

?Celebrating Caledon?s Coaches? ? Accolades to Community Coach

Jason Sweeney]

By Jim Stewart

This regular feature will present a Caledon-based coach who gives of their time for the betterment of student-athletes in the community.

This week, we focused on Jason Sweeney, a 25-year, three-season coach at Robert F. Hall Catholic Secondary School. He also builds community by volunteering as a Caledon rep hockey and rep baseball coach and administrator.

Coach Sweeney took a break from his busy teaching and coaching schedule to discuss his coaching career and some recent highlights regarding his 2022 championship football team at Hall CSS:

The Caledon Citizen: What is the most rewarding part of coaching?

Coach Sweeney: The best parts are the relationships you make with the students outside of the classroom. That relationship is invaluable when it can be brought into the classroom as well.

The Caledon Citizen: How long have you been coaching and at what levels and centres?

Coach Sweeney: I have been coaching for over 25 years--started in the Rexdale Baseball Association before I started teaching. Since I started here at Hall in 2000, I have coached the Baseball team, Football team (Head Coach since 2004), I have helped with the hockey team for a number of years as an assistant - Junior and Senior, have helped run the ski club since 2005, as well as being the main coordinator for the last five years. I have also coached in the Caledon Hawks organization for the last 12 years and the Caledon Coyotes organization for the last 4 - 5 years. I have also been coaching in the Bolton Braves/Caledon Nationals Minor Baseball Association for the last 12 years. I am currently the Head Coach of the 16U Rep team and the 18U Rep team as well as the VP of House League.

The Caledon Citizen: What was the secret to success for your championship football team in 2022? Describe the magic moment when you knew this team had what it takes to win a regional title.

Coach Sweeney: This was the work of our entire coaching staff. This was my fourth championship, but the second with this coaching staff: 2019 and 2022. Hall has also won in 2013. We have an amazing community coach in Sean O'Keefe, and the teacher coaches in John Beresford, Tommy Chondronikolas, Michael Chondronikolas, Dave Angeles, and Henry Burgos. Not having had football for the last few years because of COVID, we didn't know what to expect. We had a rookie QB, mostly all rookies at all positions really. But the dedication of the players - 40+ showing up in June for workouts, then again in late August before school started - showed us we had something special here.

The Caledon Citizen: Is there a model student-athlete in your 20+ year coaching career that impressed you the most both on and off the field/rink/diamond?

Coach Sweeney: Nathaniel Fray-Smith and Marco Di Roma are a few that have gone on to play University Football and baseball, respectively.

The Caledon Citizen: As a Department Head of Social Sciences, an active teacher and a family man, how you make time to be a three-season coach for high school and community athletes?

Coach Sweeney: You make the time; a lot of family time gets sacrificed to do these jobs. When my twins were born, I thought I was going to have to give it up, but my wife was very supportive and knew that coaching was something I loved.

The Caledon Citizen: How would you convince a resident of Caledon to commit to coaching, if they are on the fence about stepping up to coach their kids and/or kids in their community?

Coach Sweeney: Coaching is a wonderful opportunity to get involved in the community. It can be one of the most rewarding things as a parent. The effort and joy I see on my girls' faces after a game with the Caledon Coyotes right now, to see them want to improve and have fun, is a blessing in itself.

The Caledon Citizen salutes Coach Sweeney for his evident dedication to the student-athletes he develops at Robert F. Hall CSS, as well as the rep hockey and baseball players he coaches and administers in the broader Caledon community.

If you believe that a Caledon-based community coach deserves recognition, please email me at jim@lpcmedia.ca and we'll build a profile for our Celebrating Caledon Coaches series. I look forward to hearing from the Caledon high school and community sports organizations so we can promote these effective volunteers and leaders.