

January 7, 2015 - [ajackson@kitchenerpost.ca](mailto:ajackson@kitchenerpost.ca)

When Dalton Pompey and Natalie Wideman grew up in Mississauga, the only option was to go to a gymnasium or community centre.

The childhood friends — Pompey now a member of the Toronto Blue Jays and Wideman a member of the Canadian Olympic softball team — were both amazed by a new indoor baseball facility in Kitchener, which officially opened on Saturday.

“We made the most of it ... we had different things to use, but not to this scale. This is an insane opportunity,” said Wideman.

PlayBall Canada, a 20,000-square-foot baseball facility, opened its doors for the first time, letting the public in to take a look at the state-of-the-art facility.

It includes a full-sized infield with synthetic turf, batting cages, bullpen pitching areas, as well as a weight room area.



Dalton Pompey, an outfielder for the Toronto Blue Jays, throws the first official pitch at PlayBall Academy Canada in Kitchener on Saturday. The 20,000-square-foot facility opened its doors officially after starting construction only four months prior.  
*Adam Jackson photo - Kitchener Post staff*

The idea is years in the making, but construction started only four months ago.

“It’s overwhelming. We didn’t think we’d get to this point two or three weeks ago. I didn’t think we’d get to this point and be open today,” said Sam Hirani, an investing partner in the facility. “Just the reaction from people — it tells us we did the right thing.”

Pompey, who grew up in Mississauga and made his debut for the Blue Jays last season, says the facility is “unbelievable.”

“The size of this place and the amount of stuff you can do here is ridiculous. You can do fielding in here, ground balls, you can simulate a game, you have the cages and weight rooms,” said Pompey. “Back when we were younger, we’d go to school gyms and throw the ball into the wall ... it just goes to show how far Canadian baseball has come along and the direction it’s headed in.”

Hirani and Trevor Reading — another investor in the project — have sons who play for the Ontario Blue Jays, the top amateur-level ball available in Canada. Pompey is an alumnus of that program, which is how he was brought on board to participate in the grand opening.

But for Pompey, it was more than just helping out some friends.

“It was something that I never had. I didn’t have the opportunity to have something like this and for young kids — and me being from this area — I think it’s important to show that I support stuff like this and would use stuff like this myself,” he said.

Pompey says the availability of a facility like PlayBall Canada will only improve the quality of youth baseball in Canada.

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"It will only help them to reach their dreams and do anything that they want to do in life," said Pompey.

The facility has already been chosen to host the pre-season college prospect showcase on Jan. 24.

The pre-season showcase will be used to grant invitations to the future top prospects games and competitions.

For more information on PlayBall Academy Canada, visit [www.playballacademycanada.ca](http://www.playballacademycanada.ca).

*As posted online:*

*<http://www.kitchenerpost.ca/sports/open-for-business-new-indoor-baseball-training-facility-opens-its-doors/>*