

Jays drop third in a row to lose NDBL Championship to Ivy Leafs



By Jake Courtepatte

It's 'always the bridesmaid, never the bride' for the Aurora Jays.

The North Dufferin Baseball League (NDBL) closed its books on the 2014 season last Saturday, as the Ivy Leafs defeated the Aurora Jays in six games in the best-of-seven championship series.

It marked the second time in two years that the Jays, who are still seeking their first NDBL title, would lose the championship series.

The Jays made the trip to Ivy on Saturday for a crucial elimination Game 6, having lost two in a row to the Leafs to be behind in the series 3 - 2.

Both teams arguably sent their best pitchers to the mound, with the Jays Brent Owen facing off against Brad Grieveson for the Leafs.

Deadlocked at zero in the bottom of the fifth, a perfect game by Owen was broken with a walk to Ivy's Mike Kriegizas. It would prove costly, as he would be sent to second base on a sacrifice bunt, later being brought in by a Chad Watters base hit to put the Leafs up 1 - 0.

Desperate, the Jays pressed in the sixth, when Ted Beadle, Chris Rettie, and Fab Dolan would each hit singles to load the bases with two outs.

However, Jake Pinnegar would hit a liner to second to end the inning and leave all three base runners stranded.

Owen allowed only one baserunner in the bottom half of the sixth, pairing two strikeouts with a nice Ryan Lewis catch on a deep fly ball.

Needing to score a run to extend the game in the top of the seventh, Daniel Lehmkuhl gave the Jays a fighting chance by hitting a single down the centre to reach base with zero outs.

Stephen Vallee would then hit a textbook sacrifice bunt to bring the tying run to second base.

Chris Bloom fought back from a 0 - 2 count to face a 3 - 2, eventually being hit by a pitch to put two runners on board.

Unfortunately, the Jays season would come crashing down one batter later, as Ian Rettie, who led the team with 35 hits in the regular season, hit into a double-play sending the Leafs' dugout into a frenzy.

Owen's outing was downplayed by the loss, allowing only two hits and one walk in a complete game for the Jays.

Grieverson was given MVP honours after the game for his pitching efforts, giving up seven hits in the shutout and his third win of the series.

It was the Leafs' eighth Strother Cup win, and the first since 2003. Meanwhile, the Jays are still looking for their first championship, previously having dropped the series in four games to the Bolton Brewers last year.

The Jays were the top seed coming into the 2014 playoffs, having gone 21-4-1 in the season. Prior to the championship series, the Jays were undefeated in the postseason.