

Minor baseball sign-ups grow again

By Eamonn Maher
emaher@theifp.ca

The executive members of the Halton Hills Minor Baseball Association are hoping they can literally find a diamond in the rough in order to maintain its increases in registration numbers in the near future.

Sign-up numbers skyrocketed from about 500 players in 2015 to more than 700 last year a rise attributed in part to the recent resurgence of Major League Baseball's Toronto Blue Jays and another jump of about 100 players is expected for this spring and summer.

Dee Dee Hanyes Ridley, director of communications and community relations for the HHMBA, said the organization is working with the Town of Halton Hills to try to accommodate the rapid growth and that a number of options are being explored.

Just one mounded diamond, located at the Georgetown Fairgrounds, is suitable for usage by older rep teams, as all of the other available facilities are multi-purpose for slo-pitch and fast-pitch user groups.

We re expecting to be over 800 players this year and we feel we ll reach 1,000 in the next two years, said

Hanyes-Ridley.

The only thing holding us back and the reason why we can't grow beyond this is because we don't have the diamond time at this point.

Efforts are underway through a collaboration with the Georgetown Slo-Pitch League to add another mounded diamond at TSP, although Hanyes-Ridley said that field would be an unfunded project with the town.



Another strain on the fully booked diamond time was the recent addition of a youth division by the GSL, forcing the HHMBA to put a cap on the number of players on rosters for 2017.

We were a little tardy applying for a grant this year for some funding, but we re working with the GSL and other user groups to get another diamond built at TSP, Hanyes-Ridley added.

It becomes a safety issue when

you've got older players who can't practise on regulation fields.

The HHMBA has also added a bantam elite team for a two-year commitment to help keep local talent from leaving the municipality.

This is a new division that was opened by Baseball Ontario because we were losing AAA players to the Ontario Blue Jays and Burlington Pirates and a few different outlaw groups that aren't part of (Baseball Ontario), Hanyes-Ridley added.

This way parents don't have to take their kids elsewhere and pay between \$10,000 and \$15,000 to register for those teams.

The first Winter Indoor Skills Program session of the season took place in Acton last week and the 100 spots, ranging from T-Ball to bantam, were filled in only an hour and a half, Hanyes-Ridley said.

Registered players are eligible to participate in the free conditioning clinics coming up later this month, March and April. Umpiring training clinics are scheduled to take place in Georgetown on April 1 (Level 1) and April 8 (Level 2).

For more info, email info@hhmba.ca or visit the website www.halton-hillsmminorbaseball.com



BEARCATS BOUNCED: Ben Armstrong of the Acton Bearcats was fouled on this play by M.M. Robinson of the Halton Hills Eagles during an HSSAA senior boys basketball matchup Monday. Armstrong had six points in the Bearcats' 37-24 loss. Following a two-week break for exams, the Halton Secondary School Athletic Association resumed its winter sports schedule on Monday with a full slate of games. The single-A Bearcats have posted a 2-8 record in the Tier 2 division playing teams from AA- and AAA-sized schools. Tuesday's action was postponed due to the threat of freezing rain and it's not known when those games will be made up. Photo by Eamonn Maher

Raiders reach 40-win mark

The Ontario Junior Hockey League's most-productive power play went 3 for 5 Saturday night in the Georgetown Raiders' 5-1 victory over the Mississauga Chargers in Port Credit for their second win in a row.

With 60 man-advantage markers in 47 games, first-place Georgetown ranks second behind Trenton in efficiency at just under a 30-per-cent success rate.

Ryan Takamatsu tallied with the extra man 1:25 into the contest, followed by power-play scores from Josh Dickinson and Keegan Blasby in the second period. Jake Payette and Arran MacDon-



ald rounded out the scoring and Josh Astorino made 34 saves for the win in goal.

Georgetown remains in second spot in the Canadian Junior Hockey League's Weekly Top 20 Rankings behind the Brooks Bandits of the Alberta loop with seven games left to play in the regular season.

The 40-5-1-1 Raiders hosted the last-place Milton IceHawks Wednesday night, with the Burlington Cougars, who beat Georgetown in a 1-0 OT thriller Jan. 27 and are an honourable mention in the CJHL Top 20 Rankings, set to visit the Alcott Arena Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

Entwistle out with mono

Although MacKenzie Entwistle looked energetic enough in his last game a goal-and-an-assist performance in last week's CHL/NHL Top Prospects Game in Quebec City the 17-year-old forward has been diagnosed with mononucleosis.

It was announced that he'll be out of the lineup for the Ontario Hockey League's Hamilton Bulldogs for an indefinite period, the

team announced Friday.

It's not known what impact the ailment may have on the 6-foot-3, 181-pound Georgetown native's standing for the 2017 National Hockey League Entry Draft, which will unfold in Chicago June 23-24.

Entwistle had 11 goals and 13 assists in 45 games with the Bulldogs prior to his diagnosis and missed all three of this past weekend's games, in which Hamilton went 1-2.

COUNTDOWN TO THE RAIDERS NEXT HOME GAME

Saturday Feb 11th, 2017
7:30 pm at Mold-Masters Sports Plex
Georgetown Raiders vs. Burlington Cougars

312 GUELPH ST.,
GEORGETOWN
905-877-2296



www.georgetowntoyota.com