

# Devon McCullough – Home Town Boy Makes Good At Home And Around The World



being from your hometown and getting your name announced in front of that crowd. It's going to be pretty hectic," he chuckled.



There was no doubt it was a hectic time for Devon, but before "the pitch", came a lot of hard work and struggles for the always undersized McCullough. At every age level coaches would say he is alright now but he is going to struggle at the next level where the players are bigger. McCullough proved them wrong every time. He was a winner at every age class.



Every local softball fan will remember the pitch. It one of, "the local boy" Devon McCullough's best, change up. The same pitch that Brad Enoka hit out for a three run shot the last time Devon faced the Kiwis. But with approximately 7000 fans chanting Devo, Devo, he had the courage to throw it again and this change up worked, as he struck out Stephen Ratu to win the gold medal game. The strikeout helped Canada claim it's first ever Men's World Softball Championship on home soil. It was a huge accomplishment for Canada.

It was truly special for Devon as well. Not just because he was in the circle at the end of the gold medal game in spite of being Canada's youngest player, but he was in the circle, just blocks from where he grew up and on a diamond that he burst through onto the national stage. "Just being at home with friends and family being able to all be there to share it," McCullough said prior to the championship. "I was here in 2009 when I was watching the worlds here, just seeing the crowds here how big, how many people were here. I can't imagine

Still eligible to play in the Rookies leagues in Saskatoon's Montgomery community, he moved up to play for the Zone 4

Phantoms. He always seemed to pitch well in his first year but dominated in his second. After his two years in the Squirt class and one Provincial championship, he moved on the Pee Wee category winning a Western Canadian Championship in 2004 and being named Top Pitcher. Two years later he repeated the feat in the Bantam category. His three years of Midgets saw even more success. He won a bonze medal in 2007 (the last time Midget nationals were in Saskatoon) and was named Top Picher and MVP of the preliminary round. He followed that up with a pair of gold medals and a pair of Top Pitcher Awards at the next two Midget Nationals.

After his first year in Midget, he caught the eye of the national Team program and was one of three Selects (along with Travis Dauvin and Derek Arsenie) chosen to represent Canada in 2008 at the ISF Junior Men's World Championship in Whitehorse, where he was a key player in the pitcher's circle (2.45 ERA with 36 strikeouts in 25.2 innings) and at the plate (.474) as Canada won the Silver medal. It was certainly a bittersweet event for McCullough as he was the losing pitcher in the gold medal game giving up a single in the bottom of the 8<sup>th</sup> inning. "It was a tough way to lose, but two inches to the left and Terrell Walker gets that ball and throws the runner out at first" commented Canadian head coach Tom Doucette. "Dustin Keshane (Canada's Ace for the tournament and a year older than Devon) is a tremendous pitcher and had the hot hand, but we made the right decision to come back to Devon McCullough. He pitched a heck of a game for us and came one pitch away from a World Championship." (courtesy Softball Canada)

Following that performance, he was added to the Senior Men's National Team Athlete Pool in 2010 and competed in the 2014 Pan American Championship. Throughout most of his time on the Athletes Pool he was looked at as a long shot to make the World Championship roster. He was too young; he was not mature enough to play with the big boys some critics claimed. But he just got better. So much so that after his performance at the Pan Am championship he could no longer be overlooked.



When Team Canada Head Coach John Stuart, named him to the team he said. "The thing that impresses me most about Devon as a young pitcher is his composure. We've got him into some scrimmage games. I've watched him in tournaments, He doesn't get flustered, It's actually quite amazing. He has the same composure if he gives up a homer or if he strikes out the side. He is learning and has come a long way in a short period of time" (taken from Saskatoon Star Phoenix, June 4, 2015)

Devon grew up in a softball family. His father Dave began coaching with his oldest son Devon, when Devon was 5 years old. His wife Barb has been team manager and house organizer for as long as Dave has been coaching and Devon playing. They are joined by their daughter Brielle, who like Devon, was a member of Canada's Jr National Team and won a Midget National Championship with the Saskatoon Selects. The middle child is Darren who went to numerous Western and Canadian championships and was part of Saskatchewan's team at U21 International in Saskatoon in 2013.



Pitching was in Devon's blood at an early age. "Back when he was 4 or 5 he loved sports" Dave said. When he picked up a ball and threw it, we all went whoa. He's spend hours at it pretending. It goes back a while that he has been working on it".

Over the years he certainly did put in the work and it paid off, for Canada, Saskatoon softball fans and Devon. Prior to last years' world's, Coach Stuart said of McCullough, he throws the ball hard and hits his spots really well. Devon is going to get a lot of innings. He got 13 and 1/3 innings and finished with 31 strike outs. The last 1/3 inning and strike out will be remembered for a long time in these parts.