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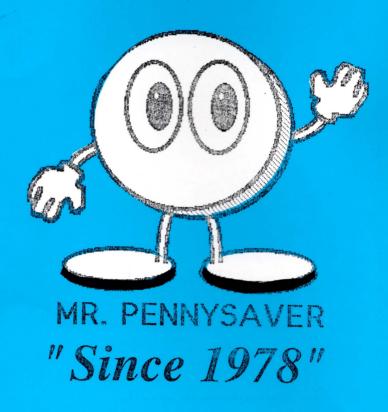
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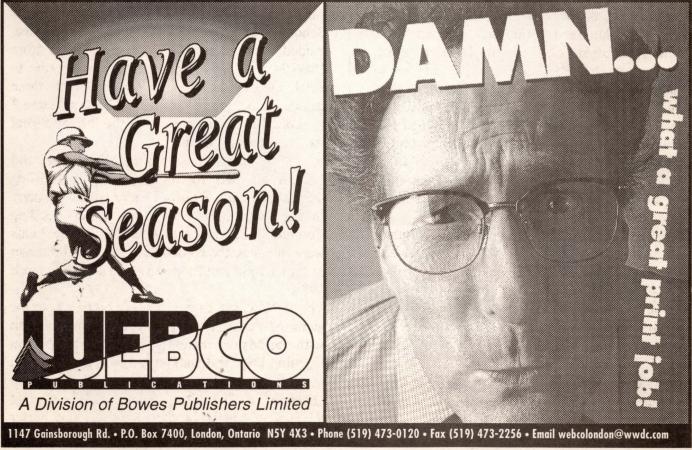
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Brief History of the Intercounty Major Baseball League by Jeffrey Reed

The Intercounty Major Baseball League, enjoying its 82nd season in 2000, is one of the oldest organized athletic leagues in North America. Since 1919, Ontario baseball fans have enjoyed the best senior amateur baseball in Canada.

The baseball hotbeds of Galt, Guelph, Kitchener and Stratford were the Intercounty's charter clubs, with the latter two dominating until 1935, winning a combined 13 league titles (including Galt's 1927-31 dynasty). London first entered a team in 1925, and promptly won the title. To the Intercounty's credit, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, it steamrolled to success, and it continued to survive during World War II. The post-war Intercounty flourished, with league calibre matching or bettering many U.S.-based professional leagues. The introduction of night baseball saw record crowds file through Intercounty turnstiles.

In 1948, the London Majors (formerly the London Army Team who won the Canadian Sandlot Congress titles in 1943-44), captured the North American Sandlot Championship. But in 1957, London and Brantford jumped ship, joining the Great Lakes-Niagara District league. London won the Great Lakes pennant, but lost to Niagara Falls in the league final. The next year, London, Brantford and Hamilton rejoined the Intercounty loop; the GL-ND league folded like a cheap suitcase. From 1959-63, the Brantford Red Sox won five straight titles. Tough times existed in 1962-63, as only five clubs competed, but a rebuilding period began in 1964, when the Stratford club rejoined the league.

The 1960s and '70s saw the Majors change their nickname to the Diamonds (1960-61), back to the Majors (1962-63), the Pontiacs (1964-69), the Avcos (1970-73) and finally back to the Majors, a handle which current team owner Arden Eddie grabbed for good when he purchased the franchise in the fall of 1976. Eddie, in his 34th season with the club, was an Intercounty rookie in 1967. Today, he holds numerous records, including most games (843),

seasons (33), at-bats (2,909), hits (769), RBI (382), and walks (669).

In 1969, Jack Dominico's Toronto Maple Leafs entered the league and have been a strong competitor from the east ever since. In 1976, after a 14-year absence, the history-rich St. Thomas Elgins returned, and in 1984 won their last championship. The powerhouse Windsor Chiefs brought a western flavour to the league from 1979-81, and in 1982 the new East and West divisions were respectively renamed the Halpern and Hamel divisions. after commissioner Reub Halpern and secretary Lorne Hamel. In 1984-85, the Intercounty returned to one division, then split again from 1986-90.

