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SPORTS OTHER SPORTS

Majors capture Game 1 thriller

Wed, August 20, 2008

By MORRIS DALLA COSTA

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If that's the kind of entertainment the London Majors and Brantford Red Sox are going to provide in the Intercounty Baseball League final, everyone is in for a treat.

It won't do much for the faint of heart but it was thrilling baseball.

The London Majors took the first game in the best-of-seven Intercounty Baseball League final 4-3 in 10 innings.

Majors shortstop Jeff Helps singled with the bases loaded in the 10th, scoring Mason Reilly for the win.

But what a trip it was to that 10th inning.

Majors starter Josh Palmer, who looked unhittable tossed a masterpiece but made one mistake and paid for it.

Red Sox starter Brad Hogeterp was almost as good but gave way to a shaky bullpen that eventually cost the Red Sox the win. The lefty hadn't pitched in 17 days but you wouldn't have known it.

With the score 0-0, the Majors scored three runs in the bottom of the eighth inning on the Red Sox relievers without hitting a ball out of the infield.



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Up 3-0, Palmer had given up only five hits and struck out 10. The Majors looked home and cooled.

But the drama wasn't over by a long shot. The Red Sox managed to get two on with two out.

With a 3-2 count and Labatt Park fans on their feet, Jason Gotwalt hammered a Palmer pitch over the fence and the trees in left field to tie the game.

The only cheering came from the Red Sox fans and team as everyone else sat in stunned disbelief at what happened.

Majors manager Roop Chanderdatt revived before the start of the half inning, in time to get tossed out for arguing balls and strikes with the home plate umpire. He didn't like the ball call before Gotwalt's bomb.

But the Brantford relievers exploded as well, walking the bases loaded before Helps' hit.

The Majors want to get into the Brantford bullpen, which gave up two big, late-inning leads against Guelph in the semifinal series.

"It was really tough," Palmer said of the home run. "But the important thing is we won. I felt great all game. We knew this is the championship and I knew I had to step it up. My stuff was great and its frustrating but we'll come back and get another win."

His stuff was great. He started his fifth game in the playoffs. He was 2-1 going in with an ERA of 1.42. Palmer has become the Majors' go-to guy.

It was a game in which the teams took turns coming up with the big moment. The Red Sox didn't pack it in against the tough Palmer. When Palmer gave up the bomb, the Majors didn't quit on him. Palmer wound up with 11 strikeouts and reliever Mehdi Djebbar got the win.

The Majors were missing shortstop David Narodowski. He's headed to school at Kansas. Helps moved over from second with Vince Burke getting some work at second.

Helps had three hits and Burke added a pair. It was third baseman Kyle Piwowarczyk's last game. He's headed to Germany to give pro hockey a try. But Chanderdatt has been preaching the gospel of everyone having to contribute and so far it's working.

"I keep talking about character building," Chanderdatt said. "These guys never give up because there's another guy on the bench who can come up with a hit. This team I build on depth and hopefully we'll prevail because of that."

The next game in the series is tomorrow in Brantford with Majors starting Adam Echlin and the Red Sox going with Gabe Rebas.



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SPORTS NEWS

Athletes show wild side


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