

Majors look to South America for new talent

By SEAN MEYER
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When Roop Chanderdatt took over as general manager of the Intercounty Baseball League's London Majors back in October he said he was committed to building a winning program in the Forest City.

While few Londoners will have been thinking baseball this early in the new year, Roop has been focused on getting players signed and in place prior to the Intercounty season which starts in early May.

Besides signing several returning and local players, Roop has also found himself looking to not only outside of London, but outside of North America as well. In fact, the Majors recently held their inaugural baseball camp in Venezuela under the direction of Roop and recently resigned infielder Simon Gallaraga who has been named director of Latin America scouting.

"We invited 15 guys to it and we have gotten a number of commit-

ments out of it. These players may not necessarily be on the roster. Some will be prospects, some will go to a college, some will just practice with the team. But there are a lot of guys excited about coming here," Roop says. "We are only allowed three imports, and including Simon that leaves us a couple spots. And it takes a tremendous amount of time and energy to get players signed. But we have signed a lot of scouts who will work under Simon and that's going to pay off."

As Roop continues to prepare the team's roster for the upcoming season, he has found local interest in the team is continuing to grow.

"We are planning a huge sponsorship drive and we've heard there's a lot of interest in that. I'm very, very encouraged," Roop says. "People see what we are doing and want to get behind it. There is still a lot to do, but there is a lot of interest out there."

That interest may not necessarily result in signed player contracts, but Roop says he can promise one thing above anything else.

"We want guys who want to be here so the one thing I can guarantee people is an opportunity. Then it's up to them to show what they can do," Roop says. "I stress hard work, dedication, respect. The guys see that and know that's what I'm about. Everyone has options so you have to build a rapport. They have to too and I appreciate how they take this process seriously."

Although this is Roop's first time serving as a team's general manager (he does co-own the Majors with fellow Londoner Scott Dart), he has found the job to be even more time consuming than he expected.

"It's been surprising as GM just how much work is involved. I had been helping out part-time, but now it's full-time and it's proven to be a lot of work. But it's also been awesome," Roop says. "I love a challenge and this certainly is. We're not rebuilding here, we are building a program for long-term success."