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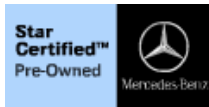
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SPORTS OTHER SPORTS

Majors heading back to final

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Sat, August 16, 2008
London pinch-hitter Vince Burke drove in the winning run in an extra-inning, series-clinching victory

By MORRIS DALLA COSTA

If you're going to go to a championship series, you might as well get there in style.

The London Majors certainly did.

The Majors are headed to the Intercounty Baseball League final, looking to win their first championship since 1975.

They defeated a tough Oshawa Dodgers team 6-5 in 10 innings last night at Labatt Park in front of about 900, closing out the best-of-seven semifinal 4-1.

The Majors did it in storybook fashion, coming back from 3-0 and 5-3 down, tying the game in the ninth with two out and winning it on a single by a guy who came in to pinch-hit in the ninth.

Vince Burke started the Majors' two-run rally in the ninth with a leadoff pinch-hit single. He ended the game with a one-out single up the middle, scoring Jess Bechard from second.

It started a party on the field.

"It's tough staying prepared," said Burke, wiping off a shaving-cream pie his teammates



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hit him with after the game. "You aren't seeing at-bats regularly. But you know what, it's baseball, you have to answer the bell. The boys set the table for everybody. I was the lucky one that had the opportunity to come through today. I'm sure everyone in the locker room would have done the same thing."

Scrappy is the operative word for this team. It doesn't quit. It works for everything and it often creates runs out of not very much.

The-ninth inning rally was a prime example. Manager Roop Chanderdat pulled some strings trying to get his offence moving.

He sent up pinch-hitter Burke, who singled. That was followed by another pinch-hit single by Will Richards. Christian Ruiz came on to run for Richards.

With Rudy Vallejos up bunting, Dodgers catcher Mike Reeves had a ball bounce out of his glove, allowing Burke and Ruiz to move up a base.

Vallejos, who had a single earlier, drove a fly ball deep to left centre that scored Burke and moved Ruiz to third. After Jeff Helps lined out to third with the infield in, the Majors squeezed out the tying run.

With two strikes, Kyle Piwowarczyk hit a high chopper to first. He beat Dodgers first baseman Ken Calway to the bag while Ruiz scored the tying run.

"I was praying the ball was going to go foul," Piwowarczyk said. "I could see the guy was staying back on the ball. He didn't want to charge it. I wasn't thinking of anything except running down the line."

Even the winning run in the 10th came with plenty of excitement attached to it.

Bechard led off with a single. With one out, catcher Mason Reilly hammered a ball to deep right-centre. Bechard thought it was going to be caught and held on first to tag up. The ball took one bounce to the fence. Instead of second and third, the Majors had runners on first and second, setting the stage for Burke.

"This team never quits, " Chanderdat said. "If you look at our record all year, that's a testament. There was a stretch we were 4-5 or 5-4 and that's where we turned it around. That's where we built our character."

The Majors now wait for the winner of the Guelph-Brantford series, which is tied 2-2.

Mike Mitro got the win. He pitched the 10th inning for Pierre Milville Deschenes who let the first six batters in the game reach base. He gave up three first-inning runs and then settled down to go the full nine innings.

"We're really scrappy, but that's the way I like it," Piwowarczyk said. "I love winning games like this."



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Austrian Nordic skier Rainer dies after paragliding fall
 Austrian Nordic combined skier Alfred Rainer died early Saturday from the severe head injuries he suffered from a paragliding accident last week, the Austrian Ski Federation said. He was 20.
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