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## SPORTS OTHER SPORTS

**Majors try to get past injuries and win**  
 Fri, June 20, 2008  
**London manager Roop Chanderdat says the team stands a chance at No. 1**  
 By **RYAN PYETTE**

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The London Majors are underdogs no more.

They swing with the big boys in the Intercounty Baseball League. Known more for their recent string of shocking postseason runs, the biggest surprise will be if the Majors don't make playoff noise this summer.

"The guys are starting to see that we can play with anyone," said London manager Roop Chanderdat. "But we're still trying to get over that hump. We've had injuries to deal with, but I think we have a real shot at it (first place)."

London has an 11-6 record and travels to Barrie tomorrow for a double-header against the league-leading Baycats.

They return to Labatt Park Sunday at 1 p.m. to face the last-place Stratford Nationals.

Had the Majors not lost two of their past three games in extra innings, top spot would be on the line this weekend.

"We had our chances in Brantford -- we had the right hitters up with guys on base but just couldn't score," said Chanderdat. "It's tough losing in

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extras like that. You win those and you start to solidify your position in second place."

London has a strong rivalry with Barrie, one that became heated during a wild brawl last year -- a suspension-filled contest the Majors blamed partly for their ensuing meek playoff exit. Last week in a London twinbill, the Majors lost in eight innings to Barrie, but then ended the Baycats' 15-game winning streak in the second tilt on a walk-off homer by Japanese import Toshi Sasa.

"Toshi's still not right -- he's about 60-70 per cent (with a hamstring problem)," said Chanderdat. "Had he not hit it out and got on base, I would've definitely pinch-run for him. I've been trying to keep his bat in the lineup, though, as a DH and pinch-hitter."

Tomorrow in Barrie, the London batters will like face the Baycats' best pitchers: Paul Spoljaric and Brad Bissell, who started the season with a combined 8-0 record and impressive stats.

Daunting, but the Majors have a tough lineup led by three of the IBL's top hitters: Puerto Rican Christian Ruiz (.450 average), Jess Bechard (.410) and Vancouver native David Narodowski (.345).

"With Christian, I've been sending e-mails out all over the place (to pro teams and colleges) because someone has to take a chance on this guy," said Chanderdat. "People have been talking about our middle infield with Narodowski, who's going to a great school at the University of Kansas, at short stop and Jeff Helps at second.

"They've been really solid for us defensively and (veteran) Kyle Piwowarczyk has been great at the plate for us."

Adam Echlin, with a 3-1 record and 2.60 earned run average, and Josh Palmer (3-0 with two complete games and a 3.38 ERA), have established themselves as the Majors' top moundsmen. But they need some help.

London has been able to win despite the loss of starting catcher Will Richards and outfielder Denton Neill, who hasn't arrived yet after breaking his nose twice during the university season.

The injuries could prompt a few more roster additions. Depth has always been a pre-requisite to join the IBL.



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#### Flames, Habs and Leafs busybodies Friday night at entry draft


OTTAWA - The Ottawa Senators hosted the NHL's entry draft but it was three other Canadian teams that stole the show Friday.

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