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Piwowarczyk a boost of energy

Thu, July 2, 2009

Majors sweep Toronto in doubleheader

By RYAN PYETTE

In his opening at bat, Kyle Piwowarczyk laid down a bunt and hustled -- skated, as some might describe his running style -- to first base for an infield single.

Where did the London Majors third baseman's extra gear come from?

Thank the Rostock Piranhas hockey club in the German third division.

That's where the former Western Mustang and London Knights forward chased the puck this past season. If anything, the players on his team learned how to be nimble.

"Our dressing room at home wasn't attached to our arena so that took some getting used to," the 25-year-old Londoner said. "I'd say it was a good five minutes away and we did (the trek) every day in our full gear. Everything, even skates. We'd put the skate guards on and walk."

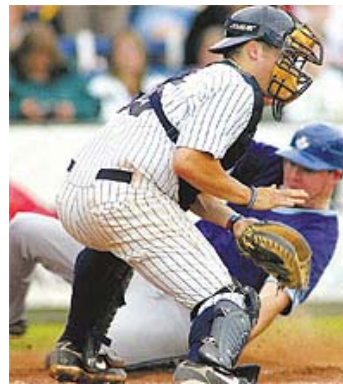
By comparison, navigating a muddy Labatt Park infield in Intercounty Baseball League action against the Toronto Maple Leafs on Canada Day was a walk in the park.

In their doubleheader opener yesterday afternoon before about 500, London starter Pierre Miville Deschenes appeared in deep trouble when the Leafs scored two runs and he allowed the first four hitters to reach base.

But the Majors are employing a scrappy, reach-at-all-costs brand of ball these days. Bunting and hustling at every

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Catcher Mason Reilly of the London Majors waits for the ball as Kyle Morton of the Toronto Maple Leafs slides into home. (Mike Hensen, Sun Media)



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turn, they answered with four runs and sent nine men to the plate.

Roop Chanderdat's crew knows it's how they have to play the rest of the season. Gamble here and there while fighting for every extra base.

London also can't afford to make many mistakes in the field. They made a few errors but nearly turned a triple play in the fifth inning.

Piowarczyk forced extra innings with a bouncer over the first baseman's head in the bottom of the seventh. Will Richards won it with a walk-off homer in the eighth.

"We're a team that's searching for chemistry right now," he said. "You can see it out there. We've had a lot of guys in and out of different spots in the lineup because we're looking to see where guys fit best. We have good pitching. It's the same as everything else. You get in the playoffs, you upset someone, somebody else upsets someone, and you're right there with a look at it."

Piowarczyk has long been a heart-and-soul guy for the Majors. He's still miffed that he missed the IBL championship series last summer that drew a full house to Labatt Park for the decisive Game 7 against Brantford Red Sox.

He had to leave baseball to depart for Rostock.

"That sucked," he said. "You work so hard for that opportunity and then you can't be there for something like that. Of course, I followed it the whole time from Germany. I stayed in touch with a lot of the guys on the team."

After a defensive role in junior hockey and two-way duty in university, Piowarczyk became a rookie scoring star in the German league. He scored 28 goals to go with 69 points and played part of the season on a line with fellow former Mustang Kevin Richardson.

"It was nice to be able to open it up and play that kind of game," he said with a grin.

Piowarczyk won't be returning to Rostock this fall. The club finished fourth in the league but still opted to drop down a division.

He has signed with the club that knocked his old team out of the playoffs. But he still doesn't know what his post-season status will be with the Majors.

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