

BASEBALL: Former York Region resident is back with the Blue Jays

Spoljaric hopes a return to Toronto is permanent

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

Paul Spoljaric is back. And this time, he hopes a move back to Toronto is the last one that he will have to make in his aspiring major league baseball career.

Beginning the season with the Philadelphia Phillies, the 28-year-old former York Region resident received news last Wednesday he was rejoining the Toronto Blue Jays in a trade for relief pitcher Robert Person.

"It's great to be back," said the left handed hurler upon his return to Toronto, where he began his major league career in 1994 and spent the 1996 and part of the 1997 season before being traded to the Seattle Mariners.

"It really doesn't feel like I've left here. But it's an opportunity to come back to where I was raised as a player."

Dealt to the Phillies from the Seattle Mariners in exchange for pitcher Mark Leiter last November, Spoljaric had no idea that a pending transaction was in the works.

The Kelowna, B.C. native vividly recalled the news of the trade, which came during the fourth inning of the Phillies' home matinee game against the San Diego Padres last Wednesday.

"The whole time I had no idea what was going on," Spoljaric conceded.

"They told me the manager (Terry Francona) needs to see you. I thought the whole time that maybe I forgot to tell them beforehand where I would be, either sitting in the bullpen or dugout."

Upon receiving the news, Spoljaric immediately boarded a plane for

Toronto and suited up with the Blue Jays later that day for their home contest against the Oakland Athletics.

During his brief stay with the Phillies, Spoljaric saw action in four games and started three. As a starter he had an 0-3 won-loss mark and sported a 15.09 earned run average. In relief he was 0-0 with a 2.45 ERA.

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While disappointed with his productivity, Spoljaric insisted he had no problems in making the adjustment to pitching in the National League.

Instead, he felt his output could have improved with a little more playing time.

"I just didn't pitch enough," he said. "I had four games in a month. That should tell you right there."

Despite the lack of innings pitched, Spoljaric said the National League organization treated him as well as could be expected. "They were good to me and were always up front."

In returning to the Blue Jays, Spoljaric will be in the bullpen and enter the game in long relief situations for the time being.

"It's fine by me," he said. Spoljaric is excited about the

prospects of this year's team and feels the Jays have a legitimate chance at earning a spot in the post season.

This was a far different cry from the last time he suited up with the Blue Jays, which was a team in transition.

"If this team doesn't make it to the playoffs I'd be surprised. There's lots of talent on this team. There's pitching, hitting and guys that can come off the bench."

Blue Jays manager Jim Fregosi feels the change in scenery and a return to a place where he had his best years in his blossoming major league career, might be the elixir Spoljaric needs to fulfill his potential.

"He's pitched well here in the past. Hopefully he'll get things straightened out."

For the time being, Spoljaric revealed he and wife, Lisa, and 10-month old son, Hunter, will stay with his in-laws in Stouffville.

As for purchasing another home in York Region, Spoljaric is rather hesitant at the moment, noting the unpredictability of professional sports and his past experiences in being traded.

"I don't think I'll be buying a home here just yet. I'll wait until I get a little more security under my belt."



PAUL SPOLJARIC
Happy to be back pitching for the Blue Jays

Dump neighbour steamed over methane flare

Landfill owners violate gas handling protocol, councillor says

BY CHRISTOPHER DOURIS
Staff Writer

Concerns about safety have arisen after Toronto was slapped with a violation notice over the handling of methane coming from the Maple dump, a local councillor said yesterday.

"Can we assure our residents that there isn't going to be this methane gas permeating the community?" Councillor Mario Ferri asked.

"The fact there was a breakdown shows the system is not foolproof."

Lou Ciardullo, Toronto's manager of landfills, said all the gas that should have been incinerated was incinerated, either through Eastern Power's boilers or flares designed to burn the methane.

"Absolutely, there was no gas emitted to the atmosphere uncombusted," he said.

Methane is produced by decomposing trash in the Keele Valley landfill site, Canada's largest. A collection system has been set up to route the gas to Eastern Power or to a system of four flares. Eastern Power uses the gas to produce electricity, which is then sold to Ontario Hydro.

The notice of violation, dated March 6, in part states, "During a partial shutdown on March 6, 1999 lasting approximately 29 hours, approximately 6,600 CFM (cubic feet per minute) of landfill gas was incinerated in one flare, thereby exceeding the approved flow of 4,000 CFM as stipulated."

A letter from the Environment Ministry to Toronto's solid waste management department pointed out, "On the morning of March 7, 1999, the ministry received an odour complaint from a resident in the community."

Ferri, who lives 600 metres from the dump site, said, "They've assured me there's nothing to worry about, the Ministry of the Environment has assured us."

However, "just telling us over and over isn't enough," he added. "That's one of the reasons we have become so totally skeptical of everything they say."

Ciardullo said the problem was caused by weather conditions. "In my opinion, it wasn't a major problem."

The methane is supposed to be burned by Eastern Power, he said. If for any reason it shuts the plant down, there are four flares that can burn off the methane.

On March 5, Eastern shut down one of its boilers, Ciardullo said.

Frozen valves prevented the flares from burning the methane, causing the overflow gas to be burned by one flare.

"(We) exceeded the certificate of approval limit those flares are licensed for," Ciardullo said.

The system was originally over-designed so the extra methane didn't pose a problem.

"They're capable of burning much more than 4,000 CFM," he said.

"Interestingly enough," Ciardullo added, "we had already begun the process of requesting the Ministry of the Environment amend the certificate to allow us to burn more."

A test is planned for the Victoria Day weekend to prove the flares can handle more than the 4,000 CFM.

"If that proves to be successful, that violation was really a moot point," Ciardullo said.



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