

Baseball teams come together for tournament to honour slain officer



By Jake Courtepatte

Const. Garrett Styles loved to play baseball. He was a seasoned pitcher, playing with the Newmarket Baseball Association for many years.

But in the early hours of June 28, 2011, Styles was killed in the line of duty following a routine traffic stop in East Gwillimbury.

Only two months later, Styles' home of York Region came together for the inaugural Garrett Styles Memorial Baseball Tournament – a tradition that continues today, with thousands of dollars raised by friends, family, and even complete strangers travelling from all over Canada and the United States.

“It makes me feel really proud, really happy,” said retired Constable Garry Styles, Garrett's father. “I look forward to it every year and that they come here and support my family, my community.”

This year's incarnation of the tournament came last week over the areas of Aurora and Newmarket, with two schedules hitting four different fields.

In the high school tournament, Sacred Heart won a tiebreaker with the powerhouse Saint Andrew's College Saints to meet Anderson in the final at the fairgrounds in Newmarket. There they spread their offence over four innings to win the championship 4 – 1. Brad Aldred threw a no-hitter for the Raiders.

King City went 0 – 2 in the tournament, dropping a close 5 – 4 game to Our Lady of the Lake.

“In a tournament like this it's more than just baseball,” said OLL's Mike Tomlinson. “It's people rallying together for a good cause, the baseball is just extra fun.”

Styles was pinned under a rolled-over van after attempting to take the keys out of the ignition of the stolen vehicle.

The driver of the vehicle, who escaped from the wreck a quadriplegic, is currently serving nine years of “conditional supervision” for the incident he caused as a 15-year old.

Toronto Police Constable Ryan Gourds, who also played in the tournament last year, had similar sentiments to Tomlinson.

“A day like this is much more than just baseball,” said Gourds. “When you hear the story of Garrett, and his young family?it just makes you want to do something about it. It's a good way to remember.”

Meanwhile, the senior tournament was also underway, with a battle between emergency service departments from as far away as the United States. It was an all-Canadian final, with the York Blue Sox beating Toronto Police Services 11 ? 1 on Friday to capture this year's title.

Proceeds from the tournament go to Canadian Tire's JumpStart program, helping children in York Region whose parents have trouble affording organized sports.