

Former Manor Park t-baller to play NCAA ball

By Ryland Coyne

Not long ago, he was enjoying his first game of pitch and catch with his dad in the front yard of the family home on Finter St. Today, Sam McKay has transformed that magical time into a dream opportunity south of the border.

The former Manor Park resident, now 18 years old, has earned a combined academic and athletic scholarship to Canisius University in Buffalo, N.Y. Starting in the fall of 2025, the Colonel By Secondary School graduate will play Division I baseball, a starting pitcher with the Golden Grifins.

While his future is bright, Sam says he still looks back fondly on his early days in the sport, playing t-ball just a decade ago at the Manor Park Public School diamond.

“That was my first introduction to baseball, period.”

While the Manor Park Community Council (MPCC) program helped spark an interest in all aspects of the sport for Sam, there was one part that appealed to him the most.

“I just really liked throwing ... it’s always been my passion.”

Over the years, with the help of Ottawa-based coaches like Evan Grills and Tan-



A young Sam McKay takes a swing during a t-ball game at the Manor Park Public School diamond. PHOTO: JOHN MCKAY

ner Watson, he shifted from thrower of a baseball to pitcher.

Playing now for the Toronto Mets of the Canadian Premier Baseball League, his fastball has hit the 90-mph mark. And while achieving that velocity is something he’s worked on “for years and years,” he admits his favourite pitch is the “split change-up.” This pitch will often fool a batter by diving dramatically as it reaches the plate.

Significant injury

Sam, a right-handed pitcher, was one of the youngest of the 140 baseball players from across Canada who were se-

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lected to play at the Blue Jays Futures Showcase in 2022. However, the next season he suffered a shoulder injury that set him back on his development journey.

“I was unhappy with how I was performing. So, from the summer of 2023 to the 2024 season, I worked to elevate my game,” he explains in a press release. “I played with the



Sam McKay, who got his start in baseball in Manor Park more than a decade ago, officially signs on to join Canisius University’s baseball team, starting next fall. PHOTO: JOHN MCKAY

Toronto Mets ... and worked to improve my mechanics. I became more ambitious and focused on being more college-ready.”

Sam’s changed frame of mind and 90-mph fastball put him back on the radar of U.S. college baseball.

Working with his coaches at the Toronto Mets, Sam’s father John says his son reached out to his number one choice for a college team, Canisius University. He called head coach Matt Mazurek, visited the campus, and ultimately committed to the school.

Sam says he couldn’t be happier with his decision. Ev-

erything is within walking distance on campus, the university has a strong undergraduate program, and the baseball team is a perennial contender in the Div. I Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC).

Sam credits the amazing support from his coaches at the Toronto Mets, the openness of coach Mazurek, and the support of his parents in giving him the opportunity to succeed.

“It’s never only about the player,” he says. “I have been given amazing opportunities and I have always tried to honour them by maintaining focus and working hard.”

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