

Aurora Jays wrap up League season heading to playoffs



By Jake Courtepatte

Despite a mediocre final week performance, the Aurora Jays are heading into the postseason at the top of the North Dufferin Baseball League (NDBL) standings.

The Jays battled the Bolton Brewers and Ivy Leafs for league supremacy all season, and the standings would come down to the wire. The Jays entered the week one point up on both Bolton and Ivy.

After a 17 ? 3 whipping of the visiting New Lowell Knights on Monday, the bats stayed hot the next evening in a 10 ? 6 win over the Creemore Braves that saw a five-run first inning. Aurora picked up an amazing 32 hits between the wins.

The week only got better for the Jays on Wednesday when the Brewers finished their season by splitting a doubleheader with the Barrie Angels. The loss clinched first place for the Jays, having won three straight games.

With two games left on the schedule and the standings in the books, the Jays were already preparing for the playoffs.

?We've got a couple of sore bodies that we're trying to give some time,? said coach Rob Wilson. ?A couple ?maybes' too that we're giving some rest.?

The Jays had only nine players for Friday's final home game against the Midland Indians, a game that was delayed until almost 9 p.m due to heavy traffic.

The undermanned Jays fell to the fifth-place Indians 6 ? 1, giving up three home runs in the process. With the team in recovery mode, Andrew Bukovec said the Jays ?just weren't that into it.?

The final game of the season came Sunday on the road in Orangeville to face the Giants. Despite more than doubling the Giants in run production throughout the season, the Jays had trouble scoring after a Chris Bloom run in the top of the first put the team up early.

Down 2 ? 1 in the sixth, Bloom gave the team another lift when he would take second base on a wild pitch, then stealing third. He would score the tying run, tagging up on a deep fly ball.

Holding on to their playoff hopes by a thread, the Giants came out in the seventh looking for the win. After relief pitcher Ted Beadle sat down the first batter he faced, he gave up a bunt single to Giant Dave Humphrey. Humphrey quickly stole second base, putting the winning run in scoring position. With two outs, Kevin Buck would hit a deep fly ball to the gap to bring Humphrey in for the walk-off 3 ? 2 win.

Despite the final two losses, Wilson said the Jays' season was a ?resounding success.?
?The last couple of games weren't the results we were looking for, but we're still on track for our goals. Regardless of the results, these games are definitely something we can learn and build on.?

The Jays end an incredible season with a record of 21-4-1, off a league-high 197 runs. They will meet the Barrie Angels in the first round of the Strother Cup playoffs, a team the Jays went undefeated against in the regular season.

Looking ahead, Wilson said he's confident in his team's abilities, regardless of who they face.

?Our regular season record shows that we're not scared of anybody,? he said. ?I'm going to be so bold as to say I think we're the team to beat this year. We've had a lot of success in the season, and we're not scoreboard watching. We'll be ready to play.?

The five-game series kicks off next week, pending a league meeting to determine schedules.

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