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SPORTS OTHER SPORTS

Majors fail to cash in chances

Thu, August 14, 2008

By [MORRIS DALLA COSTA](#)

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When a team doesn't hit for a lot of power, it has to do just about everything else to win.

The London Majors did just that last night but failed in one key aspect, coming up with timely hits.

Toss in an outstanding four-hit performance by Oshawa Dodgers starter Cam Gray and the Dodgers have new life in their Intercounty Baseball League semifinal.

The Dodgers, behind Gray's performance, cut the Majors lead in the best-of-seven series to 2-1 with a 1-0 victory at Labatt Park.

Game 4 is tonight in Oshawa.

The Majors played great defence and got a strong game from starter Adam Echlin, who went eight innings.

But they were missing home run threat Jess Bechard, who had a previous commitment on this night.

As a result, even though they threatened several times, they couldn't come up with the timely hit.

"We had two guys at third, less than two outs, and we couldn't score them," said Majors manager Roop Chanderdat. "We played great

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defence, got great pitching but didn't do the third thing we have to do."

Chanderdat wasn't surprised by the Dodgers' performance.

Before the game he said he thought that there was still a lot of work to do in the series.

Execution is the key to playing that kind of baseball. Last night the Majors didn't execute and the Dodgers played almost perfect baseball.

"Our goal is to get ahead early," said Chanderdat. "That's why you'll see us bunt early, try to get a run early. That puts a lot of pressure on the other team. It takes them out of their game. They start to feel pressure. Maybe guys think they have to do it themselves, hit it out of the park.

"It also gives the game to our pitchers, who have been great."

Chanderdat knows he has a solid team that has performed well all season but the playoffs are a different animal. It's far easier to play from in front than from behind.

The Majors had several chances to score in the early innings, stranding a Jeff Helps' double in the first inning to lead off the game and Rudy Vallejos on third base in the third inning with less than two outs.

"We just didn't get the job done," said shortstop David Narodowski. "We had some hard hits but it seemed when we had runners in scoring position, we'd hit the ball at somebody.

"We did play great defence though. Almost everyone at every position made a great play."

Left-fielder Vallejos ran down everything. His best play came in the top of the sixth.

With one out, the Dodgers had runners on first and second. Ryan Fleming hit a sinking liner to left that Vallejos made a sliding catch on. Jordan Castaldo lost count of the outs and headed for third. Vallejos doubled him off at second.

Ron Oneson, who started the game at first base for Bechard, and Narodowski, both turned in outstanding fielding plays in the same inning.

The best of the night, though, was a Kevin Virtue beauty in the top of the seventh.

With the game scoreless, the Dodgers had pinch-runner Brodie Ross on first. With one out, Kofie Osei-Aning hit a fly to right that was slicing away from Virtue toward the first-base line.

Virtue never stopped running, diving full out and coming up with a highlight-reel catch.

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With two out, Ross tried to steal second and was thrown out by five feet by catcher Mason Reilly.

Echlin allowed nine hits in his eight innings of work.

"Your starter goes eight innings? You'd take that every time," Chanderdat said. "We have to capitalize on our chances. Capitalize is a big word for us and we didn't capitalize."

The Dodgers finally got to him in the top of the eighth.

Steve Wickens led off the inning with his third hit of the night. He was sacrificed to second and Tler Johnstone drove him home with a double to the left-field fence.

DODGERS 1, MAJORS 0

London leads best-of-seven Intercounty semifinal 2-1

Game 4: Tonight at Oshawa, 8 p.m.

Game 5: Tomorrow at Labatt Park, 7:30 p.m.

Game 6: Saturday at Oshawa, 5 p.m., if necessary

Game 7: Sunday at Labatt Park, 1 p.m., if necessary

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Majors fail to cash in chances

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