

St. Michael SS's 2025 ROPSSAA Baseball Championship should inspire the Blue Jays in their pennant and playoff run

By Jim Stewart

As the Toronto Blue Jays went through this past week's dry spell of bad luck, bad calls, and bad hitting, the prospects for an AL East Division title seemed dimmer. It felt like 1987 all over again-- when the Jays lost Ernie Whitt and their last seven games, ceded the AL East title to the hard-charging Detroit Tigers and missed the playoffs.

In an eerie coincidence in 2025, the Jays lost Bo Bichette and started losing games with shocking regularity, the Yankees' Evil Empire closed in, a five-game lead was frittered away, and many local fans believed that MLB's replay command center was conspiring against the Jays' AL East aspirations.

Such intrigue and heartfelt fanaticism.

Gotta love meaningful baseball in September ? especially after the Jays crushed Tampa Bay 13-4 on the strength of four home runs to win the AL East on Sunday afternoon.

Distanced from but connected to the trials and tribulations of John Schneider's lethargic yet triumphant ball club is St. Michael's Secondary School Co-Head Coach Drew Fontaine whose Varsity Boys Baseball team captured the ROPSSAA championship back in June?winning a pennant for the Bolton high school and building an ascendant program that also won the Peel Regional Championship in 2019.

During our post-school day chat last week at an eatery in Bolton, Fontaine likened his intrepid 2025 squad to the current Blue Jays.

?Like the Jays, we have so much depth from player 1 to player 18. Every kid can play ball. They did all the little things that matter ? even the big things that matter such as Dom hitting a Grand Slam against Gonzaga.?

When Captain Kirk hit his Grand Slam on Sunday, the similarities between St. Mike's and the Jays got even eerier.

St. Mike's defeated the Gonzaga Bulldogs, a perennial powerhouse in Mississauga, 10-0 at Dave Dash Memorial Park in Brampton on June 10 to capture their second title in five years. Fontaine compared last season's Thunder squad to an excellent Midwest MLB team that won it all ten years ago.

?We were like the 2015 Royals. We were a good defensive team, had excellent pitching, but we were also relentless and aggressive. We turned singles into doubles and tended to overwhelm teams.?

He also lavished praise on the two pitchers that shut down Gonzaga in the championship game.

?Our Grade 10 right-handed starter Ashton Alviero provided quiet leadership all season and had an unhittable curveball in his start versus Gonzaga. Our Grade 12 left-handed starter O'Neil Thompson insisted that he close the game and told me: ?Give me the ball, Coach.' I was so happy that O'Neil won a championship in his last year and I'm super proud of him growing into the young man he has become. Both Ashton, who returns to the team as a Grade 11 and is ?The Guy' going forward, and O'Neil were our studs throughout the regular season and playoffs. They were always willing to do what was asked.?

The future seems rosy for the Thunder and Coach Fontaine pointed to the satisfying individual performances by some of his youngest players during the championship season.

?Matteo ?Majors' Magliocchi was our lights-out closer as a Grade 10, especially versus Hall who had won the championship two

years in a row. He was a Grade 9 prospect, very quiet, who emerged as a key player for us. Our Core Grade 10s?Ashton in centre-field and a starter, Drayden our shortstop, Alex our second baseman, and Dom our catcher?are now heading into their last two years of high school and give us strength up the middle. These four started with us in Grade 9 and we're ready to compete in the Provincials in the Spring with these guys. Three of our senior players are at USA Showcases in Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania this Fall with their Canadian Premier Baseball League teams.?

In addition to this depth and breadth of talent on the Thunder roster, Coach Fontaine also singled out the support and impact of his players' parents.

?We get huge support from the parents. They all come to the games and drive the kids. There's no money for transportation any more so their help is appreciated. It's been a total buy-in from the parents and they've been so positive with the players and coaches.?

The Thunder Coaching staff features four staff members who have contributed mightily to the team's success. Fontaine, who transferred to St. Mikes in 2018 from a successful baseball program at Gonzaga, outlined the ?dynamics of a winning coaching staff? including his ?excellent working relationship? with Co-Head Coach Mike Pupo.

?Mike started the program at St. Mike's and we came up with a dual-Head Coach system where Mike and I can be the Generals in the Dugout to plan our lineup changes and handle the pitching staff. Mike Silva?who joined us last year as a new teacher to our school?is our ?Sergeant in Arms' and our Third Base Coach. Mike coaches with the Team Ontario Astros of the CPBL. Maya Giancola is our scorekeeper, looks after our lineup cards?she's the all-round Jill of All Trades who looks after the boys as our Bench Coach, but she's really like a General Manager in our Dugout.?

With four dedicated teacher-coaches in the dugout and a returning core of players with championship pedigree, the St. Michael's Thunder Varsity Baseball team has set the foundations for a dynasty in Peel Region.

After winning his second ROPSSAA pennant in five years, Coach Fontaine offered some light-hearted advice to his counterpart in the Blue Jays dugout in their final weekend of the regular season.

?The Jays just need to take a step back and Springer needs to perform as he has all season. Everything's there?they just need to go out and have a game.?

Based on the Jays' cathartic 6-1 thrashing of the Red Sox on Thursday night?which included a Springer Dinger, a game-winning Grand Slam by Dalton Varsho, and a stellar performance by seven pitchers who all ?wanted the ball' as well as the three-game sweep of the Rays on the weekend, Coach Fontaine's words were, indeed, prophetic as Toronto hunted down the 2025 East Division title.

Here's hoping the Jays ?have a game? on Saturday in the ALDS and throughout October much like St. Mike's had last June versus Gonzaga to capture the ROPSSAA championship.