

# Recreation and Sports

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## DeSouza's NHL dream leads through Panthers camp

By Mike Zrostek

Getting a shot at the big time in the National Hockey League would be a dream come true for any Canadian kid but, for former Georgetown resident Ray DeSouza his next chance is just another notch in his hockey career resume.

DeSouza the six-foot-four 215-pound 25 year-old former Georgetown Gemini defenseman who was born in Chinguasousy and moved to Georgetown when he was 16, will be attending the expansion Florida Panthers training camp in August.

He took a round-about route to realize his dream, but the trip might be just about to end.

"I just got laid off at the airline (World Ways Canada) I was working at and went with my friend (Mark Lindauer) to Manitoba to look at some teams, I knew I could and should be playing hockey."

It was probably the best trip DeSouza took, the trip that started his professional career. He suited up for some exhibition games with the Brandon Bob Cats of the CIAU and ironically, he was offered a full scholarship at the University of Manitoba.

"They signed me and gave

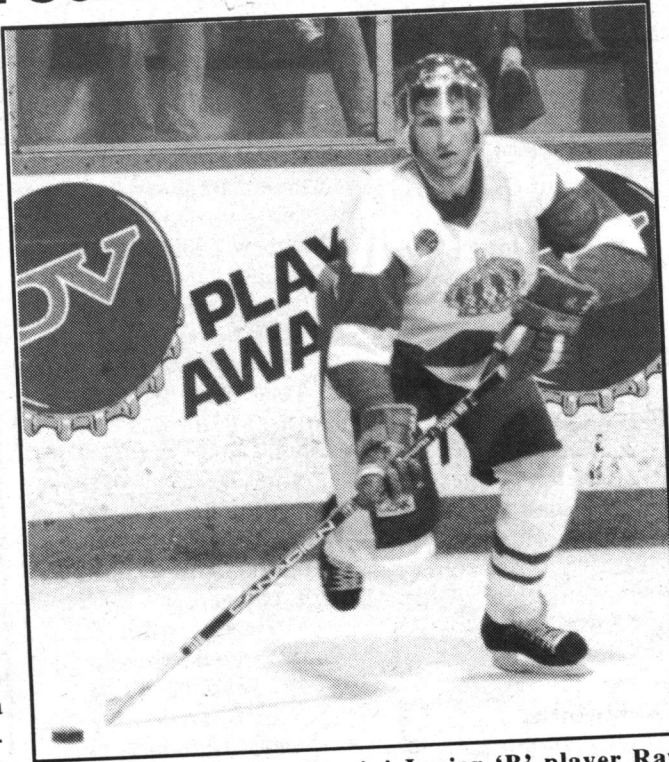
me a scholarship. I never attended, because I wanted to play hockey professionally and everything started to unfold. I made a name for myself and that's what you have to do."

DeSouza admits it wasn't easy getting back into the hockey grind. "Trying to get back was hard. You really have to make a name for yourself and do anything to beat out the next guy for a job. I also bounced around a lot at the beginning." Indeed it's been a busy time for DeSouza who played for the Gemini for three years before playing for the Pembroke Lumberkings in the Centennial Cup at the age of 20.

"I went there (to Pembroke) because I knew they had a great chance to win the Cup. We didn't win, but the experience I got from playing was good for me."

After the Centennial Cup DeSouza quit hockey for a couple years "to try other things", attending school at Humber College taking Humanities. In 1991 he decided it was time to try hockey again and made the trek to Manitoba.

At the conclusion of his brief stint with Brandon DeSouza ended up with the Dayton Bombers in the East



Former Georgetown Gemini Junior 'B' player Ray DeSouza, saw Centennial Cup action with the Pembroke Tier Two Junior 'A' team in 1988. photo submitted

Coast League for two months. That same year, he played for Thunder Bay of the Colonial League.

Things picked up in 1992 when he decided to become a free agent and tried to make his own deal. He contacted Nashville of the East Coast League and was invited to play for Nashville and head

coach Nick Fotiu the former New York Rangers tough guy.

