

Looking back on the not so hazy days of summer

Despite playoff elimination, Majors manager has fond memories of 2009

Posted By Sean Meyer

Updated 2 days ago

In the world of team sports, some losses are more difficult to accept than others.

Roop Chanderdat is going to spend a lot of time thinking about how abruptly – and disappointingly – this past season ended for the London Majors.

It was game six of the Majors' Intercounty Baseball League first-round series with the Toronto Maple Leafs. The Majors were up 5-1 in the fifth inning of that game and playing before about 1,000 cheering fans at Labatt Park when it all went terribly wrong.

The Majors gave up nine runs in the sixth inning and never recovered in a 10-7 season-ending loss to the Maple Leafs.

“It was disappointing for sure. I really thought we had the type of team that could make some noise in the playoffs,” says Roop, who is the Majors' field manager, general manager and co-owner with Scott Dart. “Second round, third round, it's hard to say. Toronto was a close series, there were blowouts on both sides, but it really could have gone either way. And I think we would have matched up really well with Barrie in the next round. We had the depth to give them a real run. But that game six against Toronto, you don't easily forget that kind of loss. We were up 5-1 in the fifth, feeling pretty good and it all just fell apart.”

That sixth inning would see four Majors pitchers, including starter Mike DeLong, walk eight batters, something Roop says he never could of believed would happen.

“Mike (DeLong) did his job, but he was struggling, he was done, then we went to Aaron Boag, who hadn't



The London Majors were eliminated from the Intercounty Baseball League playoffs in six games by the Toronto Maple Leafs. For Roop Chanderdat, the team's field manager, general manager and co-owner, the loss was particularly stinging after the Majors gave up nine runs in the sixth inning of a 10-7 defeat at Labatt Park.

Sean Meyer Photo

walked six guys in probably 16 innings. He struggled, so did (Matt) Brennan and then (Adam) Echlin and he never walks anybody. It was just so unbelievable," Roop says. "I can't explain it, it just seemed to all end so suddenly. Before that fifth inning, you never look ahead, but it is natural to think we had that game won; we had momentum going into game seven. But we never got to that game. That's the disappointing thing."

After the game, Roop spoke to his players and despite the disappointment of the loss told them how proud he was of what they had accomplished during the season.

"I told them I was proud of this team. We went 12-3 to finish out the season. We finished in fifth, but at 21-15 we were three games out of third. And my goal is always to finish in the top four, to get that home field advantage," Roop says. "It was that poor start that really hurt us (the Majors struggled around .500 for the first half of the season). It took a lot to come back from that. But after the game we all talked about this season and a lot of guys said it was their best time playing baseball in their lives. That says a lot about the character of this team and it tells you this is a good environment where the guys have fun playing the game."

That fun, Roop says, translated into some outstanding performances in 2009.

"Craig Bate (5-1, 1.72 ERA) and Pierre Miville-Deschenes (3-2, 2.65 ERA) would be our co-pitchers of the year," Roop says. "Craig was coming off Tommy John surgery and pitched tremendous. Pierre was one of our best all season. Not so much in the win-loss record, but every game he pitched he put us in position to win. His two-hitter (in the regular season against Toronto) was a highlight of the season."

As for his offensive stars, Roop says there were several players this season that really stepped up.

"Jordan Drieling (47 total bases, 15 RBI, .323 avg.) had an aluminium bat swing at the beginning of the year, but by the middle, end of the season he was playing the best shortstop in the league. Alan Cattrysse (46 total bases, 21 RBI, .336 avg.) was a middle of the order guy for us, was a threat to steal all the time, had a great arm," Roop says. "But if you look from the beginning of the first game of the season to the last game of the playoffs, it's Will Richards (65 total bases, 33 RBI, .295 avg.). He gave us power, he gave us everything. He was locked in all year."

Roop also points to a couple players who provided that little something extra all teams need over the course of a season.

"Of course, there is Kyle Piwowarczyk (33 total bases, 10 RBI, .310 avg.). A .300 hitter and the best defensive third baseman in the league. He's the cornerstone of the franchise," Roop says. "Ryan Cattrysse (38 total bases, 13 RBI, .318 avg.), he started out maybe as Al's brother, but he really showed raw power, the ability to hit .300. It's not that we didn't expect good things, but he really separated himself early on and proved to be a starter the rest of the year."

Roop is also quick to point out the team's off-field successes in 2009.

"From a community standpoint, I think we did a real good job. Every year our profile increases. On the field you reap the rewards of a successful season the next year. I think our phenomenal team last year helped raise the public's awareness," Roop says. "The community was coming out to the games, to our camps, we had businesses coming to us wanting to be sponsors. Our whole business team, from Scott to Anna (Gladysz, the team's marketing manager) and the rest of the staff, they just did a tremendous job."

The London Majors are never going to be compared to the New York Yankees – or even the London Knights – when it comes to profitability, but Roop says the team’s success on the balance sheet is encouraging.

“From a pure business sense, we have a long way to go, but we are getting closer. We’re getting closer to being a true business, to being able to pay people the way they deserve to be paid. We are getting to the point where we are maybe getting back more than we are putting in,” Roop says. “Scott and I haven’t looked close yet, but we will be close to breaking even this year, it’s going to be close. Another round would have been nice; getting the liquor license earlier would have helped. But you have to look at the expenses involved too. The work that Tamara Chapman (licensed beverage coordinator), Scott, Anna, that everyone did was tremendous. You can really see things growing.”

While the sting of that game six loss might linger a while, Roop says he will take the usual couple of months away from baseball before he starts looking at what he needs to do to prepare for the 2010 season.

“I will look at the depth chart, I know we have a need for more speed. We will look for more middle infield depth. We will evaluate our imports and of course look at the local guys. I would say this will be more fine tuning than a major overhaul,” Roop says. “The young guys have to look at their opportunities, what their best chance is to be seen. The imports have to decide what is the best way to showcase themselves. The local guys have to decide if they want to come back. There are a lot of difficult decisions to be made. There’s always work to be done.”

Article ID# 1733845