

Rare grand slam highlights Jays? first round sweep of Indians

By Jake Courtepatte

One of the rarest feats in the game of baseball went down at Lambert Wilson Park in Aurora last Tuesday.

Down three runs to the Midland Indians in the bottom of the seventh inning of the North Dufferin Baseball League playoff opener, the Aurora Jays' Chris Fafalios knocked a walk-off grand slam out of the park to win the game by one run, known as an ?ultimate grand slam.?

In a tight 2 ? 2 game heading into the top of the sixth inning, the Indians blew up the score with four runs plated, holding onto a 6 ? 2 lead into the seventh. With a new pitcher on the mound for the final inning, the Jays loaded the bases off reliever Ryan Beckett and cashed in on a sacrifice fly for a three-run game.

They followed up with a walk, before Fafalios slammed what manager Rob Wilson called a ?no doubter? to left centre field for a 7 ? 6 win.

Only 28 players in the history of Major League Baseball have accomplished an ultimate grand slam.

The thrilling win was the kickoff of an eventual sweep for the Jays in the best-of-three series, who entered the first round as underdogs.

Knocking off the Indians on their home turf Thursday by a score of 9 ? 5, they returned Saturday to book their ticket to the semifinal round with a 9 ? 0 shutout.

Wilson said their win over Midland was reminiscent of the Jays' upset by the Orangeville Giants last season, also in the first round.

?They had a solid season like we did a year ago, and like Orangeville did to us last year, we managed to spoil a strong season with a round one ?upset'. Midland is a great club and it took our best three-game set of the season to beat them.?

As the sixth-ranked team heading to the second round, the Jays biggest challenge of the entire postseason perhaps comes this week.

They will face the first-place New Lowell Knights, who swept their series against the Bolton Dodgers by a combined score of 32 ? 4.

The Knights lost just four games over the 26-game season, but Wilson said his team will head into the semis ?with confidence.?

?Round one really ignited a fire in our club. After a regular season where it felt like we never had all the cylinders firing in sequence, now it feels like everything is clicking. To see our pitching and offense start to reach potential, overshadowing some great defensive plays is encouraging.?

Coming off a shutout by New Lowell early in the season, the Jays season finale featured a 9 ? 0 stomping of the Knights.

Despite being annual contenders, the Jays are still in search of their first Strother Cup championship.

The schedule is yet to be released, as the first round continues, but a tentative starting date is set for this Saturday.