

While many of his friends and classmates will spend the summer working part time jobs, hanging out with friends and relaxing, 17-

year-old Jerome Werniuk will have some serious decisions to make over the next month or so. The Neil McNeil grad will have to make a difficult choice between the path of higher

learning at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York, pitching in Division 1 NCAA baseball, or choosing work by signing with the Texas Rangers, who picked the right hander in the 20th round of the Major League Baseball draft this year.

"It feels good after 11 years playing baseball, having the option to get paid to play baseball," said Werniuk.

Werniuk grew up in the Beach, attending St. Denis Catholic School, and starting baseball at the age of six with East Toronto Baseball at Ted Reeve. Over the

course of elementary and secondary school, he also took part in hockey, swimming and volleyball, helping his Neil McNeil team make it all the way to provincial OFSAA volleyball play-offs.

He excelled at baseball, however, and joined the Ontario Prospects team five years ago, under the guidance of Rob and Rich Butler. Last summer he started on the Provincial Junior team, and by the end of the season, after helping Ontario win the National Championship, Werniuk had been invited to join the Junior National Team.

At the end of June, Werniuk was on the road with the team in North Carolina, in a five game exhibition series against the U.S. Collegiate National Team. When asked about highlights of his baseball career so far, Werniuk mentioned his opportunity as a starter in the latest series of games, "putting the Canadian jersey on, and wearing my country's name across my chest."

Werniuk said many people have helped him on his way so far; coaches, teachers, local baseball organizers and his friends and parents have all contributed to his success.

Jerome's father George has been a huge support to his burgeoning career, driving Werniuk to practise in Ajax up to four times a week, travelling longer distances when necessary, and taking on the role of scorekeeper. George laughed at the memory of once having to make a difficult choice between two sports with games on the same day.

"It was a tossup between soccer and t-ball, and we chose t-ball," he said.

With the support of his family, friends and community, Werniuk is sure to excel no matter which route he chooses to take this summer.

"I've got two good options, but either way, I get to play baseball," he said.

Perhaps most importantly, Werniuk is playing the game of baseball for all the right reasons.

"My dad's always said that 'as soon as baseball isn't fun, quit.' And it's definitely still fun," he said.

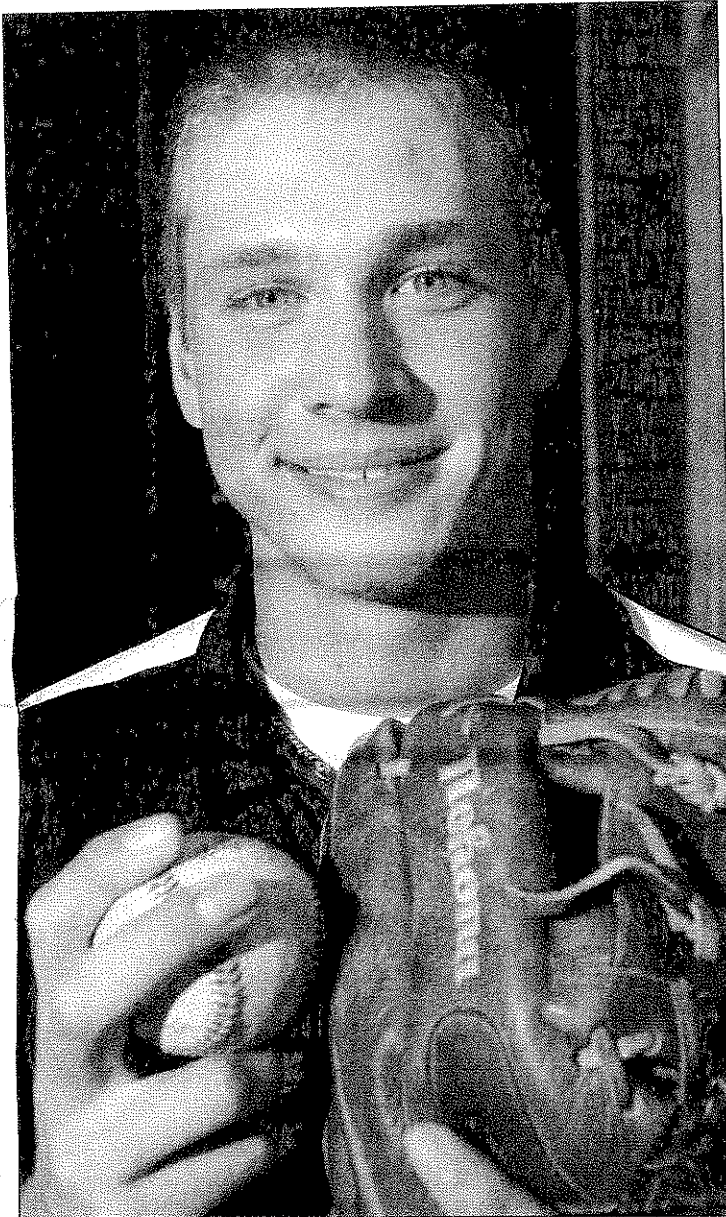


PHOTO: JON MULDOON

Beacher Jerome Werniuk was drafted by the Texas Rangers in the 20th round of the Major League Baseball draft this year.

