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Majors even series with dramatic win

Mon, August 21, 2006

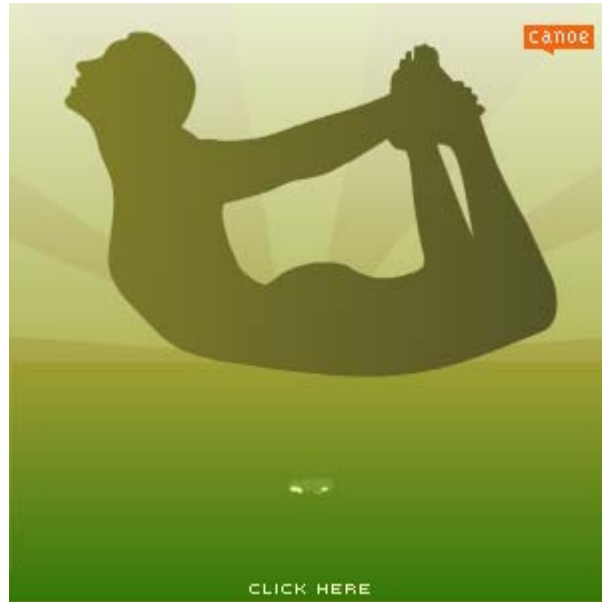
By [STEVE COAD](#), FREE PRESS SPORTS REPORTER



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There was nothing minor about the damage London bats inflicted on the Brantford Red Sox in the first two innings yesterday at Labatt Park, but in the end it was the Majors' performance in the role of Cardiac Kids that allowed them to square the Intercounty Baseball League final series.



With the score knotted 9-9, the bases loaded with Majors and two out in the bottom of the 11th inning, London's Matt Luvisotto cashed in teammate Kevin Virtue with the help of some faulty defence by the Red Sox, but mostly a lot of hustle on Luvisotto's part.

The Majors third baseman hit a high bouncer toward Brantford second baseman Tyler Burnell, who had to wait for the ball. With Luvisotto flying down the line, Burnell whipped the ball to first base where Jason Gotwalt struggled to field it as Luvisotto left his feet for a head-first dive at the bag.



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Luvisotto was safe as Gotwalt couldn't handle the throw, although Burnell wound up getting the error.

In any case, while all this was going on the right side of the diamond, Virtue was crossing the plate from third with the winning run in London's 10-9 victory before about 700 spectators.

With the victory, the Majors, in the hunt for their first Intercounty crown since 1975, tied the best-of-seven series at 1-1.

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Game 3, in which London will start right-hander Josh Palmer, goes tonight in Brantford at 8 p.m. The teams return to Labatt Park for Game 4 Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

Of his heroics, Luvisotto, 20, said he was "just trying to get the ball in play and use my wheels.

"I'm not sure if I hit the first baseman (perhaps helping to shake the ball loose). I felt a rush of energy, I know that," Luvisotto said. "This feels great. The series is tied."

While everything eventually came up roses for the Majors, it didn't happen easily -- particularly since the Londoners led 7-1 after two inning and were cruising 8-2 through five.

The Red Sox chipped away with three runs in the sixth, the big blast being a two-run homer by clean-up slugger Josh McCurdy, and three more in the eighth when former London Werewolves player Adam Vella cranked a two-run homer.

His team trailing 9-8 in the ninth, Brantford's Al Stephens hit a single that chased London reliever Tom VanKesteren and cashed McCurdy who had led off the inning with a triple.

London manager Roop Chanderdat was relieved by the outcome.

"It was exciting for the fans," Chanderdat said through a smile. "It gets the heart going, that's for sure.

"We really didn't take advantage of our opportunities early," he said in reference to the fact the Majors left the bases loaded in the second and stranded two more in the fifth.

"But we had a lot of guys do good things tonight -- Matt (Luvisotto). Simon Galarraga had three hits and what can you say about (reliever) Adam Arnold, who was outstanding at the end?"



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Arnold, a 20-year-old from St. Thomas, pitched the final 2 2/3 innings, allowing just two singles and fanning two.

Hiarali Garcia, whom the Majors thought they'd lost last week to studies at East Oklahoma State University, was back in the lineup last night as London's starting pitcher. The righty went 7 2/3 , allowing nine hits and eight runs, only five of them allowed as both second sacker Pete Babcock and shortstop Kyle Piwowarczyk made uncharacteristic throwing errors during Brantford's three-run eighth.

Garcia, who arrived with school books in tow, is expected to stay with the Majors through the rest of the series.

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