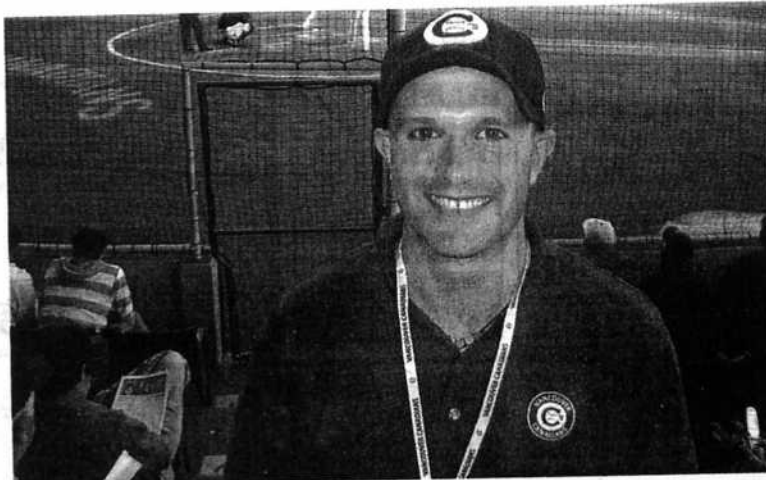


# Former Montrealer plays key role with professional baseball in Vancouver

By Mike Cohen  
The Suburban



D.D.O. native Jason Takefman is living out his baseball dream in Vancouver.

porate sales intern," he relates. "But they could not get me a visa. The team was nice enough, though, to send out a blanket e-mail to all major and minor league teams. Twenty minutes later someone from Vancouver responded. They were seeking a group sales intern. This was three months before the Canadians season was to begin. And a visa in this case was not an issue."

Takefman says he did his interview via a webcam from his Hampstead basement. That was the winter of 2006. He got the job, which included a large enough stipend to cover basic living expenses. The following season Takefman was promoted to director of ticketing. While there are only 38 regular season home games, Takefman says his duties keep him busy year-round.

Several groups in the Montreal area are presently trying to acquire a franchise in the independent professional Can-Am League which already has successful teams in Quebec City and Ottawa. Takefman does not sound too interested in returning home should they succeed.

However, he does believe Montreal and the Can-Am would be a good fit. The bidder are from the South Shore and Boisbriand/Mirabel. Takefman believes retrofitting the Claude Robillard Stadium for baseball would probably be the best option. ■

**Vancouver** - Professional baseball continues to thrive in the city of Vancouver with a former Montrealer playing a key role. Twenty-five year old Jason Takefman, who grew up in Dollard des Ormeaux and Hampstead, says he is living a dream as the director of ticket operations and community relations for the North West League rookie "A" level Vancouver Canadians.

The Canadians play out of picturesque Nat Bailey Stadium, often referred to as the prettiest little ballpark in North America.

Last year, after local businessmen Jake Kerr and Jeff Mooney purchased the franchise, the 57-year-old, 5,100 seat stadium underwent a significant facelift.

Takefman notes that the team has more than 1,000 season ticket holders and averages a very impressive 3,700 fans per game.

"The Montreal Expos were drawing those kind of numbers in their final days," Takefman told *The Suburban* in an interview during a break from running the box office at a recent game against a team from Yakama, Washington.

Vancouver, says Takefman, has a good core of true baseball fans. Pro ball first arrived here in 1951 with the Vancouver

Capilanos of the low level Western League.

After only four seasons the city attracted a Triple A club (the last step before the major leagues) with the Pacific Coast League Mounties. They became the Canadians 12 years later and remained so for 21 more years until the dollar dipped to 62 cents American and the parent Oakland Athletics helped engineer a move to

Sacramento, California.

"It could have been the end of professional baseball in Vancouver," says Takefman. "But not with this fan base and such a beautiful stadium. Oakland's rookie team, which was operated by a former Canadians owner, jumped at the chance to move from Oregon to here. We kept the name Canadians and even though it was a shorter season and several levels below Triple A the fans kept coming."

The Canadians have been thriving in the North West League since 2000, always working on special promotions to bring in the crowds. There are neat gimmicks between innings, such as a sushi mascot race, the dancing grounds crew and guests such as the San Diego Chicken and former major leaguers Tim Lincecum and Ferguson Jenkins.

Takefman grew up a big sports fan in Montreal. He confesses that the Boston Red Sox, not the Expos, were his favorite team. While attending Hebrew Foundation School and Bialik High School, he maintained an interest in hockey as well. He moved on to Dawson College and then McGill University, where he ended up studying psychology.

"I have no idea how I ended up there," he now says. "What became clear to me was that I wanted a career in sports."

After university Takefman took a year off to explore. He volunteered as an executive assistant to Allan Maislin with the Israeli National Hockey Federation. At the same time he worked on the computer, trying to find opportunities in professional sports.

"Over a two year period I spent over \$800 in postage and envelopes in sending out my resume," Takefman admits. "That accounted for 250 letters to minor and major league teams. Out of that I got a lot of nice rejections. Ultimately you need experience and a visa. I had neither."

Takefman's big break came when one of his letters was responded to by the major league Colorado Rockies.

"They actually wanted to hire me as a cor-