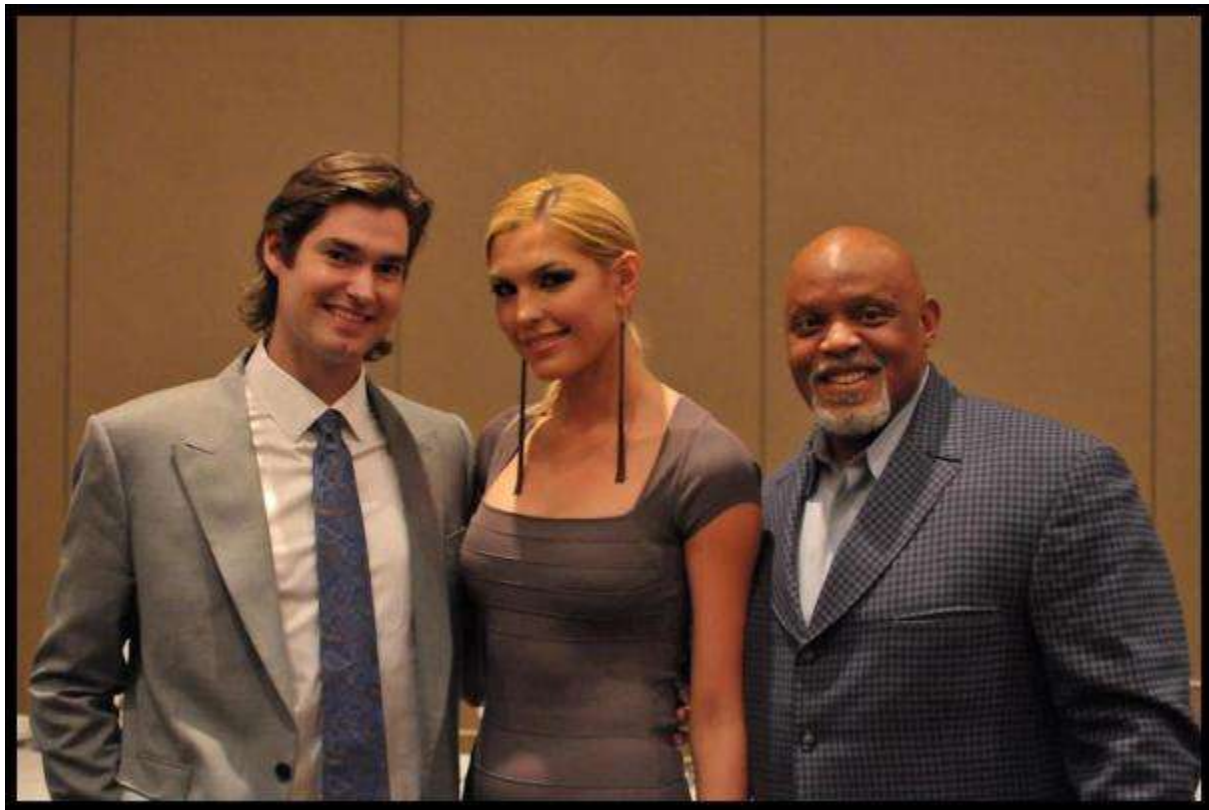


Ontario Blue Jays Hall of Fame Induction Gala: Class of 2012 with Cecil Fielder as Keynote Speaker

Posted by [Jonathan Hacoen](#)

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MLB reports - Jonathan Hacoen: On Friday night, I got to combine two of my favorite loves: baseball and food. The Ontario Blue Jays were kind enough to invite MLB reports to be a part of their Gala Dinner and Inaugural Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony. The event was held at La Primavera, a beautiful banquet facility in Woodbridge, Ontario (Canada). It was definitely a night to remember.

The OBJ delivered former MLB slugger Cecil Fielder as the Keynote Speaker for the evening. Having grown up watching Big Daddy play on the baseball field, it was an honor and privilege to speak to him during the night. More on Cecil to come, but let's say that he certainly did not hold back in his speech. Cecil discussed everything in his captivating address to the starstruck audience. From growing up and

playing football/baseball, to his time in Japan, Toronto, Detroit and New York. Cecil also touched upon his personal life, including his recent remarriage and of course, son [Prince Fielder](#).



But firstly, the event itself. Director of Baseball Operations for the OBJ, Dan Bleiwas put together a first-rate program. From the Keynote Speaker, to the inductees, memorabilia auction and of course, the food! I had my eye on a Carlton Fisk autographed lithograph among the many prizes available up for grabs. But with the big spenders on hand that night, it was not meant to be. With a good fill of steak and tiramisu in my belly though, I surely wasn't complaining. We sat at Table 5 (the most rocking table in the house). I spent a great deal of the night catching up with Michael Bonanno, Vice President of Oak Sports Management. As a baseball agent, Michael's phone did not stop ringing or buzzing the whole night. It was definitely a pleasure to talk baseball with an industry professional of Michael's stature. Overall, the room had a great vibe from the start. Baseball talk was in the air, from the cocktail hour right through to the speeches. The night was meant to be a celebration of baseball and the OBJ delivered in that respect perfectly.

