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## Quick start, but finish counts

### INTERCOUNTY BASEBALL LEAGUE

By RYAN PYETTE, THE LONDON FREE PRESS

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The London Majors are off to one of their best starts in years.

They're 13-3 and, despite a loss to Barrie in Guelph on Tuesday, remain in first place in the Intercounty Baseball League.

But Manager Roop Chanderdat isn't excited just yet.

"The wins still count now, but I want to make sure we're playing our best in the last two weeks leading into playoffs," he said. "It's nice to get off to a good start like we have, but it's how you finish that means everything."

Chanderdat has a long memory. He played for the 1998 Majors team that started 14-1 but ended up finishing second to Toronto in the pennant race and losing in the league semifinal.

"We lost our first game of the season in Toronto and then won 14 in a row," he said. "I remember because I started the 14th game (and had a

couple hits against Brantford Red Sox mainstay Brad Hogeterp).

"I think I still have the video of that one."

He certainly has the evidence of the last time London started out 14-3. That was 2006, when the Majors ended in a 7-12 swoon for a 21-15 record. They recovered to make the league final, but lost to Brantford.

London can get back to 14-3 with a win over the Kitchener Panthers Friday night at Labatt Park.

"You don't want to put too much stock into chemistry, but I think this team had it right away," Chanderdat said. "You go through this lineup 1-through-9 or even as deep as 1-through-12 and they can flat-out hit. We've talked about minimizing the big inning and the same goes for losses.

"We've been able to bounce back and avoid the losing streak so far. We're coming off a loss to Barrie in Guelph, but we had a ton of chances. We made four base-running mistakes and you do that against a good team, they'll make you pay."

All eight IBL teams will make the playoffs this season. The funky quirk of Guelph sitting out this year has eliminated the urgency of needing to bust out of the gate in a hurry.

"I remember in 2008, we started 5-4," Chanderdat said, "and we were in Oshawa and I told the guys I can keep running the same lineup out there and we can finish .500 or we could do something about this right now. I told them batting practice was at 10 a.m. on Sunday and everyone was out at 8:30 in the morning ready to go.

"They knew they had something special and didn't want to waste it."

That team roared to the pennant and took the Red Sox to Game 7 of the league final.

In 2004, the Majors limped to a 3-6 start and ended up 14-21, but pulled off some upsets and made the league final, too. Going way back to the Richard Thompson and Jon Owen days of 1988, London started out 2-6, then rolled to a 21-5 record the rest of the way to finish first.

So there are a lot of roads to success.

"I just hope that we've showed we're a pretty solid franchise," Chanderdat said. "We haven't won it (since 1975), but we're in there every year competing."

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### MAJORS' QUICK START

(A look at some of the London Majors' historically fastest starts to the Intercounty Baseball League season).

**2011:** 13-3 start. Currently first place.

**2006:** 14-3 start. Finished 21-15 and lost league final..

**2004:** 3-6 start. Finished 14-21 and lost league final

**1998:** 14-1 start. Finished 20-10 and lost league semifinal.

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