

Pitching tandem, Texan push Spartans to perfect start

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

When Jeff Fong began pre-season workouts with the Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans baseball team, he didn't know what type of talent with which he had to work.

The fourth-year head coach has large expectations, but with the Tier 2 season well under way, he has been pleasantly surprised.

The Spartans are a perfect 4-0 so far after an 11-1 mercy shortened pounding of Richmond Hill's Bayview Secondary School.

"When we started the season we didn't know how well we'd be and because of that we elected to

enter tier two," Fong said. "But now, knowing what I have, we would definitely be playing tier one."

PITCHERS BECOME INFELDERS

A big factor in the Spartans' success stems from pitchers Ryan Pontone and Mike Warner, who transferred from Courtice.

"They are both phenomenal pitchers. They complement each other well in the way they move the ball and change speeds.

"They have a variety of pitches and the batters have a hard time in adjusting," Fong said.

When Pontone or Warner isn't on the mound, Fong uses them at shortstop to anchor the infield.

"Our infielders and outfielders

have only made just a few errors," Fong said.

"And that's been helpful, too, in our success."

As good as the club has been on defense and on the mound, Fong also noted their offense has clicked well enough.

Not so much with the long ball, Fong said, but rather keeping the ball in play that has enabled them to erupt for big innings.

As an example, in the club's 16-0 win over Markville Secondary School May 7, the Spartans exploded for 11 runs in the first inning.

In their May 9 15-8 road win over Milliken Mills Secondary School, the Spartans overcame a 5-0 first-inning deficit by scoring three runs

in the second inning and six in the fourth and fifth innings to take a 15-5 lead.

"When the guys try and put their egos aside we can hit the ball," he said.

"For us to be successful, we have to just put the ball in play."

BIG INNINGS ABOUND

Among those who have jump-started the Spartans' offence is centrefielder and clean-up hitter Phil Wood.

Leadoff hitter and leftfielder Tyler Harvey, a Grade 9 student from Texas, is just at the school for this year.

His father came to Stouffville to open up the Wal-Mart store near

the school.

Third baseman John Reesor and first baseman Travis Connor have also swung big bats.

In Wednesday's win, Pontone started the game on the mound and picked up the win.

Warner scored three runs while Alex Powell and Pontone each crossed the plate twice.

Defensively, the Spartans received big plays from Powell, who made two great catches in the outfield.

The Spartans were scheduled to resume play yesterday against Richmond Green Secondary School (Richmond Hill), a first-year team coached by former Spartans head coach Andy Stoikos.

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