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By [STEVE COAD](#)

A peek out the window suggests baseball season is a long, long way off.

But London's biggest boys of summer, the Intercounty league's Majors, are well into their preparations for the coming campaign.

The Majors, who advanced to the Intercounty final three of the last five years only to come away empty-handed, have signed Alan Cattrysse of Chatham for 2009, the year they hope to win their first league crown since 1975.

Cattrysse comes with a splashy resume that includes a stint last year with the University of Windsor Lancers' men's basketball team. More german to the Majors, 24-year-old Cattrysse, a six-foot-two, 190-pounder, won four athletic letters in baseball at Michigan State University. His .303 career batting average with the Spartans includes a .342 in his senior season, and his 228 career hits are second most in Michigan State history.

Excuse the pun but Cattrysse is a major pickup.

"It's big for us; I'm very excited," Majors manager and co-owner Roop Chanderdat said.

Cattrysse, a McGregor secondary school grad, offers a lot of options. At Michigan State, he was listed as an infielder-outfielder-pitcher.

Chanderdat plans to use Cattrysse in centre field to take advantage of his speed, range and athleticism.

"He'll bat somewhere in the top part of the order, maybe first or third or fifth," Chanderdat said, who's busy recruiting this offseason.

"I'm looking for, probably, four outfielders, the same number of infielders, and a couple of pitchers," he said.

The fact the Majors have been to the Intercounty championship twice in Chanderdat's three seasons as manger helps.

"I think so," he said. "Players know our program, know that we're competitive. I do want to win but I also want to move players along (with their baseball careers)."



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While there will be turnover from last year's team, "the nucleus will be back", Chanderdat said, referring to star players such as Josh Palmer, the ace of the Majors pitching staff, and Jess Bechard.

Along with a head table that includes former NHLers Serge Savard, Eric Lindros and Jacques Demers, Canadian Olympic rower Adam Kreek, a Londoner who won gold in Beijing; and Canadian figure skating stars Tessa Virtue of London and Scott Moir of Ilderton, the Rogers Sports Celebrity Dinner and Auction on Monday will pay tribute to 10 local athletes and coaches for outstanding performances during 2008 at its table of honour:

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The group, which will be seated front and centre at the London Convention Centre, is:

- Mike Circelli, education: Senior football coach at Catholic Central high school, whose teams have won 12 championships. He will retire from teaching and coaching next January.

- Jen Cotten, University of Western Ontario: Reigning Canadian pentathlon (track and field) champion

- Paul D'Hollander, Fanshawe College: Canadian Colleges Athletic Association soccer coach of the year

- Gerry Findlay, auto racing: Owner/founder of Abby Motorsports championship team

- Fred Kern, golf: retired head pro at Thames Valley, who taught renowned teaching pro Patty Howard

- Bess Lennox, UWO: All-time leading rebounder in Mustangs women's basketball history

- John Mason, Fanshawe College: Three-time all-star in cross-country running and captain of the Falcons, who won the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association team title and finished third at Canadians

- Steve Robblee, auto racing: Record-setting eight-time late model champion at Delaware Speedway

- Mitch Sutton, golf: Canadian and Ontario junior men's champion. Also, he played in the Duke of York Young Champions of the World tournament in Scotland.

- Steven Takahashi, amateur wrestling: Silver medalist at 50 kilograms at the Commonwealth Youth Games in Pune, India

The event has raised \$1.3 million for the Thames Valley Children's Centre since its inception, including \$55,000 last year.

Tickets, \$150 adult, \$75 youth, are available at Centennial Hall box office, 519-672-1967, or by contacting Jackie Prince at jackie.prince@tvcc.on.ca or at 519-685-8675.

The Western Mustangs women's ringette team, a development program in its second season, placed first in Tier 2 on the University Challenge Cup tournament at Brock University in St. Catharines.

Ten schools -- Brock, Guelph and Ottawa, Calgary, Ottawa, Alberta, Sherbrooke, York, Waterloo and Western -- took part in the two-tier, three-day event. Brock, Guelph and Ottawa had teams in both tiers.

Calgary coralled the Tier 1 championship.

The Mustangs are coached by Western alum Erin O'Grady, who is assisted by Ron Vermeltoort, Kerry Box and Iain Findlater. O'Grady is a teacher at Westminster secondary school.

Western's roster includes Josee Wilson, Jana Burgess, Samantha Coleman, Krystin Regier, Julianne Clifford, Michele Hobson, Shannon Adams, Taylor Kirktown, Sabina Bomans, Kayla Vermeltoort, Lisa Daly, Lauren Borland, Kim Anderson, Victoria Pegg, Meighan Clifford, Nicole Deveaux and Tonia Williams.

Teams were allowed to add as many as four affiliated players, allowing Western to use Borland and Kirktown, who attend Fanshawe College.



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**SPORTS NEWS**

**Raptors struggles continue against Bulls**

Rookie Derrick Rose had 17 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter to lead the Chicago Bulls to a 102-98 win over the reeling Toronto Raptors on Tuesday.

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