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Sparks Brantford team's win Ridley basks in world title glow

EAMONN MAHER
Staff Writer

Even though the team he was cheering for this week in the World Series came up a little short, Georgetown's Hal Ridley can take consolation in that he's a world champion in his own right.

The 66-year-old recreational slo-pitch softball player was somewhat disappointed that the Philadelphia Phillies defeated the Tampa Bay Rays in five games Wednesday night, but a glance away from the television at the engraved gold medal he recently won at the Huntsman World Senior Games in Utah could quickly help him think about something else.

Ridley batted cleanup, played first base and pitched a few innings as well for the Brantford Nissan squad that won the men's 65-69 AA age group after posting a 9-1 record in the 12-team double-knockout tournament, defeating the Milwaukee Seniors twice in a row to claim the cham-

ionship.

The Olympic-format Huntsman Games have been held in St. George, Utah—a two-hour drive from Las Vegas—for over 20 years and this year's event drew some 9,500 athletes from 20 countries in 25 different sports.

"It's considered the biggest senior slo-pitch tournament in the world with 330 teams altogether and it's so well organized," said Ridley, a retired physical education teacher who taught at North Peel and Central Peel in Brampton.

"The whole atmosphere around it is a really fantastic experience. We were able to go sightseeing to places like the Grand Canyon, so it wasn't just about the slo-pitch itself."

The victory was especially sweet for the Brantford side, which had lost by one run in the 60-64 AAA division final two years ago in the Huntsman Games to a team from California.

Ridley, considered the elder-statesman of the Georgetown Slo-Pitch Association's over-35 A

division with The Jumbos, has played on the side with Brantford Nissan for the past seven years. The core of that team captured a Canadian championship six years ago in Saskatoon and won provincial titles in 2005 and 2006 in Niagara Falls.

The path to winning this year's title in Utah was hardly a stroll in the park for Brantford and Ridley, who had double knee replacement surgery in July of 2007. They tuned up for the Huntsman Games with a tournament in Mesquite, Nevada, losing to a team from Michigan in the AAA final, before heading to St. George, meaning they would end up playing 15 games in eight days.

"My knees feel really good. It's amazing what they can do," added Ridley, who keeps fit by playing golf, swimming and hiking with his wife Janette.

"I wasn't sure at first how it would go after having both (knees) done but I got myself back into shape and now everything's fine."



Local resident Hal Ridley was a key contributor to the Brantford Nissan slo-pitch softball team that recently took top spot in their age group at the Huntsman World Senior Games in St. George, Utah. Submitted photo

Ridley also has the advantage of being on the diamond for a couple of more months a year than most as he plays in a league and some tournaments with a

bunch of Snowbirds in his winter home in Lakeland, Fla.

(Eamonn Maher can be reached at emaher@independentfreepress.com)

Playoff-bound

Adam McGourty (8) of the Georgetown Rebels won this battle at the net with a Notre Dame opponent on Wednesday in the final match of the Halton Secondary School Athletic Association senior boys' volleyball league regular season. The Rebels beat the Fighting Irish 25-20, 25-21 and head into the playoffs in third place in the Poliziani Division with a 9-4 record. Georgetown's seniors will be on the road for their opening-round playoff matchup, while the first-place Rebel junior boys are set to host a post-season contest, both on Monday afternoon.

Photo by Eamonn Maher



Spencer overcomes rain and wind to capture Jr. tourney

Howling winds and rain didn't stop Georgetown South's Samantha Spencer from claiming top spot in a field of four players at the final stop on the Maple Leaf Junior Golf Tour's Ontario Fall Series in Cambridge recently.

Spencer, 12, carded a round of 16-over-par 88 to win the open girls' division by six shots over 17-year-old runner-up Brittany Davidson of Mississauga at the one-day tournament held at the Whistle Bear Golf Club.

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