Impressive display of talent at OFSAA track meet

Posted by [Editor](#) on Friday, June 12, 2009 in [Sports](#)



T'Keyah Dumoy

By RON FANFAIR

It's not how you start but how you finish that matters.

With that in mind, Neil McNeil High School sprinter, Dushane Farrier, is on cloud nine after recovering from a poor start to defeat Birchmount Park Collegiate's Aaron Brown in a close finish in the senior boys 100-metre dash at last weekend's Ontario Federation of Schools Athletic Associations' (OFSAA) 60th annual track and field meeting at the University of Toronto's refurbished Varsity stadium.

After stumbling at the beginning of the highly anticipated race, Farrier rapidly made up ground to cross the finish line in 10.54 secs., just ahead of Brown who clocked 10.55.

"My coach (Al Baigent) told me that when you are in trouble, you should stay calm because if you become tense, you will never recover," said Farrier. "I remembered that. That was definitely my worst start in a competitive race, but I was able to relax and get back into stride quickly. For a moment, I definitely thought I was out and that Aaron had it."

Farrier, who returned to the all-boys Catholic school after graduating last June to boost his low grades and improve his track times, was impressed with Brown's raw talent.

"He's a very promising kid," Farrier, 19, said. "He's in Grade 11 and you have to watch out for him in the future."

Brown, who won three gold medals and set provincial high school junior-age records in the 100-metre and sprint relay events last year, did not make excuses and was gracious in defeat.

"I saw him stumble and I tried to pull away, but he came back very strong and beat me at the end," said Brown, who is a running back on his school's varsity football team which clinched the Toronto citywide title.

This was the third meeting between the sprinters this season. Brown defeated Farrier in the Nike/Neil McNeil John Rowland Games at York University in late April, but Farrier bounced back a month later to avenge the defeat at the Metro Regionals at the same venue.

Last month, five-time world and Olympic sprint champion, Donovan Bailey, made a surprise visit to Birchmount Park to meet Farrier, who was training, after learning that the young athlete wanted to be a role model for young kids.

"It was quite a good meeting and we talked about several things, including track," Farrier said.

The senior girls' 100-metre race also produced a close and exciting finish with T'Keyah Dumoy of St. Joseph Secondary School in Mississauga squeezing past Simone Martin of St. Thomas Aquinas School in Brampton. Both athletes clocked 11.94 secs.

"I am not surprised that it was this close because I knew who my competition was," said Dumoy, who hopes to secure a track scholarship in the United States. "I knew it was going to be a fight, but I had a good feeling and I knew I was going to meet her at the line."

Martin turned the table on Dumoy in the 200-metre final, winning in 24.28 secs.

Chanice Taylor-Chase's bid to capture three gold medals was thwarted when she fell just before the end of the 200-metre junior girls final which was won by Sade Lewis of St. Thomas Aquinas in a new meet record time of 24.99 secs.

Though bothered by groin and ankle injuries, the Notre Dame Catholic Secondary School gifted athlete established new marks in the 80-metre hurdles (11.44 secs.) and the long jump (5.69 metres) before her disastrous fall.

Taylor-Chase, who Athletics Ontario selected the best female midget-age sprinter in the province in 2007, captured three goals medals last year at the OFSAA championships in Hamilton.

Several new records were set during the three-day meet at the U of T track which became the fourth Greater Toronto Area facility to host the championships after the Canadian National Exhibition, York University and Centennial Park Arena in Etobicoke.

Marlon Laidlaw-Allen of Bendale Business Technical Institute clinched the 100- and 200-metre junior boys events in a record 10.77 and 21.72 secs. respectively while Oluwasegun Makinde of Colonel By Secondary School in Ottawa breasted the tape first in the 110-metre senior boys hurdles and 200-metre events in new meet times of 13.36 secs. and 20.99 secs.

Pickering High School Grade Nine student, Noelle Leon-Palmer - who secured five wins at the Central Regional finals in Midland last month - captured the 100 and 200-metres midget sprint double, breaking the record in the sprint dash with a fast time of 12.13 secs. that eclipsed Cassandra Pascal's mark of 12.20 secs. set last year.

Pascal, a Grade 10 student at St. Marcellinus Secondary School, broke Dionne Wright's 20-year record (12.05) in the 100-metre junior final, clocking 11.94 secs.

Xavier King of Pickering High School turned in a remarkable performance in the junior boys 3000-metre race, leading from start to finish to blow away 23 contenders and cross the line in an impressive time of 8:39.06.

Other winners included Dieuleveut Mufuta (midget 100 metres), Jharyl Bowery (senior long jump), Keith Cyrus (junior 100-metre hurdles), Alistair Moona (senior 400 metres) and Steven Ajayi (midget 200 metres).

