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## SPORTS OTHER SPORTS

### T-birds strike first in 2-1 win

Mon, July 28, 2008

#### INTERCOUNTY BASEBALL: Majors' Josh Palmer goes distance for a five-hitter, but London bats fall silent

By RYAN PYETTE

Josh Palmer provided another complete-game five-hitter.

Mother Nature handed them back home field advantage with a Saturday rainout in Hamilton.

The Intercounty Baseball League playoff format offered up a first-round opponent who finished 17 games behind in the standings.

With all that in their corner, how the heck are the London Majors down 1-0 in their best-of-seven series with the Hamilton Thunderbirds?

Here's the deal -- the Coogie Man spooked their bats.

London managed just five hits off Hamilton starter Coogie Freedman, who matched Palmer's complete game and survived a

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Hamilton Thunderbird's Tom Robertons steps over London Majors' pinch runner Jason Wiles who is thrown out at second base on a fielder's choice in the first game of playoff action in the Intercounty Baseball League. London lost 2-1. Game 2 is tonight in Hamilton. (Susan Bradnam, Sunb Media)



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threatening ninth inning as the Majors fell 2-1 to the heavy underdog T-birds before about 700 yesterday at Labatt Park.

London lost just three at home in 18 regular season games. But home-field advantage -- and Palmer's perfect 8-0 record -- is gone.

"We have to forget about this one and move on," said Majors shortstop and No. 3 hitter David Narodowski, who combined with Vince Burke and cleanup man Christian Ruiz in the heart of the lineup to go 0-for-12 in the opener. "We're in the playoffs. We're playing Hamilton. We just have to relax. It's just another game.

"It was frustrating. We hit some good balls right at guys. A few feet to the left or right and it's a different game."

London didn't get a hit until the fifth inning. The Majors didn't get a runner past first base until the eighth and their best opportunity to score was their last -- when rightfielder Kevin Virtue hit a deep fly ball to centre field with two on to end the game.

"We're a better-hitting team than we showed," said London manager Roop Chanderdatt. "Hats off to them (Hamilton) -- their pitcher did a nice job against us. It was a great pitchers' duel and they came out on top. You have to put on the pressure -- get your leadoff guys on and we didn't.

"As the game went on, we had some better chances. We will hit. This team will hit -- you can count on it."

London's regular second baseman Jeff Helps, a catalyst at the top of the lineup, is hurt and listed as day-to-day. So is workhorse pitcher Adam Echlin -- Pierre Miville-Deschenes will get the start in Hamilton tonight.

"Hopefully, we can do the same thing to them they did to us here," Palmer said. "We're confident in our guys. If it ends up going seven games, we have the pitching to do it."

London hit .300 collectively this season and finished second in team batting (second-place Guelph, which was similarly upset by the Kitchener Panthers in their post-season opener, was first). But the Majors were confounded by Freedman, who pitched for the Atlantic City Surf in the CanAm League last year.

It was only the third start for the 28-year-old from Richmond Hill. Just two weeks ago on the same mound, he was knocked out early -- but learned from it.

"It's good to be in the underdog role," Freedman said. "London (27-9



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in the regular season) won the pennant so everyone's expecting them to do well. We finished pretty far behind them (with a 10-26 record) and we're just trying to prove ourselves."

They proved they're not going to be rattled by London or the umpires. The only run Freedman allowed was generated when Toshi Sasa, he of the lingering bad hamstring, stole second, advanced to third on a Kyle Piwowarczyk grounder and got a free pass home on a balk.

## INTERCOUNTY PLAYOFFS

Thunderbirds 2, Majors 1

(Hamilton leads best-of-seven IBL quarter-final 1-0)

Game 2: Tonight, 7:30 p.m. at Hamilton's Bernie Arbour Stadium.

Game 3: Tomorrow, 7:30 p.m. at Labatt Park

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**Red Sox win finale**

BOSTON - Manny Ramirez might be happier if the Red Sox traded him. On Sunday night he showed why they shouldn't.

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