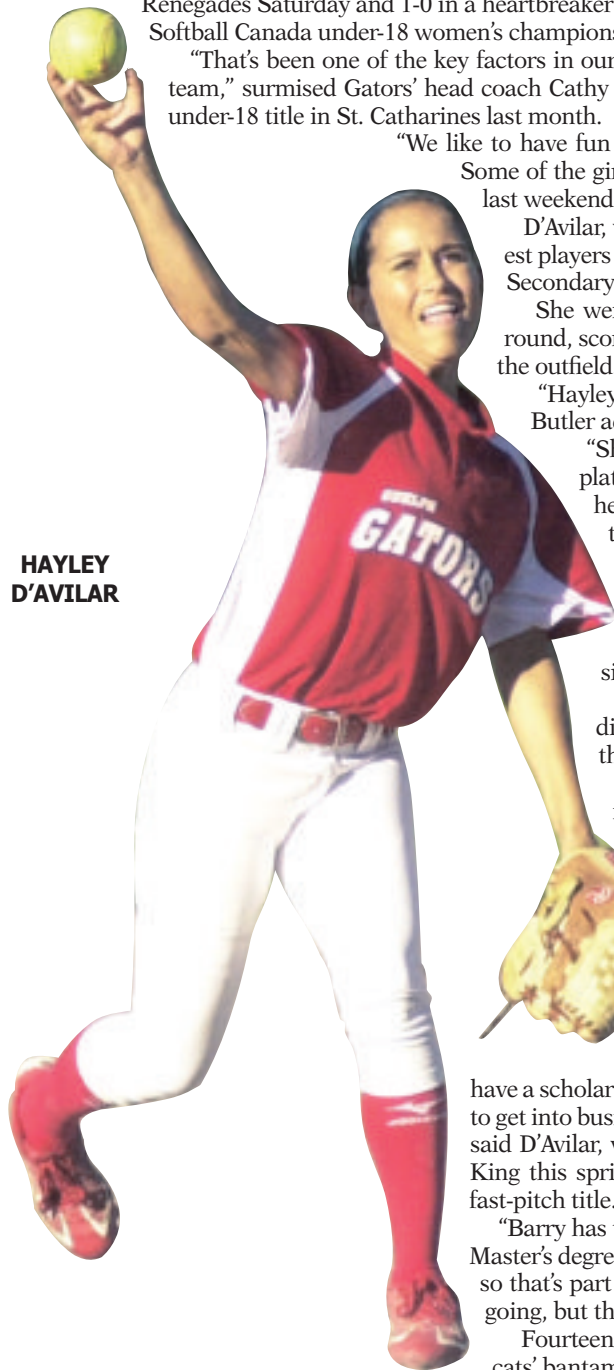
D'Avilar and the Gators also had a good showing at the Canadian Open Fastpitch Championships in Surrey, B.C. last month, placing fifth against competition that included international teams.

Her focus now shifts to sorting through scholarship offers from U.S. colleges, with Barry University in Miami, Fla. currently at the top of the list.

"I've been talking with a few different schools and I have a scholarship offer from Canisius (in Buffalo, N.Y.), but ideally I'd like to get into business and sports management, something along those lines," said D'Avilar, who played alongside younger sister Chelsea for Christ the King this spring as the Jaguars won their first-ever Halton high school fast-pitch title.

"Barry has that program, so I can go there for four years and get a dual Master's degree in those things. Their assistant coach is with Team Canada so that's part of it. I should make a decision by November on where I'm going, but things could change."

Fourteen-year-old Chelsea D'Avilar, who plays for the Brampton Bobcats' bantam team, can also boast of a provincial championship in 2012 as the Bobcats earned gold medals at the Ontario Summer Games this past weekend.



HAYLEY D'AVILAR



Golf Association of Ontario executive director Dave Mills (left) presents Club at North Halton member Reg Finlayson with the Super Senior (70+) title trophy at the GAO Senior Men's Championship in Midland. Photo courtesy Golf Assoc. of Ontario

Finlayson, Spencer tops

Georgetown South golfer Samantha Spencer became the third Club at North Halton member to win a provincial championship this month, earning the gold medal at the Ontario Summer Games by seven strokes.

The 16-year-old Spencer carded the girls' tournament low score of 72 on Thursday, adding to her opening round 78 and Friday's 75 for a total score of 225, nine-over par at the Cedar Brae Golf & Country Club.

Despite her strong lead down the stretch, Spencer kept focused on her way back to the clubhouse on Friday afternoon.

"I knew in the last five holes it was pretty tight still, but I tried not to worry about it that much and focus on my own game and it worked out for me," the Grade 11 Christ the King student said.

"The course was very nice and in great condition, the greens were really fast, which I like."

As well, North Halton's Reg Finlayson of Georgetown shot two rounds of 77 to place first in the Super Senior division (70+) at the recent Golf Association of Ontario Senior Men's Championship held at the Midland Golf & Country Club.

The 71-year-old was five shots better than the runner-up in his age category and tied for 29th overall at 14-over par.

In 2009, he won the 60+ title at the GAO Senior Men's Championship.



Samantha Spencer holds her Ontario Summer Games championship trophy.

Submitted photo

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