

SPORTS: Stouffville man, 38, gives big league baseball final shot

Father of three's aging fastball not quick enough for pro scouts

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For years now, Justin Lusk often wondered 'what if?'

Since retiring from playing competitive baseball when he was 22 years of age, the now 38-year-old Stouffville resident and father of three wondered what would have happened if an opportunity presented itself where he could showcase his pitching arm before a handful of Major League Baseball scouts.

Last week in Etobicoke, Lusk was given that chance.

Auditioning before several major league team scouts, the Stouffville District Secondary School graduate was among some 200 hopefuls, primarily between the ages of 15 to 23, who were hoping to get that big break.

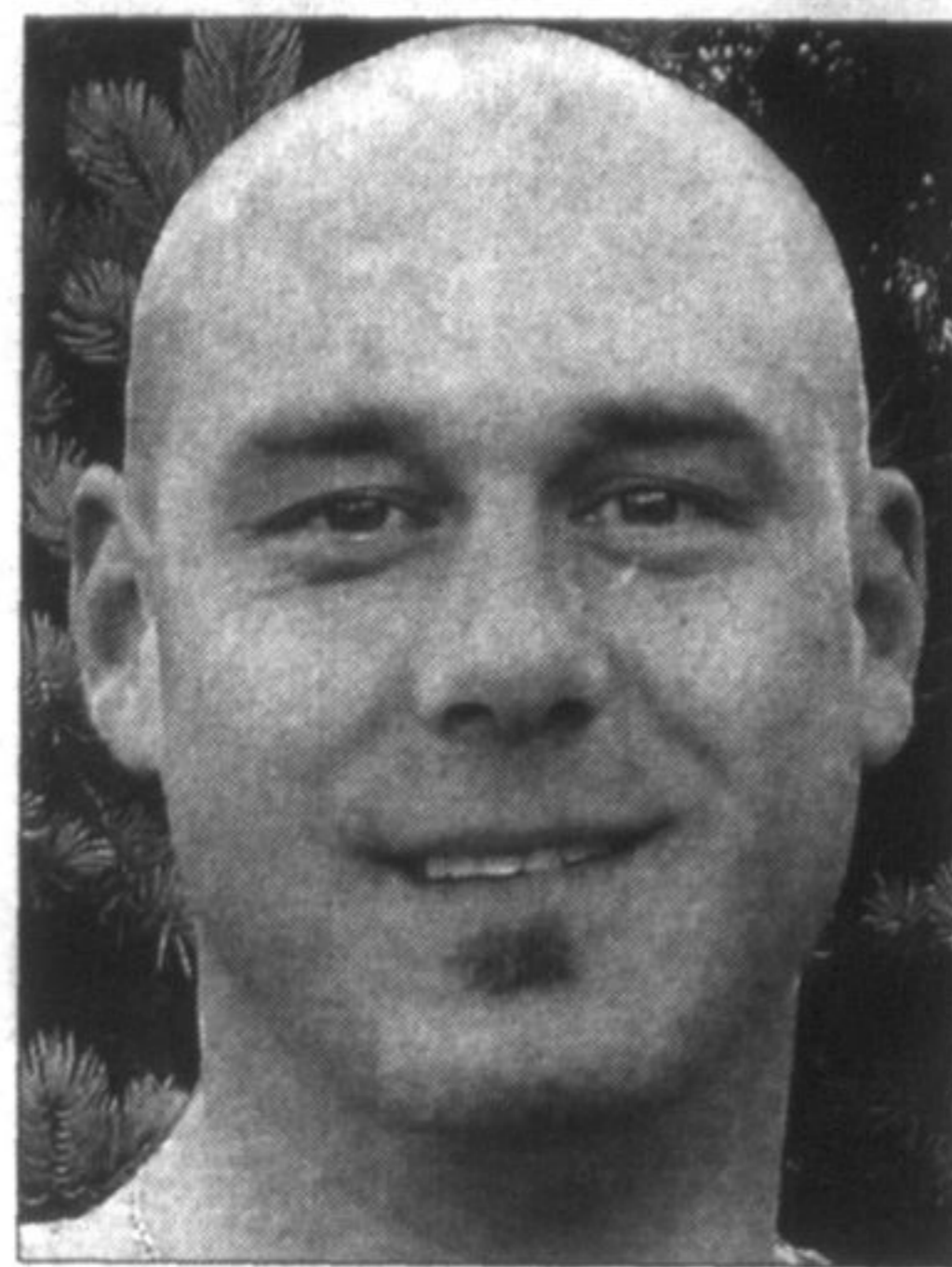
While Lusk's pitching prowess didn't catch the attention of the major league scouts, he had no regrets in attending the open tryout.