"I played 26 games for Nashville and thought it was great playing for Fotiu who demands a lot of respect. He told me so many great stories like how he carried a pipe with him on the subway on his way to Madison Square

Garden. Just a great guy to play for."

Then DeSouza got the call most players hate to get, the one that says you've been traded. In this case it was the best break DeSouza could have got.

"Nick called me New Year's Eve and told me I was traded to the Birmingham Bulls. He said that they needed defenseman and that it would be a good move for me and it turned out it was."

When he arrived in Birmingham the puck started to roll for DeSouza and it hasn't stopped yet. In his first year with the Bulls he appeared in 30 games, scoring a goal and 10 assists. The statistic DeSouza enjoys the most is that from the time he arrived with the Bulls he led the team in plus-minus.

"I'm a stay at home defenseman and the plus-minus is something I'm very proud of," said DeSouza who also isn't afraid to mix it up either.

"I remember playing for Georgetown and one brawl we had I just kept coming back on the ice and I ended up getting suspended for six months." When asked what he thinks about fighting in the NHL DeSouza doesn't hesitate with an answer.

"Hockey is an emotional

game and you have to realize players carry a stick that can be used as a weapon. Put together the stick and a guy who doesn't like fighting and you've got trouble. DeSouza absolutely loves and would like to stay if the Florida try-out doesn't pan out.

Considering DeSouza just got into playing again to get employment many other doors have opened including coaching in hockey schools and offers to play in Europe.

"My agent (Gary Theoret) put me on the wire and before I knew it a first division team from England offered me a contract for between three and five years at \$50,000 a year. What makes that great is that they give you a place to live and a car so you pocket the salary. Realistically DeSouza admits he can probably play about three or four years and coaching is something he would like to get into when his playing career is over. So staying in Birmingham wouldn't be a difficult decision.

When you consider DeSouza got back into hockey for just for a job, his hockey resume is looking more impressive everyday and making the Panthers would be another notch in his career.

## Soccer column has changed focus over the years

By Alex Tough

When this column began several years ago, the focus was 90 per cent youth soccer. Then it was difficult to obtain space for any soccer news at all. We persevered until the column became a regular feature, although often relegated to the weekend editions. However, very welcome indeed. It took a while and now we have reports from individuals giving us news of the youth in all age groups.

This column now concentrates on the Inter-County senior, provincial and national soccer. The odd news about the ladies league creeps in, although I do not receive regular news; otherwise, we would.

Time marches on and I no longer play or referee, which I miss - no one else does, I will

add, (if I do not, someone else will). I am no longer on the boards of Peel/Halton and Ontario Associations and miss those days also. News from both bodies still is passed down and from those, and other sources, comes the column. (Just in case you are interested).

The names of Falcons, Meteors, Ajax and Eagles have been around these parts for many years - the Ancient Mariners are relatively newcomers by comparison, beginning around the 1976 season. Falcons have dropped in status from a well-respected and feared Toronto & District member to Peel/Halton to Inter-County status.

Last week they suffered the biggest defeat I can recall in losing to Eagles by 10-1 in second division play. This is

Falcons' first season in the league and they are not finding matters as easy as they thought. The standard of play and player is underestimated by many, that is, until they watch the league at play each Wednesday. Falcons are at home to Caledon this week at Alcott at 7 p.m. and will be looking for a return to form.

Caledon's high scoring machine was held by Ajax last week in what must be taken as a surprise result. The game ended in a 0-0 tie and Ajax take a bit of credit out of the meeting. Originators of Ajax are the Dutch members of the community and this was a strong team in the early days. This season's team has a fair sprinkling of other "nationalities" and lack some firepower up front, although putting in a power of work. Ajax play United, the co-club team of Meteor, at Meadowglen, also at 7 p.m.

Eagles, another Dutch community team, today are still that, and a young team of strength, skill and good football which has improved each year since reforming. They are a force to be reckoned with as results testify. This week Milton visit Alcott at 8:45 p.m. to face this high scoring outfit.

Meanwhile, the first division also has been in business.

