

Jays end season on high note ahead of playoffs



By Jeff Doner

The Aurora Blue Jays ended their regular season on a high note with a convincing 9 ? 2 win against the Barrie Angels last week.

In order to keep their starting pitchers fresh for the upcoming playoffs, the Jays rolled out some variety, including some who hadn't pitched in years.

Getting the start for the Jays was Nathan Drury who pitched two innings. Although he got into a bit of trouble with a bases loaded situation, the defense backed him up and converted a double play to hold Barrie to a single run in the first.

Following Drury was regular starter Ian Milne, who was credited with the win for his one inning of work in the third when the Jays took a two run lead.

Andrew Bukovec, Ryan Lewis, Chris Bloom and Chris Leslie each pitched an inning to finish off the game.

Lewis and Bloom, in particular, hadn't pitched in years, but both said it was fun to get out there and hurl a few pitches.

?It was fun. It was good to have a game where we could take the pressure off a little bit and have some fun,? said Bloom. ?It's been probably seven years since I have pitched, so it was kind of fun for me and ?Louie' [Lewis]. We've been barking and joking about it for quite a while, so it was good to get in there.?

Bloom not only pitched well, but made a highlight reel pickoff at second base.

?I channeled teammate Ian Milne there,? he said laughing. ?It was probably the selfish thing to do, but when you get the opportunity to pick someone off when you haven't pitched in seven years, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to spin and fire one to second.?

Despite the fact the team had little riding on the game against Barrie; the Jays know how they need to be in top form with playoffs rapidly approaching.

?I think we're feeling confident,? said Bloom. ?We know it's going to get serious really quick and that from here on out there's really no breaks, but over the last few years we've kind of learned the ability to kind of lock in when we need to, so I think we're all excited and turned in the right direction after stumbling a bit out of the gate this season.?

Lewis agreed that the Jays seem to be running a well oiled machine and as a veteran of the team, said it was neat to see the team grow together over the years.

?It has been amazing to grow with these guys and see the progression of everybody maturing; it's fun to be a part of,? he said.

After being knocked out in the first round last year, Lewis thinks the team will come in with a lot of knowledge about what it takes to move on.

?We're looking good. We're lucky that we have the amount of guys that we have to fill in all the positions and I'm confident now with our big pitching staff and the team that we're playing, we match up well against them, so we're hoping to make the finals this year.?

Bloom agreed that the matchup against Clearview will be a good one for the Jays.

?It's always a tough park to play in and usually we play early games [no lights], so it's tough to get guys to the park on time, but they're a good team, they're in the playoffs and they've won some big games this year,? he said. ?They've always given us a run for the money, so it should be a pretty good series. I'm expecting that our team will lock together and we'll all go out and do our job. If we do that, we shouldn't have too much trouble with them.?

The Jays playoff schedule is as follows: Game 1 ? Tuesday, Aug. 6, 7.30 p.m. Game 3 ? Thursday, Aug. 8, 7.30 p.m. and if necessary game 5 on Tuesday, Aug. 13, 7.30 p.m. all at Lambert Willson Park.

For a full schedule, stats or team info, visit www.ndbl.ca.