



Raiders surge into first place

The Georgetown Raiders have surged into first place in the Ontario Junior Hockey League's West Division standings thanks to a three-game win streak, capped off by a 2-1 overtime victory over the host North York Rangers on Sunday night.

Fourth-year forward Brendan Jacome of Caledon potted his 18th of the season in extra time against the Rangers in which Georgetown out-shot the opposition 36-33.

Josh Dickinson had a second-period power-play marker for the 17-8-2-0 Raiders and Andrew Masters picked up the win in goal.

At home on Saturday evening, Brendan Jacome (2), Jack Jacome, Matthew Pyz and Arran MacDonald found the twine in a 5-1 home triumph over the Toronto St. Michael's Buzzers.

Next up for the Raiders is a home date against the Cobourg Cougars Saturday at the Alcott Arena at 7:30 p.m. Fans are asked to bring an unwrapped gift to the game and "Fill the Net" for the Toys for Tots/Treasures for Teens campaign.

Up and coming star baseball pitcher, Ben Abram has his eye on the Big Leagues

By Eamonn Maher
emaher@theifp.ca

Ben Abram is a popular name in elite baseball circles these days.

Just 15 years old, the towering right-handed pitcher already has scouts salivating about his potential and he was recently named to Baseball Canada's Junior National Team for 2016.

The second-youngest of the 30 best 18-and-under high schoolers in the country, the Georgetown resident is also the tallest on the roster at 6-foot-6 and 200 pounds.

He was one of only two players eligible for the 2018 Major League Baseball Draft selected to play in the Tournament 12 prospects tournament held in September at the Rogers Centre in Toronto, where he struck out four of six batters on 18 pitches in a two-inning relief appearance.

A leap year baby and the only child of Sandy and Brett Abram, who are both about 6-foot-3, the scary part is that Ben will likely grow two or three more inches into Randy Johnson territory. Sandy was an all-Canadian volleyball player at Durham College while dad Brett played football at what's now known as Western University.

"Ben's a freak of nature and I think he might be the most popular right-handed pitcher in Canada right now," said local resident Scott Van de Valk, Abram's manager for the Oakville-based Ontario Terriers' under-18 showcase team.

Van de Valk said in his discussions with scouts, they are impressed with Abram's "free-and-easy" delivery and some have compared him to John Axford, a veteran closer with the Col-

orado Rockies from Port Dover, Ont.

"A sports medicine guy did some testing with Ben and we know he can get a lot stronger, so that's exciting too."

A straight-A Grade 10 student at Georgetown District High School, Abram's fastball has been clocked in the mid-80s mph and his repertoire

includes four other pitches. He aims to put on about 20 pounds this winter in a structured workout program that includes three or four sessions a week with a specialty trainer and a couple of weekly visits to a bio mechanist.

Georgetown minor hockey, and who has also played basketball and volleyball at GDHS.

Careful to avoid burnout or injury, Abram starts just once a week during the season and won't begin throwing again until January. U.S. Division I schools can't contact prospects like Abram, so they'll have to be patient

helping him develop as a young hurler.

"At age 12, someone said I could make Team Canada when I was 16 and that's when I thought, 'Hey, maybe I am good at this.' And then it progressed to, 'Maybe I want to play in the Majors someday,'" he added. "Everyone says that, but it's really become a goal of mine now."

The local teen had his eyes opened to the scouting world at the Prep Baseball Report Futures Games this summer in Indiana, at which he had the chance to speak with about 30 U.S. college coaches.

Abram made his debut for Canada at the Fall Instructional League last month in Orlando, Fla. against pros from the Atlanta Braves, Houston Astros and Washington Nationals.

But the highlight of his budding career came while sitting in French class at GDHS in September.

He received a call on his cellphone and let it go to voicemail before checking the message after the teacher left the room for a couple of minutes.

"I played it and I hear, 'Oh hi Ben, it's (director of Baseball Canada's national teams) Greg Hamilton. I'd just like to talk to you about the Junior National Team.'" I remember bursting out of my chair and running out of the classroom and called my mom and said, 'Guess what?' She was excited too. There was some profanity, actually. It was a lot of fun."

The JNT has a spring training trips to Florida scheduled for March and April as well as exhibition games in the Dominican Republic Summer League in May and the Cuba Series, with games to be played in Havana and the Rogers Centre in early July.



Georgetown's Ben Abram represented his country for the first time recently at a fall instructional camp in Orlando, Fla. against prospects from major league baseball organizations and Stetson University.

Submitted photo

as he's got two more years of high school after this one and two more summers with the Terriers.

He has been a big fan of Toronto Blue Jays ace David Price even when the lanky lefty was a member of the Tampa Bay Rays.

"I wish I was left-handed. It would be nice and it would be tougher for batters, but I'll take my right arm," he said.

Abram credits his Georgetown Eagles coach, Ian McLaughlin, with

Sat. Nov. 28, 2015

7:30 pm at Mold-Masters Sports Plex

**Georgetown Raiders
vs.
Coburg Cougars**

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