

Baseball Player Sam White honored by the Optimist Club at Aurora Sports Hall of Fame

Aurora resident Sam White, starting outfielder for the NCAA Division 1 West Virginia University (WVU) Mountaineers, was honored this month at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (SARC).

The graduate of Aurora High School and freshman student-athlete at WVU received a \$500 scholarship from the Optimist Club of Aurora at the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame.

Glen Sharp, president of the Optimist Club, presented the 'Future Hall of Fame' scholarship to Sam's parents, Todd and Audrey White. Sam was unable to attend due to commitments on the diamond and in the classroom in Morgantown, West Virginia.

Sharp noted how the scholarship was 'a perfect fit' for the 19 year-old scholarship recipient.

'The Optimist Club is all about supporting youth and we are thrilled to provide this scholarship to Samuel who is not only a gifted athlete, but a fine young man.'

Growing up in Aurora, White excelled in numerous sports. He was an outstanding goaltender and OMHA champion for the York-Simcoe Express. He played volleyball for Aurora High School and was a starter on his rep basketball team. However, Sam White's most sterling sports achievements were on the baseball diamond.

He started his playing career as a left-handed hard-hitting catcher and right-handed power pitcher with the Aurora-King Jays of the YSBA. White progressed to the top league in the province with the Ontario Blue Jays of the C.P.B.L. The Jays moved the Aurora resident behind the dish after three seasons as a CPBL shortstop. He flourished as a power-hitting catcher with the OBJ's and caught the eye of many Division 1 scouts in the United States at major invitationals, especially at the Perfect Game Tournament in Georgia when he batted .700 in front of 720 schools. He was selected simultaneously the same weekend by the Kingston Frontenacs in the OHL U18 Draft, but chose baseball over hockey due to West Virginia's commitment to his education.

Audrey White expressed her gratitude on behalf of her son towards the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame and the Optimist Club.

'It's terrific that the Town and the Optimists are recognizing the talents of our young athletes in Aurora. It's so nice to see the kids in our community earn scholarships as NCAA athletes. It's a real credit for kids like Sam and others recognized tonight who kept their focus on school and athletics despite the considerable challenges presented by the COVID pandemic over the last two years.'

Todd White acknowledged that Sam's commitment to the D1 West Virginia Mountaineers was 'a dream come true. We always discussed this goal as a family. We appreciate the Optimist Club helping to pay for Sam's education at WVU. Sam is so happy to have earned a scholarship towards his education and to play baseball as a freshman is a big achievement. I've enjoyed watching him play and have never missed one of his games. He always had passion for sports, especially baseball and hockey.'

Due to his fine play in the CPBL and at WVU, White has already drawn interest from at least three Major League Baseball clubs. However, the hard-hitting catcher-outfielder has his heart and mind set on his academic and athletic commitments to the WVU Mountaineers.

By Jim Stewart
Special to the Auroran