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Majors tackle Fat Cats

BASEBALL: Small-ball works best in Ottawa

By **STEVE GREEN, THE LONDON FREE PRESS**

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(QMI Agency file photo)

The playoff series the London Majors wanted to avoid is now in the on-deck circle.

After the Toronto Maple Leafs beat the Burlington Twins 24-8 Monday night in the final Intercounty Baseball League regular-season game, the Majors and Leafs ended up tied for second at 22-13. However, Toronto's 3-2 season-series win dropped London into third and set up a best-of-seven quarterfinal with the sixth-place Ottawa Fat Cats (16-18) starting Wednesday night at Labatt Park at 7:05 p.m.

Had the Twins (9-25) won, they would have been London's first-round opponents, offering a likely easier team to beat and far less travel, but Majors manager Roop Chanderdat is looking on the positive side.

"The schedule actually worked out because of the (Civic) holiday Monday," he said of Games 3-5, which will be in Ottawa Saturday at 7:05 p.m., Sunday at 2:05 p.m. and, if necessary, Monday at 2:05 p.m. "Guys won't be missing a day off work. And that was a concern.

"Ottawa's a really good team and they're used to that travel; they're used to just hopping off the bus and playing because they have to do it all the time. So we know we're going to be in tough."

The 2-3-2 format isn't ideal for London as a split in the first two games in London -- Game 2 is Thursday at 7:05 p.m. -- gives the

Fat Cats a chance to win the series at home.

"That's a tough thing to overcome, but by the same token we've got to take care of business at home," Chanderdat said. "Then, if we win once up there, they're coming back here.

"The good thing is we're going to be rested. We've had a chance to give guys like Alan Cattrysse a chance to heal."

Cattrysse won the league batting title, compiling a .419 average despite battling leg injuries down the stretch.

The Fat Cats won the season series 3-2 and Chanderdat said the Majors will have to adapt their game for Ottawa Stadium, which is a tad deeper in the power alleys and straightaway centre field than Labatt Park.

"They're a slap-ball hitting team with a lot of speed, built for that park," Chanderdat said. "The park has big dimensions and the ball doesn't carry that well there. So we're going to have to play more small-ball, hit-and-run baseball and have our hitters hit the gaps."

Chanderdat said Jordi Amargos (7-2, 2.52 ERA) and Ryan Hart (3-4, 5.14) will be his starters in the first two games, but hasn't decided in which order.

Games 6 and 7, if they're needed, are back at Labatt Park next Wednesday and Thursday at 7:05 p.m.


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