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Majors brace for tough Game 3

Tue, August 1, 2006

By **ERIC BENDER**, FREE PRESS SPORTS REPORTER

The London Majors are looking to take a stranglehold on their best-of-seven quarter-final series when the Kitchener Panthers visit Labatt Park tonight for Game 3.

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"Game 3s are always tough," Majors field manager Roop Chanderdat said. "I keep telling the guys that Kitchener isn't going to roll over. They've got some good players."

London leads Kitchener 2-0 in the first round of the Intercounty Baseball League playoffs after taking a 12-4 decision Sunday in Kitchener. Chanderdat said Game 3 in any series is "pivotal."

Ryan Gauthier has been the Majors' main weapon off the bench, he said. Gauthier, the fourth outfielder, has come in during each of the first two games to contribute to the offence at opportune times.

Gauthier was inserted as a pinch runner after right fielder Kevin Virtue singled in a run to put London up 5-3 in Friday's game. Gauthier stole second and then third baseman Peter Babcock singled him home to help put the game out of reach in an 8-3 series opening game win.

On Sunday in Kitchener, Gauthier was again used as a pinch runner and stayed in the game to slug a three-run homer in an eight-run explosion in the seventh inning.

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Centre-fielder Brad McElroy homered and drove in four runs Sunday, continuing his torrid hitting pace, and first baseman Simon Galarraga had a pair of hits, driving in a couple of runs.

Sunday's game saw the teams hit three homers apiece. Babcock hit the Majors' third, while Kitchener's Jeff Pietraszko, Kirt Zimniewicz and Luke Baker hit it out for the Panthers.

Chanderdat said the Majors have to maintain their offence in Kitchener's small park because inevitably there will be home runs.

First-game winner lefty Erick Perez is to be back on the mound for tonight's 7:30 game.

Chanderdat said he's undecided about the starter tomorrow when the Majors go to Kitchener for Game 4.

For fans, the Friends of Labatt Park are opening the historic Roy MacKay clubhouse, which holds baseball displays, during the series.

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