

Senior Jays to clash with Indians in NDBL playoffs



By Jake Courtepatte

A tumultuous season for the Aurora Jays has resulted in a first-round meeting with the Midland Indians in the North Dufferin Baseball League (NDBL) playoffs.

Closing the regular season on Thursday with a shutout of the league's top team was a healthy warmup.

Pitcher Daniel Lehmkuhl gave up just five hits over a complete seven innings at Lambert Willson Park in Aurora, on his way to a 9-0 victory over the New Lowell Knights.

He was aided by five runs scored in the first two innings by his batters, as Stephen Vallee, Ian Rettie, Brad Crosby, Chris Fafalios, and Lehmkuhl himself crossed the plate early.

A three-run fifth inning, followed by one more in the sixth, earned the Jays the blowout victory over a Knights team that had lost just three games all season.

With the win, Lehmkuhl remained the team's best pitching option. Through 25 innings this season, he has given up just thirteen runs, while striking out a team-best 36 batters, 14 more than his closest teammate.

The win vaulted the Jays two points past the Lisle Astros and Bolton Dodgers, setting up a first-round playoff series with the Midland Indians. Both teams are still in search of their first championship in the NDBL, though Aurora came close in meeting with the Ivy Leafs in the final series in 2014.

"Given our up and down season, I'm sure we're a tempting target for them," said Rob Wilson, manager of the Jays.

For the first time in years, the Jays enter the postseason as the lower-ranked team in their first round matchup, having finished the season in sixth place with a record of 14-11-1. The Indians took the third position, posting a record of 17-9-0.

"It gives us a chance to be considered underdogs for a change," said Wilson. "That's a role I think we can thrive in."

Despite the Indians holding the better record, the teams split the regular season series, having met just twice and each winning on home turf. Both games were one-run finishes.

As is usually the case, Aurora's offence carried them to a winning season. Their 177 runs scored in the regular season was top in the

14-team league, a statistic they hope will carry them past the low-scoring Indians squad.

The Indians were third in the league in lowest runs against.

The postseason schedule will be finalized Thursday following a league meeting.

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