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## Majors plan to benefit from Guelph exodus

Intercounty baseball league

By RYAN PYETTE THE LONDON FREE PRESS

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The London Majors haven't been Intercounty Baseball League's playoff kings since 1975.

Maybe an infusion of Royal-ty will change that this summer.

The Majors added starting pitcher Ryan Hart and speedster Chris Stewart from the rival Guelph Royals, who are sitting out the 2011 IBL season after the club failed to agree on a stadium contract with the city.

The 27-year-old Hart was 3-4 with a 4.17 earned-run average last year, but won 16 games the previous two seasons. Stewart, a 23-year-old from Brantford, stole 18 bases for Guelph and hit .391 in the playoffs.

"Ryan is a bulldog, a Jack Morris-type who eats up innings for you and may give up a few runs but he wins games," London co-owner and manager Roop Chanderdat said, "and Chris, I'm looking at potentially in that one-two spot in the order. He likes to run and that's the way I like to play the game

"Speed keeps the opposing defence off-balance."

The Majors weren't sure they would get a chance to sign any Guelph players who were suddenly left without a team. But they have already inked two and are talking to another front-line Royal about setting up shop at Labatt Park this summer.

The league has set a four-player limit on clubs looking to pad their rosters with former Guelph stars and put together a one-year powerhouse.

"Distance was a factor against us," Chanderdat said, "but we've had players express their interest in playing with London this summer. The Guelph players know what it's like to face the Majors and they know we battle hard for all nine innings.

"It's a credit to the Majors that guys have picked up on that and want to come here and be a part of this team for a run at a championship."

To that end, London will bring back pitcher Ryan McGorman, who pitched a one-hitter against the Brantford Red Sox in Game 5 of the IBL final series in 2008. The Majors eventually lost in seven.

"With McGorman and Hart, we're looking at two of our four starting pitchers in place," Chanderdat said.

The Majors have also signed former Seattle Mariners prospect Kevin Mailloux — McGorman's former roommate at Canisius College. The 24-year-old from Tecumseh is 6-foot-1 and 200 pounds and has been an all-star at second and third base in his last two years of pro ball.

"If it works out with (returning all-star Alan) Cattrysse at second base and Mailloux at short, we could have the best (middle) infield in the league," Chanderdat said.

The Majors are banking on contributions from a handful of local talent — Western baseball standout Shawn Robinson and pitcher Adam Paish, as well as former Badgers pitcher John Fitzsimmons and catcher Mackenzie Harrison. Josh Kennedy, a University of Guelph all-star who didn't suit up for the Royals, could add some power.

The surprise in the mix could be Cuban Julio Estrada, who is a permanent resident here but hasn't played baseball for a couple of years. He has been working out at Adam Stern's Centrefield indoor training facility.

"He's going to get a chance to play," Chanderdat said. "He's a stocky guy with Cleveland Brownlee-like power." Brownlee, the Majors' most feared long-ball threat last year, plans to return, too. London will begin its season with three exhibition games against Michigan Jet Box on April 22 and 23 (doubleheader).

The IBL schedule, delayed since the Royals bowed out, is expected to be released by next week. Most of the Majors' home games will again be on Friday nights and Sunday afternoons.

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