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Liquor license won't change the Majors' family focus

Posted By Sean Meyer

Posted 5 days ago

Since the day he first bought the franchise some six years ago Scott Dart has said the London Majors will always be about providing a great family atmosphere for the city's baseball fans.

Scott, who co-owns the team with Roop Chanderdat, says the commitment remains unchanged even after securing a liquor license to serve beer and wine coolers at historic Labatt Park for the remainder of this season and the next.

"From the beginning our focus has been on creating a family valued sports destination and we have no intention of changing that. Our fan base has grown over the years and there has been a demand in recent years to serve alcohol. I feel we have grown to a point where we can support that," Scott says. "I believe we can support that segment who wants to have a drink at the game without losing our initial target market."

The team has been working for the past five months on securing a liquor license from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario that will allow the serving of beer and wine coolers, but served in plastic cups with lids.

The decision to keep bottles and cans out of the stands was one Scott says was made chiefly with safety in mind.

"There will be no bottles in the stands. That's a decision we came to with safety as the main concern. We want a safe experience for our fans in the stands, for the players on the field, for the umpires and for our workers," Scott says. "There will be security in place; we have to have that under the license. They will be front and centre. We want the fans to know we are on top of things."

Alcohol will not be served at the existing concession stands but rather at the fan services booth at the front of the park. People will be able to purchase their drinks – a maximum of two at a time – from an hour before the game begins through the seventh inning. During a double-header, alcohol will be served until the second inning of the second game.

"My hope would be that for that group of fans who want to have a drink that they can come, have a good time and enjoy themselves. Beer and baseball goes together," Scott says. "We know we've missed out on a part of the market that would come to games if we did serve alcohol, so we wanted to address that. But at the same time, we have supported a family-friendly atmosphere for six years and there is no intention of forgetting that."

While there are many fans that will enjoy the serving of beer and wine coolers at Labatt Park it seems the corporate world has been supportive of the idea as well.

Anna Gladysz, the Majors' marketing manager, says she has already heard of potential sponsors who have considered joining forces with the team because of the liquor license.

"It was definitely the number one complaint I was here that we couldn't serve beer. I think that is going to bring a lot of people out and I think many corporations are seeing that as an opportunity," Anna says. "The big thing from a marketing perspective is sponsorships and we already got some big ones on board. We are very happy Labatt has jumped on board. We have Black Fly is supplying the coolers and we have Railway City Brewing Company too."

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Anna says these sponsors, along with other potential sponsorships, are coming from the opening up of the team's fan base.

"I think (serving alcohol) will definitely help. I think most corporations realize that where liquor is being served there will be a bigger fan base to advertise their products to," Anna says. "All the seats are licensed, but we have a non-alcohol section in the picnic area for families too. We want to do everything we can to serve the needs of our fans and I think it is going to all go well."

As one of the people writing the cheques to purchase the alcohol in the first place, Scott says he hopes the liquor license provides the team with a new revenue stream. And while Scott says he is confident the liquor license will make a big difference next season with a full schedule of home games to draw on – any chance at profitability this season he says remains in the hands of the players.



The London Majors are now able to serve beer and wine coolers during their home games at Labatt Park. Anna Gladysz (left), marketing manager; Scott Dart, team president and co-owner; and Tamara Chapman, licensed beverage coordinator, were busy with last second preparations prior to this past Friday's final regular season home game.

Sean Meyer Photo

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"I told Roop (jokingly) there's no pressure, but now he has to get us into at least the second round to make it pay off," Scott says. "We have done our due diligence. We work with our suppliers to establish very competitive pricing. We looked to be inline with the John Labatt Centre, with the downtown bars. We are going to be competitive. But I think with everything we have done when it comes down to pricing whether it is admission or concessions, we want to continue to provide a fun, affordable night out for our fans."

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