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SPORTS OTHER SPORTS

Three Majors taken in draft

Tue, June 12, 2007

By MORRIS DALLA COSTA, SUN MEDIA

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Roop Chanderdat was hoping that recruiting for the London Majors was done for this year.

That was before last week's major league baseball draft.

Three players from the Intercounty Baseball League team's roster were selected.

Catcher Chris Dennis from Amherstburg went to the Milwaukee Brewers in the 13th round. He was followed by first baseman Mitch Delaney from LaSalle in the 21st round to the Chicago White Sox.

Also going to the Brewers is right-handed pitcher Adam Arnold. The St. Thomas native went in the 41st round.

Dennis and Arnold have already signed and are heading to their teams later this week.

Chanderdat said he wasn't surprised they were drafted.

"But we just weren't sure what round they were going to go in," he said. "What I really didn't expect was for them to sign that quickly though. It's great for them and great for our organization, but it would be nice to have some sort of continuity and rhythm with the team. Now with the draft over, we can get back to business."

Despite having to go out and sign more players, Chanderdat is thrilled that his players were drafted.

"For the Majors, it's big," he said. "We have Adam for two years now. Chris and Mitch will probably tell you this: Coming to play for the Majors was key in their getting drafted. We played them full time and set up some showcase camps for them. It was tremendous for them here from Day 1."

Arnold, 21, is headed to the Arizona Rookie League in a week. "I got the opportunity to play and I wasn't going to say no," he said.

Arnold played in junior college in Michigan but at the beginning of his year, transferred to Thompson Rivers University in British Columbia.

"I very excited to learn about the game, pitching, just how to become a big leaguer," Arnold said.

Like many young throwers, Arnold has a strong arm and good velocity. He has to learn the intricacies of pitching, how to develop his off-speed pitches and his mechanics.

Losing a pitcher is difficult for Chanderdat. It's that aspect of the Majors game that needs help this year. The Majors are 6-9 and tied with Hamilton, 7 1/2 games back of leading Brantford.

"Our pitching needs to pick it up," Chanderdat said. "Tom Van Kestern has been the only one who's really been effective. I think we'll come around."

With Dennis signing and heading out, the Majors also lose one of their big bats. Dennis was among the league-leading hitters with a .394 average and five home runs.

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Dennis, 18, agreed to a contract during the game Sunday and signed after the game. He too is headed to the Arizona Rookie League. He was one-for-two when he was pulled.

"I finished my at bat and when I got back to the dugout and Roop said, 'Chris, I've been told to pull you because now it's a liability factor,'" Dennis said.

Dennis said coming to London to play had an impact on his draft position.

"There's no doubt in my mind it helped," Dennis said. "I would have been drafted but coming to London it helped me out so much. I got drafted in a higher position because I was seen a lot more. The coaching really helped me improve as a player and teammates helped me get better. The atmosphere was extraordinary."

Chanderdat is going to need a big week from his other players. The Majors play four games this week, beginning with a game in Brantford tomorrow, a home game Friday against Kitchener and then a doubleheader on Sunday when Barrie comes to town.

"It would be nice to get three wins," Chanderdat said. "We keep losing key games and we're still in the mix. We need to play more consistently."

Chanderdat said it may be two weeks before he'll sign other players.

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