

UBC Thunderbird pitcher Khan receives his IBL championship ring from the powerhouse Baycats

Aurora resident Adam Khan is living the dream for a Canadian student-athlete.

The Honor Roll graduate of Aurora High School, who currently pitches for the UBC Thunderbirds, earned his first Intercounty Baseball League championship ring when the Barrie Baycats won it all in the Fall. It was the Baycats' first title since 2019, but the club's recent history is about as good as it gets.

Khan signed on to a winning tradition when he committed to the Barrie IBL franchise three years ago.

"I joined the Baycats in 2021 and have enjoyed my three summers with them. I've signed for next summer. Coach Josh Matlow took over the franchise as General Manager when I arrived and set in stone a winning culture. As a college player, it's great to focus on playing for Barrie in the summer. I love pitching for Barrie and its fan base. They've been super nice to me."

Although this is Khan's first championship with Barrie, the Baycats have either won the IBL championship or earned their way to the final series twelve times since 2005.

From 2014-2019, the "Cats cobbled together an impressive streak of six consecutive championships to establish Barrie as a preferred destination for Canadian college ballplayers like Khan who are looking for a summer league to compete in before returning to school.

Baycats' President Josh Matlow presented Khan with his championship ring when the 22-year-old pitcher arrived home for the Christmas Break from his studies at the University of British Columbia.

Khan is looking to build on some memorable performances in 2024. The spot starter and reliever described his best performance last season with Barrie: "I got the start in Brantford versus the Red Sox. I wanted to build up my confidence and threw six strong innings and allowed only one run. It was an efficient 100 pitches. My changeup was really good that night and the start served as a great transition back to Fall Ball back at UBC."

In addition to playing a meaningful role for a perennial IBL powerhouse, Khan pitched high leverage innings for the University of British Columbia Thunderbirds who compete in NAIA's West Coast conference.

"We were in the opening round of the NAIA and qualified for the 40-team playoff in the 200-team national league. We finished 11th in the All-American Conference. I was called in from the bullpen and pitched three scoreless innings including a couple of big strikeouts in an Elimination game. I was happy with my playoff performance."

Khan believes that studying and playing baseball at UBC is the best of both worlds: "Studying at UBC and being in an excellent twenty-year baseball program is a great combination. Our coach is a former major leaguer, two of my teammates got drafted by MLB teams last year, and we play D1 teams on our schedule. We even beat the University of Washington 7-0 this Fall. We also get to play the Vancouver Canadians every year to start their Minor League season at Nat Bailey Stadium which is a historical ballpark just 25 minutes from UBC's campus. Playing in front of 4,000-5,000 fans has created great memories for me, especially when we beat the Canadians three years ago. They've beaten us the last two years, but it will be fun to be part of this year's league-opening game. UBC has been a great place to play baseball and study."

The fourth-year Economics major and Commerce minor described both his favorite course last semester at UBC and the culture that he has experienced as a Thunderbird: "I really enjoyed a 300 level Marketing course. It was good that we got to do a lot of group work for most of the semester that will help us prepare for the workforce where you're going to have to work with a whole bunch of personalities. It was great to work on projects in the course with varsity athletes. In the classroom and on the baseball field, there are

so many great values for us to experience. It was similar to the culture of the ball club in that we're all one big family. We have a big Alumni baseball weekend at UBC including a golf tournament and we play a game with 60 alumni that come back for it.?

Khan also expressed his connection and gratitude to the Toronto Mets of the Canadian Premier Baseball League who prepared him for the challenges that a student-athlete faces at the post-secondary level.

?They taught me about the importance of time management. The intensity of their scheduling and the workouts really helped me prepare for college. Rich Leach reached out to UBC when I chose not to play for a college in the United States and Ryan McBride was so helpful to me as a player, too. Both got me ready for a 40-game road schedule that I have with UBC and my four seasons with the Mets allowed me to play with future Major Leaguers like Tyler Black.?

The Toronto Mets Baseball Club erecting a state-of-the-art baseball facility at 24 Desjardins Way is one of the top franchises in the CPBL. As a graduate of the esteemed Mets program, Khan has been working out at the club's gym in Richmond Hill, and is looking forward to practicing at the new training center that will include a weight room, batting cages, pitching mounds, and a simulated infield.

?It'll be nice to work out at a facility that will be ten minutes from my home instead of driving down the 404.?

Khan encouraged young baseball players in Aurora to take advantage of all the new facilities in Town and to dedicate themselves to off-season workouts if they would like to earn a post-secondary baseball scholarship.

?So many kids in Aurora switch off baseball after hockey season starts. If kids really want to play College ball, the big difference will be working on baseball skills all winter and to use the indoor facilities that are available now in Aurora. Playing catch with friends and family during the off-season is a key to that kind of success.?

Adam Khan's success in 2024 is indicative of his dedication to baseball and serves as an inspiration to Aurora student-athletes who aspire to play college sports.

By Jim Stewart