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Sophomore seeks greater role with Majors

By Chris Montanini
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Playing professional baseball in his hometown was always the goal for a young Paul Lytwynec.

"I remember watching the London Werewolves," he said. "I remember going to those games and going on the field as a little baseball player and singing the national anthem with the guys."

Developing through the local minor baseball ranks, Lytwynec eventually set his sights on the London Majors and the - Intercountry Baseball League.

He got his chance to suit up with the team last year, making his rookie debut as an 18-year-old in a road game versus Kitchener.

"It was so exciting, you kind of feel like you've made it," Lytwynec said. "I'm not playing in the States so the IBL is the big thing. Playing in front of a crowd, I had never done that before."

But Lytwynec's aspirations haven't ended. Currently a Western Mustang, he's preparing for another busy summer on the diamond between the Majors and the St. Thomas Tomcats - the Majors' junior affiliate.

Securing a full-time job on third base for the Majors though is what's driving the 19-year-old London native into spring training this year.

"I want to be the everyday starting third basemen and improve on everything," said Lytwynec, who hit around .260 in his rookie year. "Right now I'm really focusing on getting swings in."

Lytwynec - when he's not with the 'Stangs - and some fellow Majors' teammates have been working out since the second week of January.

"I want us to be ready so as soon as the weather turns, we're ready to go," said general manager Roop Chanderdat, who added it's too early to even confirm most of the roster, but did say Lytwynec had an "inside track" at third base.

Still, there will be a lot of competition for infield positions at camp in the spring.

"He's going to get a good opportunity to play there," Chanderdat said. "We're asking a little bit more out of (Lytwynec). It's his second year in the league, he's got to produce. But being a local kid and a guy who's got the tools, he's going to get a chance."

Utility player Steve Froese, former pro Kevin Mailloux and Shaun Robinson are a few guys who will be looking for spots between the bags defensively for the Majors this year.

With warm weather starting to creep into the Forest City, both Chanderdat and Lytwynec are excited to embark on redeeming themselves after a semi-final defeat last season.

Both predicted a competitive Majors squad to hit the diamond in the summer.

"From the offensive perspective we've got to hit with guys in scoring position (and) score runs," Lytwynec said about his thoughts on improving the team this season.

"It's a great league, there's a lot of really good teams like Brantford and Barrie, that have good pitching staffs. We've just got to put a good lineup together and hit when we need hits. Last year I felt we didn't hit when we needed to in big games, big situations.

"(Chanderdat) really works hard at getting guys. (And) a lot of the (core) guys are coming back. You really don't know what the team is going to look like until you get there."

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Chris Montanini LondonerLondonOs Paul Lytwynec will be looking to secure a full-time spot on third base for the London Majors this season.

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