

THUNDERBIRDS TO TAKE FLIGHT FOR 50TH IBL SEASON

by Mike Marasco

The second oldest sports franchise in the city of Hamilton will take flight on Sunday May 1st as the Hamilton Thunderbirds travel to Toronto to face the Maple Leafs on the opening day of the Intercounty Baseball League season.

The Thunderbirds roots date back to 1958; eight years after the Hamilton Tiger-Cats of the Canadian Football League were formed, when the Hamilton Beavers were founded to play in the Senior Inter-County Baseball League, now named the Intercounty Baseball League. The Beavers were then renamed the Cardinals in 1960 before exiting the Senior Inter-County Baseball League prior to the 1962 season. From 1962 until 1965 the team played in the Ontario Baseball Association and captured the 1965 championship but would return to the Senior Inter-County in time for the 1966 season.

Along the way, the Cardinals became the Red Wings then evolved into the Marlins and then the Real McCoys and finally, they re-discovered their roots as the Cardinals in 1975. Three years later the team won its first IBL championship. The team remained as the Cardinals until late January 2005. It was then that four Hamilton businessmen purchased the Hamilton Cardinals franchise in the Intercounty Major Baseball League.

The club was re-named the Hamilton Thunderbirds and took on a whole new look with revitalised facilities, new uniforms, and marked “A New Beginning” for baseball in Hamilton. Since then, the team has advanced to the playoffs in five of its six seasons.

This season the Thunderbirds look to electrify their opposition and bring a new attitude to Bernie Arbour Stadium once again. With former Thunderbird player Matt Fortuna as the new field manager the team looks to carry its self as a professional, well-disciplined team that is prepared to compete against the top teams in the league.

With returning players like Chris Piano, who was tied for third in the league for triples, Adam Durfee, who led the team with 15 RBIs, and Graeme Carey, who was amongst the top ten in the league for doubles, the Thunderbirds will look to strike like lightning on the base paths.

Returning to the mound for the Thunderbirds Matt Martinow will lead the pitching staff along with Ryan Van Spronsen, Jordell Farquharson, Mike Fortuna and Nino Fasulo. Fasulo finished the 2010 regular season tied for the league lead in games saved.

During the 2011 regular season, the Thunderbirds will play all seven other teams in the IBL five times each. Of the club's 17 home games, ten games will take place on Sunday and the remaining seven games on Friday nights. All home games will be held at Bernie Arbour Stadium at the Mohawk Sports Complex in Hamilton, Ontario. All Sunday games will start at

2:00 p.m. while the Friday games will start at 7:30 p.m. All Friday night home games will be broadcast live on INDI 101 FM.

With loads of giveaways, electrifying action on the field and great food at the concession stand, including the famous Hutch's on the Beach french fries, where else can you spend a day with the family at affordable prices?

Your hometown players, your hometown team, your Hamilton Thunderbirds ... Be a part of the electrifying action all season long as we celebrate 50 years of IBL action in Hamilton.