Pickering High School dominated the relays, winning the senior girls 4 x 100 and 4 x 400-metre races and the junior girls and midget boys 4 x 100-metre events. Birchmount Collegiate Institute captured the senior boys' 4 x 400-metre race. Pickering also won the boys and girls team titles.

Several former Canadian Olympians attended the meet, including Molly Killingbeck who is the U of T sprint and relays coach, Mark McCoy and Milt Ottey.

"It has been a long time since we have seen such a high caliber of running and jumping in Toronto," said Ottey, an eight-time national high jump champion and two-time Commonwealth Games gold medalist who took part in his first OFSAA meet in Kingston in 1978. "I came here to watch one of my athletes (Garrick Mok) and also present some awards.

"This has been a very successful meet, not just in terms of participation but in the quality of the performances. I am very impressed with the talent on display."

Schools bring out the best

by Carole Stimmell

It's the season of school graduations, when students receive awards for their efforts over the last year. Local educators have also excelled. Teachers from two local schools received Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence which recognizes exceptional educators and the contributions they make to student success.

Awarded 'Team of the Year' were six teachers from Neil McNeil Secondary School. The teachers, Alan Baigent, Susanna Bellisario, Paul Edwards, Michael Fellin, Nicholas Kovacs and Tony Morale, developed a peer support program to empower students as leaders in helping others.

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High school lessons prepare baseball prospect for future

BY SHEILA DABU
The Catholic Register

IT WAS a school camping trip in Algonquin Park that helped baseball prospect Jerome Werniuk define his future goals and the leadership role he would like to take on in his life.

The 17-year-old Texas Rangers draft pick says leadership camps like the one he took with students from Toronto's Neil McNeil High School have helped shape his outlook on faith, baseball and education.

Werniuk was the 604th player chosen in this year's Major League Baseball draft.

Werniuk said the school's motto, "Faith in hard times," has taught him about the gift of perseverance which he has practised in life and baseball, especially during the tough times.

At this year's graduation, he was awarded Neil McNeil's Fidelitas Award which is given to a student who best embodies the school spirit. He has been involved with the school's leadership program since Grade 9. Werniuk said volunteering with the program as a counsellor has taught him about responsibility.

At a leadership and fitness training camp in Algonquin Park last year, some 20 students braved the outdoors for five days and learned how to survive on their

own. For Werniuk, the "best experience" was when the students were separated and left for eight hours to themselves. The pitcher for the Canadian Junior National Team used that time to contemplate his future and baseball career.

His time at Neil McNeil, along with a couple of "excellent religion teachers," has encouraged Werniuk to engage in open discussions about ethics, philosophy and morality, his mother, Jane, said.

"He appreciated the fact that his horizons were much more broadened," she said.

Neil McNeil and its leadership program also taught him "how to conduct yourself in a serious world," she said.

His father, George, says an example of the maturity his son has gained over the years from his leadership training can be seen in Werniuk's decision to accept a scholarship at LeMoyne College, a Jesuit university, instead of trying his hand immediately in the minor leagues. There Werniuk plans to study criminology.

The Grade 12 graduate said attending a Jesuit school will help him achieve his academic goals and continue the Catholic education he's received over the years.

Though taking the minor league route would include getting paid to play, Werniuk said he also has a desire to get all of the

experiences he can at this stage of his life.

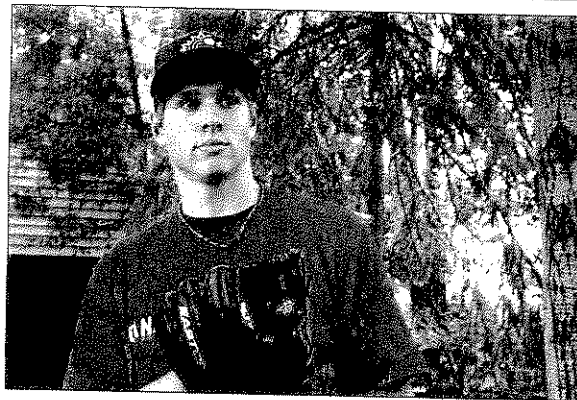
Jane said her son is a good role model for others and has a remarkable maturity for someone his age. She said he went through a rough time in trying to decide which American college to sign with and he learned from that experience.

His father adds that he's happy with what his son has decided and pleased that he has chosen to attend a Jesuit school renowned for its academic excellence. It's a "win-win situation," George said. His son will get a college education and have a chance to play baseball, while leaving the door open to a professional career down the road.

This doesn't mean, however, that Werniuk's baseball dreams are over. He will continue to play at the college level and is eligible to be drafted again by the pros again in his third year.

Werniuk credits his father for helping him along his baseball career as one of his first coaches. But George says his son's success comes from keeping his cool on the mound and keeping his emotions in check, no matter the circumstances.

As for his future outside of baseball, Werniuk is considering a career as a police officer. A co-op placement last year helped him see how police work can "make a difference" in people's lives, he said.



Neil McNeil graduate Jerome Werniuk was drafted by the Texas Rangers earlier this year. (Photo by Sheila Dabu)