

Jays rained out in Aurora, drop marathon game one of NDBL finals on the road



By Jake Courtepatte

The senior men's Aurora Jays have given themselves an early hole to crawl out of, dropping the first game of the best-of-seven North Dufferin Baseball League Championship.

Set to play out as a basic 'home-and-home' series, the regular season champs were to host the Ivy Leafs in Game One on home turf Saturday.

However, the series took an unexpected twist right from the get-go, as Friday's intense thunderstorm left Aurora's Lambert Willson Park looking more like a pond than a baseball diamond on Saturday.

Game One was rescheduled to Thursday, September 11, leaving the series to be opened on the road in Ivy on Sunday.

Emotions ran high early when Leaf slugger Todd Gowan hit a soft shot back to pitcher Brad Crosby on the mound.

Crosby was able to field the grounder, throwing to Jays catcher Fab Dolan at home for the force-out before Dolan would send the ball to first to end the inning.

Gowan was the runner heading home, being thrown out by what Jays coach Rob Wilson estimates to be 'about fifteen or twenty feet'.

He would still finish his slide, taking out Dolan, whose back was to the runner. The benches would clear with no ejections, but what Wilson called 'a lot of heated arguments'.

'It's a seven game series, and in game one we're already clearing the bases. It makes for some interesting baseball, to say the least.' The game turned out to also be quite a pitcher's battle, with neither team able to plate many runs. Jay Brad Crosby allowed one run over seven hits and two walks in the game, a run he gave up early in the second inning.

Crosby's offensive production also deserves to be noted, as he was the only Jay with multiple hits in the game, picking up a double and a single. The double could have easily been a home run, however, the trees along the fence at the Ivy park acted as an obstacle.

'He was our best player on Sunday, hands down,' said Wilson. 'He was dealing on the mound, he was locating the ball real well. His breaking pitches were on all day. For him to pitch nine innings at the calibre he did, it really demonstrates his abilities.'

The Jays were able to climb back in the top of the fifth, tying the game at one.

From there the stalemate would continue, as Ivy's Brad Grieveson would sit down Jay batter after Jay batter in a ten strikeout outing.

Unlike the earlier series, the championship does not allow for ties, sending the two teams through three extra innings looking for the winning run.

With pitching arms being exhausted, Crosby was relieved in the tenth inning by Zach Wiseman. Wiseman would give up a walk and a single, enough to plate the winning run for the Ivy Leafs.

?We know we've got some left in the tank,? said Wilson. ?And to take them to extra innings in the first game on the road and get out of a few jams says a lot about our depth.?

Aurora is looking for their first ever NDBL title, competing in their third championship series in the past five seasons. The Jays fell to the Bolton Brewers in both previous attempts, picking up only one win between the two series.

At press time, the Jays next game will be Thursday, September 11, at home at 7.30 p.m.

For playoff stats and schedules, visit www.ndbl.ca.