

Ready to Walk the Hall: David Giroux made baseball a better game in Aurora



David Giroux was never a baseball guy. In fact, he was a hockey enthusiast.

Growing up in Dalhousie, NB, all Giroux was known for was lacing up his skates and playing hockey in the Town's local community centre.

But, as life passed on by and Giroux moved to Pickering, Ont., although he still loved hockey; and played it locally there, his allegiance to that sport began to fade. While working in Newmarket, he had met his now-wife, Carol. Her son P.J. had been enrolled in baseball and she would invite Giroux out to games. They both became the driving force into Giroux, finding a love for baseball.

?I had interest in her, shall we say. I started to have interest in watching the ball games more and more. That's how it basically all started. The next year it was, the team needed a bit of help so I put the bases out. Then they kind of get you. They need an assistant coach and then they need a coach, then it was, they need help on the executive of Newmarket Baseball. Then a couple of years after they asked me to president,? Giroux told The Auroran.

While with Newmarket Baseball Association, Giroux would attend coaching conferences and eventually went to the USA annually in the early 2000s, to foster more knowledge on not just how to coach the sport but also, how to relay information to the youth. Looking back at his experiences, these coaching conferences provided him knowledge that he used in his sessions here in Canada.

It was quite a busy decade for the Girouxes. They welcomed their child Aaron into the world and immediately slotted him in as their number one fan. Despite still working for Newmarket Baseball Association at the time, the family moved to Aurora in 1996.

But it was with Newmarket where it really began for Giroux, as he made significant changes to the program. One feather in the cap was being the introduction of three teams on the field in a style of baseball nobody in the town had ever seen before.

?We put three teams on a field at one time instead of the two teams of twelve players. Back then, T-ball was 12 players strong, except all the kids would go out on the field rather than staying on the bench,? Giroux said.

?What we developed was we would have three teams of six players each, the infield being six players. The batting team six players.

And then one team in the outfield would learn new drills that we would run.?

Received extremely well by the community, the next big step was the design of a completely new division. A couple years later, spearheaded by Giroux, Junior Rookie Division was born. This new Jr Rookie Division for 6-and-7-year-olds had special balls and rules.

Giroux, along with a few others, created the York-Simcoe Interlock Baseball Association which had seen a combination of teams play from Aurora, to Bradford, Oak Ridges, Georgina and occasionally Richmond Hill.

Aurora at the time, had a very small baseball program and this was an incredible way to grow it. They all saw registrations continue to grow every year in all age groups. Aurora was becoming a baseball community.

In 2003/2004, Giroux saw the greater need for his commitment to baseball needed to be with Aurora, so he made the transition.

As more youth registered, Giroux noticed a very big issue with the landscape in the Town. Every diamond in Aurora was specifically designed for softball. With only one diamond available for players past the age of 14-years-old playing in Aurora, many players were looking elsewhere to get diamond time, as there were now 14 teams trying to play off one diamond.

So, Giroux, pulled his socks up and got to work.

He was already one of the founders of Sport Aurora, but he had to move on from that because building a baseball diamond was of his utmost concern. He regularly attended Council meetings, studying their needs and conversations, in order to develop the right approach into having a baseball diamond built.

In August of 2010, the Stewart Burnett baseball diamond was built. Giroux treated it like it was his baby. He would smooth-out the infield, fix the mound where it was needed, patched base-lines and even fixed batter's boxes at home plate. With this introduction of this diamond, the Aurora Minor Baseball Association tripled in size.

With the Baseball Association capped at certain age groups, many players left the association. This bothered Giroux very much. He questioned what the organization can do to keep players here, so he and the president at the time, thought of an opportune idea.

?Our president at the time was Alan Wilson. We had discussions in saying, ?What do you think of merging (with King) as being one association. We'll always have the identity and not have to worry. The benefit to Aurora, we'll have more ball diamonds to play on. It gives us more access to fields and practice times. We know there is going to be development in King in the future, so they have an abundance of diamonds and, at some point in time, they'll need access to more,? Giroux said.

?It was meeting of the minds, let's call it. He and I had many discussions with the King executive for 10 years previous knowing them very well. That's when we instigated that conversation so that you're never in the position of sending your kids away. Why don't we create this one association??

In this deal of best of both sides, everyone was on board with the merger and, in 2014, the Aurora Minor Baseball Association and the King Baseball Association, became the Aurora-King Baseball Association you know today.

This year, after north of 30 years of community volunteering, late nights at the diamond and looking at every youth player as his own son, David Giroux will be inducted into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame next month.

When he found out he was inducted, Giroux said that he felt fulfilled.

?It's hard to explain, but it's fulfilling. It means that I can go to sleep at night, that all of those hours that I put in are justified,? Giroux said.

?The hours that I put in, that nobody will ever know. I think that's the fulfillment of being recognized by the Hall of Fame. I can't put it into words, but it's that fulfilling thing that maybe behind the scenes people noticed and understood, what it took, to do all the aspects of what I was doing at the same time.?

The Aurora Sports Hall of Fame, Induction Celebration Dinner will be taking place at the Royal Venetian Mansion on November 10. Tickets are available online now.

By Robert Belardi