



NOVA SCOTIA

STELLAR SPORTS

TIM MCKINNON played baseball very well. At 16 years old, he made the prospect list of both the St. Louis Cardinals and the Montreal Expos. But playing in the major leagues was not where Tim would make his contributions. His rewards have come through self-discipline, determination and self-employment as a successful entrepreneur.

Life has never taken him far from his beloved sports world; but rather than being a player, Tim is now a supplier. His company, Stellar Sports, located in Stellarton, Nova Scotia, buys and sells new and used sports equipment and provides skate sharpening and equipment repair services.

Tim's business success is the result of years of hard work and personal commitment. At age 17, he suffered a stroke which left him speechless, paralysed and suffering from impaired vision. Though the doctors weren't optimistic he would live, Tim was determined to prove them wrong and started physical therapy. He graduated from high school as class valedictorian at age 22, then went on to earn a degree in Economics and Political Science from Saint Mary's University in Halifax and a diploma in developmental studies from Algonquin College in Ottawa.

After 15 years of daily work-outs – sometimes 12 hours a day – Tim achieved a level of independence compatible with his expectations. His decision to start a business came from the need to earn a living. "I was working in the sports department of Canadian Tire at the time," he says, "and found out I was going to be laid off. So I had to figure out what else I could do." Given his affinity for sports, he recognized a niche in the sports equipment market and decided to turn his idea into an opportunity.



Barrett and Mackay

With "hope and a prayer", he used his personal savings to cover rent and operating expenses for two or three months. His business opened in 1984. Since he invested his savings to cover the start-up, he financed the store's operations solely from cash flow. The result was that growth, although

the business succeed." Tim is fortunate in knowing he can count on the support of family and friends who readily do whatever they can when he needs a hand.

His advice to others who may consider starting a business is to realize that having your own com-

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steady, was slower than it could have been. Tim concedes that his business would have grown faster had he had access to bank financing in the beginning.

"It's a good feeling to see your business grow from the bottom up," he admits. "You face a lot of daily challenges like 'Will there be any customers this week? Will there be enough stock?' But when you are the boss, your decision and direction make

pany is not the easy path to financial success. It takes time, work and constant attention for a business to grow. He believes aspiring entrepreneurs should make sure to analyze their ventures thoroughly – making sure the idea is sound, a market exists, and that there is long-term growth potential. Then, he says, "Where there's a will there's a way."

Tim McKinnon

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