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Majors spell relief M-a-n-n

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By **MORRIS DALLA COSTA, SUN MEDIA**

The London Majors had some questions about their young pitching before the season started.

If they continue to get the kind of performance they got last night from Geoff Mann, a lot of those questions will be answered.

The Majors defeated the Kitchener Panthers 6-5 in their Intercounty Baseball League home opener at Labatt Park.

Mann came on in relief of struggling starter Pierre Milville-Deschenes to start the sixth inning. The 19-year-old junior threw a blanket over the Panthers, going three innings, striking out four and giving up only one run.

"I felt awesome out there," the London native said. "When I was growing up I would come out here and watch and want to pitch. That was my first outing, opening night. The atmosphere was great."

Mann was tough. He threw the ball like a veteran.

"I didn't feel any nerves," he said. "It's baseball. It's what I want to do for a living, so I can't feel any nerves."

Majors manager Roop Chanderdatt believes he has a good hitting team.

His only concern is his pitching and only because of how young his staff is.



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"I thought Mann threw great," Chanderdat said. "We put him out there to see what he could. Right now we're not sure who is going to be a starter or reliever. We're going to figure that out."

Mann knows what he'd like.

"I've always been a starter. If I can go out and have a few more good outings, maybe they'll give me a chance to start," he said.

The Majors have been rained out twice this season, including their scheduled season opener. They're 3-1. The Panthers are 0-7.

The Majors have most of the guys who will be with them all year. Chanderdat is only waiting for four more.

Returning to the lineup from last year's team was outfielder Rudy Vallejos, who tried out for the Ottawa Rapidz of the CanAm League but didn't make it.

Chanderdat also signed veteran player Jess Bechard, who played Intercounty with Brantford in 1997 and with the Frontier League's London Werewolves in 2001.

"We've got four or five guys who will sit each game who could be playing," Chanderdat said. "I just tell them to be patient that they'll get a chance to play. In this league you always get a chance to play."

Chanderdat is especially impressed with Puerto Rican Christian Ruiz, who started a five-run third inning for the Majors by beating out a bunt single. The Majors sent nine players to the plate, with the rally highlighted by a two-run double by designated hitter Mason Reilly. The Majors came out of the inning with a 6-3 lead.

Milville-Deschenes earned the win and Josh Palmer pitched the ninth inning to earn a save.

The Majors play Hamilton tomorrow at Labatt Park at 1 p.m.



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