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## SPORTS OTHER SPORTS

### Majors storm into lead Sat, August 2, 2008

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By RYAN PYETTE

HAMILTON -- Thanks to a lightning storm, the London Majors finally have a playoff win at Labatt Park and a lead in a nail-biting playoff series.

But it was Hamilton manager Jason Booth who thundered away at how the game was called with his Thunderbirds at bat, trailing by one in the top of the seventh inning.

Umpire Sean Reid -- also a veteran OHL referee -- declared a 20-minute lightning delay when flashes were seen near the diamond. The ensuing downpour rendered the field unplayable so the game was called and the Majors were awarded a 4-3 victory after six complete innings before a crowd of about 850.

London now leads the best-of-seven Intercounty Baseball League quarter-final 3-2 and can reach the second round with a victory in the Steel City on Monday night.

But not so fast, says Booth. The Thunderbirds have protested the result and await a ruling from IBL commissioner Jim Rooney.

"It's ridiculous -- I blame the umpires on this one," Booth said. "They were made aware of the lightning in the fourth inning (before London tied the game 3-3) and they didn't do anything about it. But then they decide to clear the field in the seventh when we're

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at bat and down by one.

"What is that? It's not a deciding game, but it might as well be. It's an important game and the league has to look at changing their rules. We're in a pretty good series here and this was a pretty good ball game."

The IBL dictates that deciding games of series have to be played out to at least seven innings. Earlier this week, Oshawa was awarded a similar victory over Barrie in a playoff game that didn't make it to the eighth.

London manager Roop Chanderdat said the decision to call the game goes to the umpires and they consult with the grounds crew.

"There was the delay because it was dangerous with the lightning in the area," Chanderdat said, "and then the rain came and we weren't going to play again because the field was soaked. It couldn't have been fixed.

"You could say we lucked out, but we got the lead."

"It isn't Jason's decision (to call the game)," Chanderdat said. "It isn't our decision. It's an official game unless it's a Game 7 and it wasn't in this case."

London got a break because of the weather and scored the winning run on a rare Hamilton miscue.

Tied 3-3 in the fifth, Hamilton starter Robbie Foscarin picked off Kyle Piwowarczyk, but the lefty threw the ball past first baseman Henry Duke. The former London Knights forward advanced to third on the play and came home with the Majors' first lead on David Narodowski's deep fly ball to left field.

It was a bitter loss for the Thunderbirds, who were looking to win their third straight at London's home park. Hamilton jumped out to an early 3-1 edge through two innings off London starter Josh Palmer, but the ace right-hander shut the door the rest of the way.

The league leader in complete games was still on the mound when the decision to clear the field was made.

The big question is who the teams will choose to pitch in the sixth game, which has been moved to Monday because Hamilton's Bernie Arbour Stadium isn't available this weekend.

"We could've played Game 6 here in London on the weekend, but there's no way we're giving up Game 7," Chanderdat said. "If there's a Game 7, we want it on our field."

London workhorse Adam Echlin, who hasn't pitched in the series due to injury, has been deemed healthy and available. He threw in the bullpen last night.

Chanderdat could also go back to escape artist Pierre Miville-Deschenes, who pitched five nail-biting innings in a Game 2 win. Or



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Ryan McGorman, who was outstanding in a Game 3 loss.

Then there's Game 4 winner Mike Mitro, who pitched seven solid innings to even up the series in Hamilton on Thursday.

"I've told our guys it's a game-by-game thing on who pitches now," Chanderdat said. "Guys who started for us in the series have to be ready to come out of the bullpen now. That's the way it is."

Hamilton didn't come back with pitcher Coogie Freedman, the 28-year-old who spooked the London bats in the opener.

Foscarin, a 22-year-old from Toronto, pitched well for Hamilton, but created some bad luck for himself. He wasn't alone -- London made two defensive miscues in the first to allow Hamilton to take the early lead.

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