Baseball's back at SDSS

Brian Shankman cited there hasn't been a year that doesn't go by when he's been asked by the male student population if Stouffville District Secondary School will field a boys' baseball team.

He had to politely say there won't be a team as he had been involved in coaching the Spartan girls' slo-pitch entry.

But when the spring schedule commences, he has decided to take the helm when the Spartans make a return to the ball diamond after an absence of several years.

"The boys were bugging me every year to see if we were going to have a team," he said. "But this year, I had 30 kids who wanted to be on the team before an announcement was made at the school for signing up."

He now has close to 50 students signed and if that number remains constant through practices that begin next month indoors, there's a possibility two teams could be formed, one tier one and the other two. "What we would like to do is to grow the program," he said. "We don't want to cut any players. We want to get them involved. Right now the enthusiasm is huge."

He attributes the rising enthusiasm to a couple of factors, including the growth of baseball outside of school through the presence of the Stouffville Yankees organization, which fields house league, select and rep programs.

"Not all kids want to play rugby or might be good at track and field and it would be good to have another sport they can choose from," he said. Also fuelling some enthusiasm has been the popularity of the Toronto Blue Jays, after the accomplishment last season of reaching the American League championship final.

As a lifelong baseball fanatic, Shankman is looking forward to developing a program.

"I love watching baseball and I haven't coached baseball since my Scarborough days," he cited.

"It will be a short season with games in May and June, but I think it will be exciting."

– Michael Hayakawa

