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Majors seek to down Baycats again

Fri, August 11, 2006

London could take a 2-0 lead over Barrie, but the local team is about to lose three starters.By **ERIC BENDER**, FREE PRESS SPORTS REPORTER

After clubbing the pennant-winning and defending champion Barrie Baycats into submission Wednesday night in Barrie, the London Majors are looking to take a 2-0 lead tonight at Labatt Park in the second game of their Intercounty Baseball League best-of-seven semifinal.

The Majors beat the Baycats 16-5 in the opener with an 18-hit barrage and solved the league's best ERA pitcher, and Barrie's workhorse, Angus Roy. Roy was 5-2 on the season and had an ERA of 2.16. The Baycats have five pitchers with ERAs under three.

Despite the lopsided win, Majors manager Roop Chanderdat said the Baycats are still confident. "They have the swagger of a champion. They have three really good starters (with Jordan Neufeld and Derek McDaid) and Cam Newitt out of the bullpen."

The Baycats eliminated the Majors in the first round of playoffs last season, went on to win the championship and finished first this season. The Majors finished fourth. London swept the Kitchener Panthers in the quarter-final while it took the Baycats six games to get past the Oshawa Dodgers.

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"Right now we match up well against Barrie," Chanderdat said.

The "right now" part of his statement is key.

The Majors are set to lose three starting players as they head back to school. Pitcher Hiarali Garcia (4-2 with one save in the season) is the starter tonight at 7:30 but it's his last game because he has to report to Eastern Oklahoma. Centre-fielder Brad McElroy, who captured the IBL batting title, and shortstop Mike Ambrose are leaving Monday for the University of North Carolina.

Games 3 and 4 of the series are tomorrow and Sunday. Sunday's game is back at Labatt Park at 1 p.m.

Chanderdat will start right-hander Tom Van Kasteren in Barrie tomorrow and come back Sunday with Erik Perez, who pitched the winner Wednesday. Venezuelan import Perez is 3-0 in the playoffs after a 7-2 regular season.

Perez went six innings giving up two runs -- one earned -- and Adam Arnold, Greg Shillington and Ted Kalnins pitched an inning each to salt the win away.

Right-fielder Kevin Virtue was the hero of the opening game by slamming a three-run home run and driving in five runs in total. He was a doubtful starter Wednesday after sitting out the final game against Kitchener Friday because of a work accident. Third baseman Peter Babcock still has a hot hand on the bat and leads all playoff hitters.

Chanderdat said he hopes London fans get out tonight to counter the "loud and vocal" Barrie fans, who packed their stadium Wednesday.

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SPORTS NEWS

England drops Beckham

David Beckham was dropped from the England soccer team Friday by new coach Steve McClaren. Beckham, 31, stepped down as captain last month after limping off with ankle and Achilles tendon injuries during the second half of England's World Cup quarter-final loss to Portugal.

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