



Ranta living dream on Hamilton Thunderbirds field

LAURA LENNIE, NEWS STAFF

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Hamilton Thunderbirds third baseman Zack Ranta's love of baseball was instantaneous.

The Stoney Creek native grew up around the sport.

"Whether it was going out to watch my parent's slo-pitch games or my cousin's hardball games, I was always interested in playing," he said.

"Growing up with a baseball diamond directly beside my house, where my brother, cousin and I could play whenever we wanted, also helped."

Ranta began playing baseball when he was three years old in a three-pitch league.

He also dabbled in T-ball, rookie ball and a bit of minor baseball out of Stoney Creek Optimist Little League.

"I started playing T-ball when I was five and was playing with kids who were older than me," Ranta said. "I made the T-ball all-star team when I was six, while everyone else was seven or eight years old for every team. I was always on the Tigers team while I played in Stoney Creek."

Ranta started playing with the East Mountain Cobras (now the Hamilton Cardinals) when he was 10.

He remained with the Cardinals until he was 17 at the major midget level.

Ranta was a member of the Hamilton Thunderbirds junior team and played a couple of games with its senior team last year.

"I really came up through the Hamilton system, starting in mosquito ball and working my way to the AAA midget team and eventually the junior and senior baseball teams," he said, adding he attends Genesee Community College in Batavia, N.Y. on a baseball scholarship.

"When the (Thunderbirds) team manager, Matt Fortuna, told me I was going to be on the team with a possible starting position, I was pretty excited to be playing for the senior team. I really felt it was going to be the best competition level for me to play at this summer."

Ranta said he has felt pretty comfortable readjusting to using a wood bat again after using an aluminum bat on the college field.

"I feel I have made the transition easily," he said. "I have made a few errors playing the corner positions on the infield, which I am disappointed about and hope to improve as the season goes on. I am enjoying playing with a few friends of mine that I played baseball with when I was coming up through the Hamilton Cardinals baseball association."

The Hamilton Thunderbirds occupy last place in the Intercounty Baseball eight-team league, sporting a 4-14 record.



Zack Ranta grew up playing baseball in Stoney Creek. He now dons No. 44 for the Hamilton Thunderbirds.

Ranta said the record doesn't reflect the team's effort.

"We have played pretty well throughout the season against some very tough veteran-type teams, while we are a very young team still working on the little aspects of the game," he said.

"I am still having fun playing in Hamilton with the talented group of ballplayers we have. When we start getting some breaks during the close games, we will be putting up more W's in the win column."



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