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## SPORTS OTHER SPORTS

### Majors make most of Twins' struggles

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By MORRIS DALLA COSTA, FREE PRESS SPORTS COLUMNIST

The London Majors will take home a win.

The Mississauga Twins will take home a lot of pride.

Pride doesn't do much in the standings but when the Twins showed up at Labatt Park yesterday morning for their Intercounty Baseball League game, it looked as if it was going to be a long day for them.

The Majors wound up with a 7-3 win and it was a lot harder than it looked.

Yesterday was a special promotion day for the Majors. The game began at 11 a.m. as part of a school promotion. The Majors allowed a large number of elementary school pupils to attend the game for free.



London Majors first baseman Jess Bechard hits a two-run homer in an Intercounty Baseball League game at Labatt Park yesterday. (Mike Hensen, Sun Media)

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About 2,000 fans attended, making it a boon for the concession stand but hell for the players who have to work for a living.

The Twins dressed 10 players and only three of them were the regular position players. They had no manager or regular third-base coach. Ian Held, the bench coach, ran the club. They had a pitcher playing short, a catcher playing second and three players who were called up from the Mississauga Tigers junior team. Jared Ferencik, who played right field, got off a midnight work shift at 8 a.m. and was back on midnight shift last night.



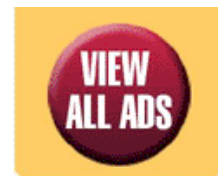
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Twins pitcher Adam Zorzit, who had some of the Twins' equipment in his car, never made it to the park. His car broke down.

Starting pitcher Kurtis Robinson kept the Majors off the scoreboard and had a two-run lead until Jess Bechard connected for a two-run homer in the bottom of the fourth.

Robinson threw very well until the bottom of the fifth, when he developed a blister and had to leave the game. The Twins didn't want to move pitcher Luis Castillo from the shortstop spot because he was doing such a good job, so they brought first baseman Derek Gordon in to pitch.

"I'm proud of them. There's no two ways about it. I'm very proud of the young men," Held said. "We struggled a bit at the plate but played well defensively. We didn't get out-hit; we just didn't capitalize when we had the chances."

The fifth was the big inning for the Majors. They took advantage of Robinson's blister and the change in pitchers to put up five doubles and five runs.

A two-run double by Bechard was included in the big fifth inning, giving the league-leading hitter a four-RBI day.

"I was just focusing on hitting the ball hard," Bechard said. "I was struggling for a few days but I got in the cage (Monday), worked hard and made some adjustment. I focused on being aggressive and attacking the baseball. It paid off a little bit."

Bechard was one of the only guys who hit anything hard off Robinson.

"Kurtis Robinson was having a fabulous game out there," Held said. "I don't think he has broken 50 pitches. I know Kurtis is really down in the dumps on that one."

Mike DeLong had a big day of his own. He went six full innings, giving up three runs on give hits and striking out 13.

DeLong looked hurt in the second inning. The way he drags his foot on his delivery, caused him to cut his foot.

But he shook it off and overpowered many of the Twins hitters.

"It was a good day at the office," DeLong said of his 13 strikeouts. "I thought in the first inning I was 90% but after that, I started spotting my fastball. My slider was working really well. The curveball to the lefties was working really good. I felt good."

DeLong took a year off baseball because of back surgery.

"This is my second start and I'm feeling like am almost at my peak again," he said. "The back is good."

The win was important for the Majors who have been inconsistent this season.

Bechard says this team has as much talent as the team that went to the final last year but it needs experience.

The win put them at .500.

"Youth is a funny thing," Bechard said. "It's experience. It's situation. It's something the young guys have to learn. We've struggled situationally. With a guy on second and nobody out, you have to get the guy to third. It's learning how to do that . . . It's not a skill thing. We have skill. It's s going through the fire and learning that."

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**Halladay, Downs to join Janssen on DL**


The Toronto Blue Jays will place ace Roy Halladay and closer Scott Downs on the disabled list Thursday, a day after right shoulder inflammation forced starter Casey Janssen to the 15-day DL.

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