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SPORTS **OTHER SPORTS**

Some old, some new do Majors some good

Sat, May 9, 2009
INTERCOUNTY BASEBALL

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By **MORRIS DALLA COSTA**, FREE PRESS SPORTS COLUMNIST

There will be some old and some new when the London Majors open their Intercounty Baseball League season tomorrow in Hamilton.

The old revolves around the usual early season headaches for the team. Until the end of May, the Majors will be playing with a patchwork lineup, waiting for their university players to be done their season.

The good news about the old is the Majors will be returning long-time veterans to give them stability. Among them will be Jess Bechard and Kyle Piwowarczyk, who have been key members of the Majors for years. They will be in the Opening Day lineup.

The Majors hope the new aspect winds up being good news for the team. They added newcomer Alan Cattrysse to the lineup and, judging by the number of positions manager Roop Chanderdat has him playing, he'll be a key addition to the team.

Chanderdat had him slotted into the lineup tomorrow as the starting shortstop. But with the return of Mike Ambrose at shortstop, at least in the short term, Cattrysse will move to centrefield.

"But if we need him as a closer, he'll do that, too."

Cattrysse is one of the big-time additions to the team. He graduated from Michigan State with a reputation as a complete player with a big arm.

"When I was in school, I played short, third, second, outfield. The only place I haven't played is catcher," Cattrysse said. "If I had a preference, it would be centrefield but I'll play wherever I can help the team."

Cattrysse was a university-calibre basketball player.

Playing in the Intercounty, where teams often find themselves short of players for a variety of reasons, having a guy like Cattrysse is invaluable.

He's hoping to relaunch his baseball career. There was a time in his university career when it wasn't fun to play baseball.

"At school, we went through some coaching changes and they kind of held some grudges against the olders guys," Cattrysse said. "When you give a large part of your life to a sport day in and day out and love it . . . it just wasn't fun to come to the ballpark anymore."



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"But I'm really looking forward to his season. The guys here are great and I want to show the pro scouts that I can play in the pros."

Cattrysse doesn't have any problems with pitching if he must.

"When I went to pro camp, I was told I had a strong arm and I should consider pitching so I did some of that," he said. "Roop is going to let me close for now. I have the right mentality and the right focus, I'm ready to go. I'm really enjoying playing again."

Chanderdat will not have all his players for the opener in Hamilton. The Majors play next Saturday in Guelph before their home opener next Sunday against Hamilton.

Chanderdat will start Mike Mitro tomorrow.

Off the field, the Majors can only hope to replicate the success they had during last year's playoffs. The run -- which went to a seventh game of the final, a game the Majors lost to Brantford -- allowed the Majors to make some money for the first time since Scott Dart and Roop Chanderdat took over as owners six years ago.

"We made a little bit of money, but look where we got to -- the seventh game of the final with that big crowd," Dart said. "We didn't get into this to make money, but we didn't want to spent our money either."

Five years later and Dart and Chanderdat have spent \$100,000 of their own money.

But Dart says that the team has achieved some of their goals including averaging 500 fans a game.

This year, the Majors have applied for a liquor licence that has cost them about \$3,000.

"We have had a lot of people come up to us and say 'It would be great if you had beer,'" Dart said. "At the same time, we want to make sure coming to a game remains a great experience for kids and families."

They have scheduled a game for 11 a.m. on a Tuesday in an effort to get schools to allow their children to attend.



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