

Former Merchants have a ball at elimination tournament

By BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

It's off to the Canadian Junior Men's Fastball Championships in Prince George, BC next month for five former Stouffville Merchants players.

The quarter, which includes Jason Underwood, Darren Crawford, Bill Pride, Bob Ferguson and Brent Bonner, are members of the Oshawa Juniors, who placed second out of 37 teams in the

Ontario Junior Men's Eliminations held in Oshawa over the weekend. With the rules now changed so that the Ontario finalists as well as the champions get to go to the national showdown, the five ex-Merchants and their teammates are in.

For Crawford, it will be the second national junior championship in which he has played. He was with the Merchants squad which placed third in Newfoundland in 1991. Also on the Oshawa

Junior roster are former Merchants Hubert Basilio and Rob Gray.

The first-place finishers were another Oshawa team, the Oshawa Juniors. The Juniors suffered their first loss of the double knockout tourney when they were pummeled 9-0 by Sebringville on Saturday. But they bounced back to edge the same crew 3-2 Sunday to qualify for the title round. They then handed the Juniors their first defeat by a 3-1 count, before

the eventual winners prevailed 3-2 in the second game of the championship round.

Underwood provided yeoman service behind the plate for the Juniors. Crawford was solid at shortstop and Pride stood out in centre field. The versatile Ferguson played second base, while Bonner played a utility role. Crawford and Underwood both crushed home runs in Friday's opening game win.

The Port Perry Juniors, whose lineup includes former

Merchants Rich and Ryan Burkholder, came up flat at the Eliminations, dropping their first two games en route to an early exit. But Rich will get his moment in the spotlight tonight when he suits up with the Oshawa City and District Pastall League all-star team for their game with the New Zealand national men's team in Port Perry.

The Kiwis, who were second to area resident Bob Abbot's Canadian team in the 1992 World Championships,

will also play the Greenbank Gamblers in the twin bill. The action gets under way at 7:30 at Port Perry's waterfront park. Thursday night will see another fastball attraction in Port as the finalists in last year's inter-national Softball Congress championships go at it in an exhibition game. It will be the Green Bay (Wisconsin) Roadrunners, the champions versus the Toronto Gators, who were dethroned by the Roadrunners last year.





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