

Caledon Cardinals join the Bolton Brewers in the expanded 12-team NDBL Senior Division

New cross-town rivals prep for spirited May 29 tilt at North Hill Park

By Jim Stewart

There's a new North Dufferin Baseball League team in town and they're looking to make an immediate impression as an expansion squad in 2025.

The Caledon Cardinals gained admission to the NDBL in the Spring, joining the Barrie Angels, Bolton Brewers, Clarksburg Blues, Creemore Padres, Ivy Rangers, Lisle Astros, Mansfield Cubs, Midland Mariners, New Lowell Knights, Orillia Majors, and the reigning champion Owen Sound Baysox in the revamped 12-team Senior Division.

Cardinals Head Coach Dalton Cooke expressed cautious optimism about his expansion team's goals in 2025.

"We're looking to get our foot in the door in our first season and get in the playoffs."

Coach Cooke was encouraged by both the Cardinals' promising start to their inaugural season and the youthful Owen Sound Baysox winning the venerable 95-year old league in 2024.

"After our first three games, we're 1-2. We played some tough teams-Barrie, Ivy, and Creemore. Ivy was really good the night we played them. Our oldest player is 26-that's me, and I'm the old man of the group-and the rest of the players are mostly 21- and 22-year olds. We have three players that are still junior eligible for the upcoming season. A good test for us will be a doubleheader in Owen Sound against the Baysox. That'll be interesting to see how our team does against the league champions."

Another good and more immediate test for the Cardinals will be a May 29 tilt versus the perennial powerhouse Bolton Brewers at North Hill Park.

First pitch on Thursday will be 7:30 p.m. between the crosstown rivals. Coach Cooke noted the importance of the early season contest.

"It's circled on the calendar. All 20 guys on the roster are coming to the game."

Coach Cooke discussed the connections between the Cardinals and Brewers rosters: "We did take five Brewers from last year's roster to build the new team."

"There are lots of talented players in Bolton who want to play competitive baseball. Our team was also built on rostering three junior players from the Barrie Angels and four Mansfield Junior Cubs. Our players have lots of NDBL experience."

The bench boss of the Cardinals also outlined his connection to long-time Brewers' Head Coach and Caledon Nationals rep Head Coach Mike Wallace.

"This is my second year coaching the 13U Caledon Nationals with Mike. We have a fantastic group of kids. They're all baseball kids-they don't have second sports, so it's been fun to watch them grow as ballplayers. We've already played 30 games this year. Mike arranges all kinds of exhibition games for us and we've been in three tournaments before the end of May. The parents are all-in, so it's a great baseball community. They supported our team's winter training program where we were in the gym three days a week."

Coach Cooke will shift his focus from the 13U YSBA Nationals to the NDBL Cardinals when his Senior club takes on the Barrie Angels on Friday, May 30 at Dana Field in Midhurst. The Cardinals' next home game will be Sunday, June 8, versus the Lisle Astros.

First pitch will be 4 p.m. at North Hill Park in Bolton.