Known as "Canada's top amateur baseball program", the Ontario Blue Jays are part of the Premiere Baseball League of Ontario. A breeding ground for Canadian baseball talent, specially Ontario, the OBJ has seen many great baseball players come through its doors. The inaugural Hall of Fame class of 2012 was a strong field of talent. The inductees were as follows:

DREW TAYLOR: We featured Drew on September 22, 2011 in our interview titled: [Drew Taylor - An Intercounty League Pitcher](#). Drew played for the OBJ between 1999-2001. He was originally a part of the Toronto Blue Jays organization and then the Philadelphia Phillies. He still stars for the Intercounty Baseball League as a member of the Toronto Maple Leafs. A left-handed pitcher, Drew still looks great on the mound. The highlight of the evening for us was Drew's mention of his interview with MLB reports during his induction speech. Thank you Drew! I had a chance to speak to Drew during the evening and look forward to featuring him again on the Reports. This cat has many projects on the go...so make sure to keep an eye on the name Drew Taylor! (You can follow [Drew](#) on Twitter: @DrewWTaylor)



ADAM STERN: We love Adam on so many levels. A member of the OBJ from 1997-1998, Stern has really experienced all levels of major league life. A 3rd round pick of the Braves

in 2001, Stern played for the Red Sox, Orioles and Brewers. A member of the Canadian Olympic team in 2008. But we will most remember Stern for his play in the World Baseball Classic. During the 2006 edition, Stern was the team catalyst- as he almost hit for the cycle with 4 RBI's as part of Team Canada's victory over the USA. As down to earth of a player as you will find, Stern embodied the terms hustle and grit during his career. Stern was solid defensively and provided a spark offensively on all the teams he played for. Speaking to him during the night, we reminisced on his career as he recently retired. It would have been a treat to see Stern play for the Toronto Blue Jays, but unfortunately the fit was not in the cards. Reflecting on his time in baseball, Stern had no regrets. As he shouldn't. The man reached baseball heights that few do and is a great role model for all kids learning the game, not just Canadians. Now in his new role, Stern is the Program Director for [Centerfield sports](#), a sports training facility located in London, Ontario. Adam has agreed to be interviewed for the Reports and we look forward to bringing you his story very soon.



PETE ORR: A member of the OBJ from 1996-1997, Orr was drafted by the Rangers and later signed by the Braves. Orr has played at the major league level with the Braves, Nationals and Phillies. Like Adam Stern, he was a member of both the 2006 and 2009 WBC Canadian teams. Pete will be back with the Phillies in 2012. We talked about his love of the city of Philadelphia and he is definitely chomping at the bit to get to Spring Training. At 32-years of age, Pete Orr still has a lot of baseball left in him. Having achieved a solid major league career, he was a very worthy choice for the inaugural OBJ Hall of Fame class of 2012.

TYLER JOHNSTONE: A member of the OBJ from 1999-2002. Johnstone was a shortstop in the New York Mets organization and played for the Winnipeg Goldeyes in the Northern League. He played in the Connie Mack World Series in 2001. Johnstone also attended Purdue and Auburn before turning professional. An interesting note is that Johnstone played every inning of every game for the Tigers between 2005-2006 and led the team in stolen bases as both a junior and senior.



After the Hall of Fame inductees were named and presented with their plaques following their speeches, the night turned to the Keynote Speaker. The man needed no introduction, as the name Cecil Fielder says it all. I had a chance to speak to Cecil before the dinner and catch up with the former MLB superstar. I had no idea what to expect, given that the last time I

met him was in 1990 as a youngster. Since then, Cecil has retired and remains away from the game. Now based in Atlanta with his wife (as he recently remarried), he spends his time running a baseball academy. We shared our experiences as fathers and talked about his role as a dad in raising his son Prince. Watching the both of them during Cecil's playing days always stuck with me and inspired me in my role as father in the present day. Whenever he spoke about Prince, there was always a gleam in Cecil's eyes. He loves his son very much and that came across clearly in his words. He did make it clear to me though that he has no interest in returning to professional baseball, whether as a coach or broadcaster. Cecil is more interested in spending time with his family and raising his kids than starting over in the minors. His family comes first.

When Cecil took the podium, every eye in the room was on him. You can't help but be drawn to his



presence. I didn't recognize him right away when we were introduced. But once he started speaking, you couldn't miss that he was Cecil Fielder. He spoke to the room for over 30 minutes, but it felt closer to 5. It was that good of a speech. Cecil talked every aspect of his life. From his football days and decision later in his youth to switch to baseball. To being drafted by the Orioles and then Royals, with his eventual trade to Toronto. Cecil expressed his love for the city of Toronto and the 1985 Jays squad. To playing in Japan, Detroit and New York, we really got to learn every aspect of his career. I was particularly interested in his discussion of the 1996 Yankees World Series team. From the bullpen of John Wetteland and [Mariano Rivera](#), to a young [Derek Jeter](#) blasting Mariah Carey in the clubhouse. Cecil was very animated and had people laughing in tears.

When it came to his son Prince, Cecil spoke at great lengths. From Prince's weight issues as a child and Cecil's assistance in getting his son into shape. Cecil spoke fondly about his son and with great pride in his voice. When it came to Prince's next destination, the indication from Cecil was that it would be Washington. I had asked him before about the chances of the Jays signing his son and he just let out a laugh. "Not going to happen", was the response I received. We have Cecil's speech for your viewing pleasure coming soon on the Reports. It is one of the best baseball talks you will ever hear. If you are a baseball fan, you will sit back and enjoy the life of Cecil Fielder in his own words.

Overall it was a magical night of baseball history. Congratulations to the Ontario Blue Jays Hall of Fame Class of 2012. A big thank you again to Dan Bleiwas and Drew Taylor for all your assistance in having MLB reports cover the gala. To our photographer Joel Lopata ([Twitter](#) @JoelLopataPhoto), who took all the pictures used in this feature. You can click on the MLB reports [Facebook](#) page to view the entire

album of the evening. We look forward to joining the Ontario Blue Jays in 2013 for their next Hall of Fame class. You can follow the Ontario Blue Jays on [Twitter](#) (@OntarioBlueJays) and check their website: <http://ontariobluejays.com>.

