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Majors pay back Leafs

Sun, July 2, 2006

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

Same pitchers. Opposite results.

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Last Sunday the Toronto Maple Leafs swept a doubleheader from the London Majors and sent the Majors home smarting. It was a showdown for first place.

The Leafs had handed pitchers Erick Perez and Josh Palmer their only losses of the season.

"Same pitchers, different result," said Majors field manager Roop Chanderdat.

Perez, now 7-1, beat Toronto 9-1 on four hits in the first half of a return doubleheader yesterday at Labatt Park before a Canada Day crowd of about 1,500.

The only disappointment on the day for London fans was the cancellation of the fireworks because of high winds.

In the second game, Josh Palmer improved to 3-1 as the Majors squeaked out a 3-2 win on his five-hitter.

"I think we can compete with them. We can compete with anyone in the league," said Chanderdat. "We've got all our guys now with (Mike) Ambrose (at shortstop). I just need to make a few adjustments in the bullpen."

No bullpen was needed yesterday as Perez and Palmer both went the distance.

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The Majors (17-5) trail the first-place Leafs (18-5) by half a game.

Perez was delighted with his complete game four-hitter. His satisfaction came through the Venezuelan's limited English.

"Small park," Perez said of Toronto's Christie Pits. "Here big park and good backup."

Perez was touched for a solo homer by Toronto's Mark Zamojc in the second inning.

The Majors had 13 hits and committed no errors.

Game 2 was a nail-biter. The Majors scored one run in the first inning by left fielder Rudy Vallejos, who got on when hit by Toronto starter Russ Williams. A Gamin Teague error at second base did the damage. Toronto tied it in the top of the fourth. In London's fourth, back-to-back doubles by designated hitter Chuck Roberts and catcher Brian Blackburn scored Roberts.

Toronto made it 2-2 in the fifth.

It took London the bottom of the seventh to win it. Vallejos got to second on a single and a throwing error.

Kyle Piwowarczyk bunted safely and moved Vallejos to third. Brad McElroy was intentionally walked to load the bases and Virtue hit a long sacrifice fly to centre field to score Vallejos with the winner. Toronto reliever Doug Dimma was the losing pitcher.

The Majors have two road games before returning home to Labatt Park Friday against the Kitchener Panthers.

MAJORS 9-3

LEAFS 1-2

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