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Majors roster to feature mix of new and returning players

Posted By Sean Meyer

Posted 1 day ago



SEAN MEYER PHOTORoop Chanderdat, co-owner, general manager and field manager of the London Majors, is busy getting his roster ready for the 2010 Intercounty Baseball League season.

In a season where the London Majors are hoping to make it back to the Intercounty Baseball League finals – and hopefully win a championship for the city for the first time since 1975 – the team’s field manager says the team hasn’t needed the complete overhaul the roster got last season.

"Last year we had a huge overhaul. This year, I want to say we are adding to a nucleus," says Roop Chanderdat, who is also the team’s co-owner and general manager. "With the core of guys we have, and if we can add some pieces, I think the London Majors are going to be right where they always should be, right in the mix, competing. That could be pennant; it could be sixth place. It depends a lot of how our schedule goes."

A pair of imports (the league allows three per team) are among the roster moves Roop says he hopes could make a big impact this season.

One of those imports, Cleveland Brownlee, 6-foot-6, 235 lbs., from Atlanta, Ga., brings with him a recommendation from someone who knows a little bit about hitting a baseball.

"Cecil Fiedler (who had a 13-year career in the major leagues) is his trainer and he emailed me, told me about this guy. This kid is looking to prove he can go to the next level," Roop says. "For him to come here, obviously he has some weaknesses, but from the scouting reports I have been getting, there are strengths and we are going to give him a chance to play outfield or first base."

Cleveland, along with fellow Atlanta import Chuncey Ward, bring with them intangibles Roop says he considers almost over their physical gifts.

"Cleveland was very polite; all yes sir, no sir and that is my kind of player. I have another kid from Atlanta, Chuncey Ward; he’s a shortstop. He wrote me this long email and he closed it, 'God Bless, Chuncey Ward.' Again, just my kind of kid. He’s 6-foot-4, plays shortstop. Right now I have guys who can play shortstop, but this guy is a shortstop. So these guys are real solid people. You give me nine character guys; I will take that everyday."

Another early signing Roop made is of Ryan Lapensee, from Windsor, Ryan, who attends Wayne State University, in Detroit, is someone Roop says should add a lot to the Majors’ offence. "He’s done everything, he’s been their leader for hits, doubles, this is his last year there and he could potentially get drafted, but we are going to roll the dice and see what happens. He’s excited to be coming to London."

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Andy St. Gelais, a pitcher from Quebec, is another player Roops says committed early on to playing in London this season. He will be joined by Zac Breault, a 6-foot-6, right-handed pitcher.

The Majors lost both Will Richards and Mason Riley from behind the plate so Roop signed Tyler Plumpton, who is from Peterborough and is also going to school in the U.S., to handle the catching role. "He's going to try and be our everyday catcher. Our catcher, they have to be able to handle our staff and not allow teams to run on us. If they can hit, it's a bonus."

Hitting – or pitching for that matter – is something Roop says he isn't particular worried about when it comes to his new players.

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"Everybody who comes here has been a great college player or they wouldn't be coming," Roop says. "They're the top two or three kid on their team. It is whether or not they can transfer that to our league."

The Majors are bringing back a number of players who have proven their skills can transfer to the IBL game.

"Chris Chambers (.308, 4 HR, 27 RBI) is an import from last year, he's from California; he's back and injury free. He played last year with a torn ACL almost the whole year and still batted over .300," Roop says. "We have the Cattrysse brothers coming back, Alan (.336, 11 SB, 21 RBI) and Ryan (.318, 2 SB, 13 RBI). They have become quite popular. Alan is very athletic, last year he played infield, mostly outfield. As my recruiting moves along, his role changes almost week to week and he knows that. He is an athlete who can play wherever I put him."

One of the most popular Majors in recent team history is also making a return.

"Kyle Piwowarczyk is back in some fashion. This is his second year of playing pro hockey (in Germany), so we have left it up in the air for now as to here he will fit," Roop says. "We haven't worked it out whether he is back full time or not. Kyle Piwowarczyk is a London Major as long as he wants to be. He needs to play a few more years; I would like to see his number retired at some point. He is a guy I have coached all along; he's put up some impressive numbers. He is a local guy. I would love him to play a few more years and get that recognition."

Another popular face will be returning to the mound for the Majors with the return of Josh Palmer. Although, Roop says when Josh takes the mound – and what his role might be – are still a little up in the air.

"Josh Palmer (5.63 ERA, 2-5, 27 SO) is one of our faces. He was injured last year and ended up in the bullpen, had arm surgery. We are nursing him along; he's doing rehab. I tell Josh your goal is to help us in July and August, to help us when it counts," Roop says. "He will start off in the bullpen; he was 8-0, won the league ERA title and is now starting in the bullpen. But Josh is one of my favourite players; he is back and is going to work himself back into shape."

Roop, who has long stressed pitching and defence as the keys to winning baseball, is bringing back a pair of pitchers he says are among the best in the league.

"Pierre Miville-Deschenes (2.65 ERA, 3-2, 36 SO) is back to anchor our staff; that is his role. When you look at bringing in top-end pitchers, you ask can they beat Brantford, Guelph, Barrie. There are pitchers who can beat the middle to lower teams, but who can beat the top end teams? Pierre gives you an opportunity from that," Roop says. "Ryan McGorman (3.89 ERA, 2-2, 23 SO in 2008) is back from two years ago. The year we went to the finals, Ryan threw a nine inning, two-hitter in the playoffs against Brantford here at Labatt Park. It was probably the best pitched game I had ever seen. Those are the kind of credentials he brings. He is another top-end pitcher."

Another Londoner Roop is excited to have back is someone he says has become almost the poster child for London Majors baseball.

"Then there is Mike Mitro (3.68 ERA, 4-1, 23 SO). Mike is back for his sixth season," Roop says. "Mike is my utility pitcher. If I need him to start, come out of the bullpen, he does it all for us. And Mike bleeds blue, London Majors blue."

Those returning players are ones Roop says he expects will help bring together a winning team in 2010.

"We have great leaders, Palmer, Chambers, Cattrysse, Piwowarczyk, but can they all come together. It takes a lot of desire and mental toughness to win," Roop says. "We can write up the lineup and go through the motions and still compete, but to take it to the next level, we have to do all the small things."

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