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Majors get two cracks at first-place Baycats

Tue, July 21, 2009

By **MORRIS DALLA COSTA**

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The surging London Majors will get an opportunity to crawl closer to top spot in the Intercounty Baseball League today.

The Majors will play a doubleheader against the first-place Barrie Baycats at Labatt Park starting at 4:30 p.m. This is a makeup doubleheader because of a June rainout.

The Baycats are 23-7. The Majors are 18-13, 5 1/2 games back in fifth place.

But the last month has seen a marked improvement in the Majors' play. Since July 1, the Majors are 9-1.

Field manager Roop Chanderdat says there are a number of reasons for the turnaround, not the least of which is that the players have a better understanding of the league they are playing in and a better understanding of how Chanderdat wants them to play.

"We had a lot of new guys," Chanderdat said. "A lot of guys were the best players on their team wherever they were coming from. They had to learn how to fill in their role . . . batting eighth or ninth and learning to play the ball I like to play. It took a while.

"Most guys who come to play in our league are batting third, fourth on their own team. They are home run hitters. It took a while to adjust to that and there's good pitching in our league, better than what they see."

Chanderdat says the players have to get over the mindset of what they see their role to be.

"When he's playing for his team, his job is to put the ball over the fence,"



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Chanderdat said. "In our league, the way our lineup's structured, we're looking to get a lead. The hitter has to move the runner, over, hit a single, hit the gap, hit the ball where it's pitched.

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"Just look at where we've hit home runs. Most of them come late in the game when we're starting to feel comfortable at the plate."

Right now, the Majors are hitting the ball well and scoring a ton of runs. While the starting pitching is still a little rocky, Chanderdat says his bullpen has been "phenomenal."

"We've had a few guys step up and they're now in a starting role, like Craig Bate," Chanderdat said of the big, strong St. Thomas native. "Mike Mitro is back. He had a few things going on personally but he's back. I started him last game and he threw seven strong innings."

Chanderdat's best starter has been Pierre Milville Deschenes. He's second in the league with a 1.43 ERA. The leading ERA belongs to Brantford Red Sox reliever Stefan Strecker.

Deschenes is 3-1. He will start the first game of the doubleheader. The Majors' Aaron Boag will get his first start of the year in the nightcap.

"That's another guy who is earning the opportunity," Chanderdat said. "Barrie's a running team, so I said, 'Let's start a lefthander and shut that down.' Aaron deserves the start. He's been phenomenal out of the bullpen. Every time we've called his number, he's done the job."

Chanderdat has seen his team gradually getting better as the season wore on.

"I told someone, 'We're close. We're really close,'" Chanderdat said. "And they said, 'You are eight and whatever.' But I could see we were close."

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