

MacKinnon is first Aurora player to win pitching award



By Jeff Doner

Aurora Minor Baseball had quite the year: Tournament wins, broken records and the successful season for the town's first ever minor midget AAA baseball was all capped off when Alexander MacKinnon recently became the first Aurora player to win the Ferguson Jenkins Award for adult pitcher of the year.

Playing for that talented minor midget AAA squad, MacKinnon starred on the mound and was a big part in his team's overall third place finish at that level.

"It feels good being the first player in Aurora to win it," he said. "I want to thank Dave Giroux, because he is the one who nominated me in the first place and through the weeks going up to it I was a bit nervous, but when they said my name I was pretty happy."

Aurora Minor Baseball president Dave Giroux nominated MacKinnon for the award, which was announced at the Westin Hotel earlier this month.

He knew he had a good season, but wasn't expecting to win the prestigious award that goes to some of the top baseball players in the province.

"It was a great season and everybody played well," he said. "I had great support from my teammates, so it kind of helped me perform to my best and it led to a great season."

MacKinnon is currently in grade 11, so he has one more year to play at this level. He has yet to decide what his future will be, but he admitted to having a few plans in mind.

"I'm hoping to go and play somewhere in the States, like Notre Dame preferably, but I'd go anywhere."

The goal to make something of his baseball career isn't a new thing, however. MacKinnon has been pitching since he was eight and has been playing the game since he was a young lad.

"I remember when I used to go to [Toronto] Blue Jays games when I was younger, instead of looking at the scoreboard I'd be watching the guys who were throwing 95 miles an hour," he recalled. "I always wanted to be able to do that and there are not many people who can. It's one of the hardest things in sports to do. I always wanted to be one of those special athletes that could throw 95 mph."

It was at those very Blue Jay games in Toronto where he watched one of his idols with a close eye.

'I use my dad for inspiration, but [former Blue Jay pitcher] Roy Halladay was an inspiration to me,' he said. 'I want to be like him when I get older.'

He also admitted to getting a little excited upon hearing news that Halladay recently signed a one-day contract to retire as a Blue Jay.

'My dad and I were just talking about him. I didn't really understand why he signed a one day contract at first, but I realized it was so he would retire as a Jay and go in the Hall of Fame as a Jay. It was a classy move by both sides.'

His dad and coach, Ian MacKinnon, said he was glad to see his son's hard work and determination pay off.

'I was very thankful, like Alexander, for Dave Giroux taking the time to submit his name,' he said. 'I'm proud of the effort that Alexander has put into it. He's a good team guy and out there on the mound sometimes you're by yourself. He's dug deep over the course of the year and over all the years he has pitched.'

As the first Auroran to win this award, Alexander is aware that he might have an effect on some of the young baseball players that he works with during the summer.

'I hope it inspires other kids to play, so that they'll say, 'he did well in this organization, maybe I can do what he did,' he said.

'They said things like they hope they can play like me when they grow up. It makes me feel happy that I'm known to them and they respect my talent and that I can help them get there.'