Another fast improving team are Blazers. When they realize their play is as good as anyone's and have the confidence to match - look out! Last week the team led Mariners 1-0 with 10 minutes left for play and threatened to

pop another when Mariners netted the equalizer. Neither team deserved to lose and so it turned out. Blazers goal came early in the second half on a deflection. Meteor dropped a home tie, 0-0 in their game with the long ball, hard-tackling Meadowvale, in a thriller. Second place Merseyside gave Manchester a double defeat, 4-3 in the Knock Out Cup, and 7-0 24 hours later in league play. Merseyside have scored 30 goals in 7 games at this stage.

First division match-ups are Mariner vs. Meadowvale at Cedarvale at 8:45 p.m.; Blazers at Merseyside and Meteor at Winchester.

Canada face Australia in the next round of World Cup qualifying at the end of the month and again in early August in the usual home and away format.

Australia defeated New Zealand in a tie-breaker for the right to meet Canada, who placed second in their group to Mexico. Neither team will be a pushover for the other.

Australia has a few players playing in top class leagues around the world; England, Germany and Italy. Canada's players also are featured in Scotland, England, Holland and Germany as well as a non-league player in long-serving Mike Sweeney, who only plays indoor these days.

The American Professional Soccer league is a newish league with Canadian participants in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. Vancouver is at the top of the standings with Toronto and Montreal in mid-

table positions. Next year the league intends to move to a two division format, hopefully not making the mistakes of former attempts by various named league operations. The cost of running a team at this level is considerable.

Toronto Blizzards expect to

lose around \$400,000 this year and half of that next year. The World Cup spin-off in dollars and spectators may just offset the undertaking in the long term. In the meantime, Blizzard ownership will continue to support the game in spite of the finances.

### Inter County Soccer

June 30

#### First Division

Team	GP	W	T	L	GF	GA	PTS
Meteor	8	6	1	1	13	3	20
Merseyside	7	5	0	2	30	10	15
Mariners	8	3	1	4	14	16	10
Blazers	8	2	3	3	11	20	9
Meadowvale	6	1	2	3	9	9	5
Winchester	7	1	0	6	7	20	3

#### Results:

Meteor	0	Meadowvale	0
Blazer	1	Mariner	1
Merseyside	7	Winchester	0
Merseyside	4	Winchester	3 (K.O. Cup)

Next Fixtures: Wednesday, July 7  
 Mariner vs. Meadowvale 8:45 Cedarvale  
 Merseyside vs. Blazer  
 Winchester vs. Meteor

#### Second Division

Eagles	7	6	1	0	35	7	22
Caledon	7	4	2	1	31	5	14
United	5	3	0	2	11	16	9
Falcon	6	3	0	3	8	14	9
Stingers	6	2	0	4	4	13	6
Ajax	6	1	1	4	9	20	4
Milton	7	1	0	6	7	21	3

#### Results:

Stingers	1	Milton	0
Ajax	0	Caledon	0
Eagles	10	Falcon	1

Next Fixtures:  
 United vs. Ajax 7:00 Meadowglen  
 Falcon vs. Caledon 7:00 Alcott  
 Eagles vs. Milton 8:45 Alcott

### Elite soccer camp

The Ontario Soccer Association is holding its Elite Soccer Camp Program at Bronte Athletic Field from July 12 to July 16. The camp is aimed at boys and girls, ages 10 - 14, who are interested in developing themselves further in the sport by participating in advanced skill and tactical development sessions throughout the week. The camp will operate from 9:30 to 3 p.m.

Team Ontario coaches and nationally licensed instructors along with professional players and coaches make this one of the top develop-

ment camps in the province. Camp participants will receive an official camp T-shirt and personal performance evaluations. The fee for the camp is \$105.

Each player is asked to bring with him/her soccer shoes, shin-guards, a warm-up suit and rain gear (when applicable). All participants should bring their own packed lunch with plenty of refreshments. Players interested in attending, please contact Peter Sarantopoulos at the Ontario Soccer Association at (416) 495-4250.