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Pitcher has passion for game and writing

INTERCOUNTY BASEBALL: London Majors' Mike Arsenault is trying to get a work of baseball fiction published
By MORRIS DALLA COSTA, THE LONDON FREE PRESS

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Alan Cattrysse of the London Majors steals second base in the bottom of the first inning on Friday, when Hamilton Thunderbirds second baseman Taylor Vanderlip couldn't come up with the throw from catcher Adam Durfee. Cattrysse then got picked off trying to steal third in their home opener. (MIKE HENSEN, The London Free Press)

Mike Arsenault has the talent to be both author and athlete.

Not a bad trick for the well-spoken, strong-armed lefthander.

Arsenault was the London Majors' starting pitcher Friday in the Majors' Intercounty Baseball League opener at Labatt Park against Hamilton Thunderbirds.

Arsenault is worried about his baseball resume but he's developing quite a literary one. At the end of this baseball season, he hopes both will be considerably beefed up.

Arsenault, a lefty from Oshawa, has a passion for writing and baseball. He's written blogs for the last few years, done some work as a guest of a major Toronto newspaper at a Blue Jay game and eventually wants to get into broadcasting.

He's also trying to get a 70,000-word work of baseball fiction published.

"I always had a talent for writing, always been able to come up with a good story," Arsenault said.

"I wrote a weekly column about my training, my attendance and throwing at a couple of tryout sessions in the U.S. and my thought process. At 26 I figure I'm getting long in the tooth for the baseball games and I wanted to

give it a shot so that when I was 50 years old, I wasn't saying that I wish I'd given it a shot."

It's what brought Arsenault to the Majors.

"Where I come from I don't have the baseball resume of the other guys," he said. "I've never really played pro. I never went to school in the U. S. I'm a ghost in terms of a resume. I'm trying to do this without a pedigree. I'm hoping with a good season with the Majors and can get that resume that I need and let the chips fall where they may.

"I just want to challenge myself at the highest level I can."

It would be quite a story if Arsenault threw lights out. He pitched four years for Queen's University and a year at Durham College. He played last season in a senior baseball league in the Greater Toronto area. He went to two tryouts last summer for the Frontier League and Can Am League.

"My stats were good but they were looking for guys throwing in the high 80s and I don't have that," Arsenault said. "At my age, I had to be throwing 89, 90 (miles an hour) to get a look. If I was 20-years-old with the stuff I have now, I might have been a prospect."

The way he was throwing early in Friday's opener against Hamilton, he looked like a prospect. He had good stuff and looked right at home.

He went five innings, left with a 2-0 lead giving up one hit, three walks and striking out two.

"I learned a lot about myself at the tryouts," Arsenault said. "It gave me the confidence to throw against professional hitters . . . With the name Arsenault I was the first guy to throw. About 100 guys were there, 10 scouts with radar guns. One, two three go, go throw. That was fairly unnerving. But I threw well but I didn't get a contract. Then I contacted Roop."

Majors' owner Roop Chanderdat let him tryout.

"He called me and asked to try out and he threw well," Chanderdat said. "He went through a lot trying to make minor pro ball."

By the end of the summer, Arsenault may have a real insight into his fiction world.

"The 70-000 word fiction is based in the Florida State League in the summer of 2008 and it follows the protagonist and his teammates through one season," Arsenault says.

After his first outing, Arsenault wrote a pretty chapter to the start of his Majors' career.

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