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This year's version of the London Majors will be good for program sales.

When they take to the field for their Intercounty Baseball League season, they'll only have six returning players from last year's team, a team that finished seventh in the regular season and then was swept from the postseason in four games by the Brantford Red Sox.

"You start your calls to find out who is coming back and who you want back (and) surprisingly enough, it's a different team," said Roop Chanderdat, manager and co-owner of the Majors. "Some guys moved on to different things. Others just didn't fit the bill."

The Majors carry 25 players. They begin play Saturday at 1 p.m. at Labatt Park with an exhibition game against Jet Box, a senior team out of Michigan that won the United States championship last year. There's a \$2 general admission with proceeds to the Boys' and Girls' Club of London.

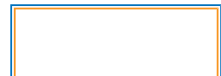
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The seven returnees are outfielder Kevin Virtue, third-baseman Kyle Piwowarczyk, backup infielder Vince Burke and backup catcher Jay

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Wiles along with pitchers Mike Mitro, Josh Palmer and Ted Kalnins.

"I'm really excited. We're going to have a good mixture of veterans and youth," Chanderdat said. "We're going to have a good team. We may be off to a rough start because most of my guys don't come back until mid-May or the end of May. Some may go deep in the (U.S.) college World Series. The first four games may be a little tough."

Even though you wouldn't think it, baseball teams rely on good chemistry as much as any other team sport.

"Team chemistry is huge and that's why I always save that last week in May to do a few team bonding or building activities," Chanderdat said. "Then the veteran guys will do their rookie thing. That last week in May is key to see how the team pulls together."

Chanderdat leaves no doubt where he feels his team needs to improve. It may be why there are so many changes.

"Dedication," he said.

"I wanted guys who want to be here, that are committed to baseball. It's kind of corny but I preach dedication, hard work and respect and I think we were missing some of the dedication last year. The guys who are coming are baseball guys. They want to play baseball. We'll have about nine guys who will play baseball every day because they are still looking to get drafted or want to move on. They'll be down at the park every day. That kind of attitude is contagious for the other guys."

Chanderdat has brought in some solid players this year.

One of the best-known local's is Mike Galloway. He was a terrific player in the Frontier League and is now in St. Thomas working in security with a view to getting into the police department.

Asking Chanderdat to name a few of the guys he really likes is similar to asking a parent to choose between siblings. There's always "just one more guy I want to mention."

It's a long list.

David Narodowski is a shortstop from British Columbia who Chanderdat believes will either get drafted by a major league organization or play Division 1 baseball in the United States.

Chanderdat recently signed left-handed pitcher Mehdi Djebbar, another junior national team player from Quebec who was drafted last year by the Milwaukee Brewers, but never signed.

Chanderdat has "been pleasantly surprised by how good" Japanese import Toshi Sasa has been. He's also pleased with infielder/outfielder Denten Neil from Ottawa; Puerto Rican Christian Ruiz, an outfielder playing in college; and Ryan McGorman from Manitoba, pitching at Buffalo's Canisius College.

"The last guy is my biggest pickup," Chanderdat said of Will Richards. " We haven't had a catcher in London since I've been here.

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They only last for a little bit. Richards is a second team all-star who played with Stratford last year. I just signed him."

Chanderdat wasn't quite done. He's rounded out his pitching staff with two Londoner, Geoff Mann and Jeff Newnes, both righthanders, and Ottawa lefthander Kevin Gamble.

The Majors open the season on the road May 10 against Guelph and their home opener is May 18 against Stratford.

"Just looking at the names, I'm excited," he said. "But until put them on the field and see what they can do at this level, you never know."

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