"It was a real good experience," he said.

"I was talking to my dad and he said it was something I should have done some 20 years ago.

"But back then I didn't know I could attend these types of trials when I was younger."

The estimator for a high-rise developer logged onto Major League Baseball's



JUSTIN LUSK: Pitcher drew snickers from younger hopefuls during MLB tryout in Etobicoke last week.

website this past winter and noticed there would be a session for Canadian prospects. He later discovered there would be one at Connorvale Park in Etobicoke in August.

However, the website noted auditions were for those between the ages of 15 to 23.

Lusk went to the tryout and asked the registrar if there would be any objections if

he auditioned, regardless of his age.

"They told me there wasn't, so I tried out," Lusk said.

"I had no clue how fast I was throwing. I haven't had my pitches measured since I was in my teens. I was oblivious to everything. Part of me didn't want to know.

"But after watching some of the younger guys throwing, I thought I was throwing in the 80s."

Afterwards though, Lusk found out his velocity was in the low 70s.

Lusk detected snickering from some of the younger hopefuls.

It was similar to a scene from the movie *The Rookie*, which depicted the life story of former major league pitcher Jimmy Morris, who at the age of 35, was signed by the Tampa Bay Devil Rays.

Lusk saw the film, but didn't draw inspiration from it.

"I just wanted to see what would happen. Baseball is something I enjoy doing and I felt that if I went I had nothing to lose.

"I probably would have regretted it if I didn't go out to the tryouts."

Would he go back to another major league tryout?

"If I could gain 20 miles an hour on my fastball I would," he said.

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Under 11 Girls Rep

AUG. 18: Vaughan Azzurri 7 vs. WSSC Mustangs 1 (Amanda Grinnell).

House league

Aug. 17-19

UNDER 10 BOYS: Four Seasons Tree Care 5 (Brenden O'Donnell, Alvin Matthew 2, Arman Doshajh, Lucas Rossi) vs. Stouffville Fish and Chips 3 (Myles Craven, Ben Rocheleau, Michael Campanale-Freitas); Schell Building Centre 13 (Zsolt Csiszer 7, Daniel Deforest 4, Maxim Meliouchk 2) vs. Richardson Masonic Lodge 0; Sutton Group 11 (David Risi, Luca Mortillaro 4, Josh Cardoso 2, Rhys Garlough, Adam Dickinson 2, James Maw) vs. Rotary Club of Stouffville 2 (Cole Sipidias, David Vecchiarelli); Toshiba 2 (Sterling Beard 2) vs. Pizza Nova 0.

UNDER 10 GIRLS: Dr. Genin, Dr. McDowell Optometrists 3 (Emma Pannacci, Madeleine Rose, Lauren Greco) vs. Avante Property Services 2 (Kristen Hanna, Elise Acciaferri); Stouffville Trophy 6 (Carolyn Valleau 3, Sydney Rutherford 2, Sophia Grammenis) vs. Magnum Print Management 0; The BBQ Pro 4 (Juliana Hutton, Victoria Scimeca, Erika Sampson, Ashleigh-Boulianne) vs. Stouffville Family Footcare 0.

UNDER 12 BOYS: Ballantrae Lions Club 5 (Joel Somers 3, Quintin Volpe, Michael Coffey) vs. SJD Contractors 4 (Cody Davis, Robbie Krawczuk, Paul Sulcs, Anoop Manjunath); Stouffville Family Dentistry 5 (Andrew Ward 2, Anthony Raponi 2, Lucas Grammenis) vs. The Multiverse 3 (David May 2, Samuel West).

UNDER 12 GIRLS: Michele's Snack Bar 3 (Lauryn Renzella 2, Chloe Pereira) vs. Swiss Chalet Serving Harvey's 2 (Robyn McFee 2).

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