

Jays push through to second round of playoffs against Orillia



By Jeff Doner

They were pushed to the limit, but the Aurora Jays men's baseball team dug deep and came out on top of a do-or-die situation in game five against Clearview last week.

The 9 ? 5 win moved them on to the second round of the North Dufferin Baseball League's senior men's playoffs against the Orillia Majors.

After forcing the Clearview Orioles up against the ropes early in the series with wins in games one and two, the Jays got complacent and allowed the Orioles to come back and tie the series.

But, after two consecutive losses, the Jays found life and were jolted for a big performance in game five.

Buoyed by a stellar performance from starting pitcher Brent Owen, the Jays rallied around their pitcher and everything seemed to fall into place.

After a tough loss in his last outing against the Orioles, Owen said there was no other option but to win.

?It felt awesome to get back on the horse,? he said postgame. ?It really sucked losing last game. It hurt. So, it was a tough loss, which made it feel even better to get this win. I pumped myself up before the game. All I wanted to do was get here and throw some strikes.?

After giving up one run in the top of the first, Owen settled in and made short work of the Clearview batters.

But it wasn't until the bottom of the second that a raucous Jays squad got the run back and took the lead.

Catcher Chris Fafalios walked and was driven in by Chris Rettie for the Jays' first run.

The one-two punch of Stephen Vallee and Chris Bloom were once again dynamic for the Jays at the top of the batting order and were catalysts in the Jays taking a 4 ? 1 lead in the inning.

From then on, Owen added to his strikeout total and kept the Orioles at bay.

Fafalios and his hot bat kept things rolling for the Jays in the bottom of the fourth inning by turning a single into a double on one of many throwing errors by the Orioles. Vallee would drive in Fafalios soon after to increase their lead 5 ? 1.

Then the bats came out again in the bottom of the fifth, to help the Jays jump out to a 9 ? 1 lead.

In the top of the sixth, Owen got himself into a bit of trouble, giving up four runs to Clearview, but he managed to escape the inning with a four run lead.

With the game almost in the bag, dependable closer Zack Wiseman relieved Owen to save the game and lock down a 9 ? 5 win.

?We all hit, the defence was good for the most part, which helped us come away with the series,? Vallee said. ?We're definitely feeling good about things right now. The biggest thing tonight was that we saw a lot of positive energy that we didn't see in games three and four when we were flat. Tonight everybody was cheering and on their toes.?

Vallee said even though his team were the favourites heading into the series, the Jays were pushed by the Orioles.

?I definitely give kudos to Clearview for playing really hard. They caught us off-guard in game three and pushed really hard in game four, but I think tonight we all proved that we are the better team,? he said.

Added Owen: ?Tonight things went well. The guys were pumped and good things are happening,? he said. ?If we keep our energy up like it was tonight, we're unbeatable. That's just how it is. The last two games have been flat, so we just need to keep the energy in it and we'll be fine.?

They're now looking ahead to their next series against Orillia, the Jays will look to keep the momentum going and the intensity at a high against a team that the Jays were unable to beat in the regular season.

?It's going to be a tough series,? said Mike Keon. ?Orillia was one of the top teams all year long. The schedule is a little unusual as Orillia has home field advantage, but the first two games are in Aurora. With that it will be very important to play well in those first two games.?

Round two schedule against Orillia is as follows: Game one ? Lambert Willson Park in Aurora on August 20 at 7.30 p.m., game two at Stewart Burnett Park in Aurora on August 22, with the following three games slated to be played in Aurora.

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