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OPINION COLUMNISTS



Majors work hard to succeed By MORRIS DALLA COSTA



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If persistence pays off, the London Majors should be in for a pretty good reward somewhere down the line.

The Intercounty Baseball League team seems to be always waiting for something. It's either bigger crowds to show up or players to come back.

Regardless of what they're waiting for, the Majors are a rarity in sports. No matter what happens, you'll rarely find them complaining.

What a refreshing change.

Their motto seems to be: "It is what it is and we'll make the best of it."

You won't find many harder workers than owners Scott Dart and Roop Chanderdat. Chanderdat actually wears a pair of hats. He's also the club's field manager.

His team won their IBL opener Sunday, a 9-5 win over the Stratford Nationals. They won it despite having only 14 players dressed. They have a pair of games this weekend, tonight against the Nationals in Stratford and Sunday at home at 1 p.m. against the defending champion Brantford Red Sox.

Chanderdat doesn't expect to have any more players in the lineup for those games.

"We'll be pretty much go with the status quo," he said. "But we played well in the opener and we should be fine."

Some reinforcements are expected in before next weekend, including Matt McCarney from Ottawa, an outfielder with the Canadian national team program and a Tampa Bay draft pick; pitcher Max Escrogin, a pitcher from the Dominican Republic; Andrew LaFleur, a left-handed pitcher from the University



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of British Columbia; all-star pitcher last year Josh Palmer; and outfielder Ryan Gauthier.

Tom Van Kastern, who came on in relief of Adam Gautreau in the opener and got the win, will start tonight. Chanderdat will come back with Gautreau on Sunday. Gautreau was on a pitch count and only went four innings in the opener.

"To their credit, we did some indoor workouts and some very limited outdoor workouts but the guys who were there, we worked them hard," Chanderdat said. "Whatever conditions we had, we worked hard and that helped."

Since Chanderdat and Dart took over, they've made the team successful on the field, getting to the IBL final two of their three years.

Dart has done most of the talking about the off-field stuff like attendance and finances, where the success has been more like a roller-coaster.

Like Dart, though, Chanderdat goes with the flow, feeling like he has three or four jobs but not complaining if things don't always work out.

He said this isn't a make or break year.

"Not at all," he said. "We're definitely happy with where we're going. Sometimes people go 'Aren't you guys getting frustrated.' No, we knew the climate we were getting into. I played in the league for 12 years. I knew what was going on. We're encouraged."

"The only thing is not every year are we going to have a championship-type team, so I hope that when we don't have it, we can maintain our fan base."

"We're in this for the long haul."

It's obvious that it's a lot more fun playing in a stadium that has fans in it. It's also more enjoyable to the fans who come if they don't feel all alone. Chanderdat said an average paid attendance of 500 would make them happy for now.

"But it's not a number we really worked out," he said. "At the end we look at what our loss is for the year and move on. I never complain. I enjoy this."

If the weather cooperates, the Majors may be in for a pretty good year on and off the field. For the opener, about 500 fans were in attendance and the team played well.

Maybe their persistence is finally paying off.

mdallacosta@lfpres.com

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