But perhaps one of the largest decisions made came in 1977, when league officials welcomed the livelier aluminum bat, striking fears amongst league pitchers. After the 1994 campaign, aluminum bats were banned, producing one of the most exciting seasons in league history in 1995. Fittingly, the team which dominated since 1986, the Stratford Hillers, were part of a fourway tie for first place. Manager Dennis Schooley, an infielder with 23 years experience, guided the Hillers to six championships from 1986-94. Perhaps his proudest moment came in 1994, against the Guelph Royals. Down three games to one, the Hillers battled back in Game 7 to score 10 runs in the top of the 9th, and steal the Intercounty crown.

In 1995, Stratford, Toronto, Kitchener and Guelph all tied for first, forcing a thrilling tiebreaker series; Stratford captured the pennant. In the league final, with the Hillers leading Toronto three games to one, the Maple Leafs were this time the comeback kids, riding the arm of hurler John Douris to win their first title since 1988.

The 1996 season captured every bit of magic the game of baseball has to offer. The year began with the Majors marching into Christie Pits on Opening Day, and walking away with a 6-1 win over the defending champions. Veterans Dean Dicenzo of Hamilton, Eddie, Schooley and Kitchener's Curran brothers - left-handed hurler

Kevin and slugging outfielder/first baseman Randy, added to their milestones. It was also the year of the one-run ballgame - 33 - as wooden bats ruled for a second consecutive season.

Home runs, scores, batting averages, earned-run averages and game times all decreased in 1996, but there was plenty of excitement. New stars emerged in Toronto catcher Dominic Campeau, who became the first player to ever win both Rookie of the Year and MVP honours. And youngster Darby Parsons of St. Thomas won the batting crown with a .407 average. Dicenzo tied Kitchener manager Tom McKenzie with 570 hits, third all-time. Eddie and Schooley added to their games played records. But it was the Currans who captured the spotlight.

The Panthers won their first league title since 1990, beating the Maple Leafs four games to two in the final. On July 30, at Emslie Field in St. Thomas, Randy Curran became the all-time home run king with round trips No. 83 and No. 84. He finished the season with 85 career homers, three more than Scott Gardiner's 82 lifetime home runs. Curran was named playoff MVP, and awarded the Tim Turow Trophy by commissioner John Coppes for outstanding achievement. All-star lefty Kevin Curran won a league-best nine games on the mound for 73 lifetime, moving into a tie for second all-time with Doug Landreth. Sadly, the Elgins folded at the completion of the '96 season. Their 4-31 finish set a futility record under a 35-game schedule.

The 1997 season was a memorable one, especially for Toronto left-hander Rob Patterson, who won both the regular season MVP award, and the Tim Turow Trophy. On the mound, Patterson finished 6-1 with a 2.51 ERA. At the plate, he hit .334. And, he was the first player chosen as a first team all-star at two different positions (first base, left-handed pitcher). Also, for the second consecutive season, a Toronto catcher, Matt Stockman, won Rookie of the Year honours. Guelph and Toronto finished the regular season tied for first at 24-12. Guelph beat Toronto 7-3 in a sudden-death game to capture the pennant.

The '97 championship final was a lot closer between the white lines than it appears in print.

Guelph won their first title since 1993, sweeping the best-of-seven affair with the defending champs. But three games were decided by one run, two games in extra innings. Kitchener right-hander Scott Medvin, a former Pittsburgh Pirate and Seattle Mariner, was in the spotlight. He went the distance in the 11-inning final contest, which saw Guelph's Sean Travers score on a passed ball to Give the Royals a 1-0 win and the championship. Brett Gray won in relief of Mel Melehes, who went 10 2/3. Randy Curran won his second consecutive playoff MVP award, thanks to eight playoff homers.

There was sadness and tragedy following the 1997 season. The Intercounty lost a great leader when commissioner (1993-97) John Coppes died suddenly at age 55 in December. Long-time secretary-treasurer Lorne Hamel retired; he's now deputy commissioner. And, the Hillers folded during the off-season, leaving the league with just six teams. With Stratford's Gary Thomas taking over as commissioner, the Intercounty prepared for the 1998 campaign - its 80th.

The Majors strung together the second longest winning streak (14 games) in league history, steamrolling over their opposition between May 23 - June 26. But London lost a semifinal to eventual champions Kitchener Panthers. Majors centre fielder Richard Thompson won his second batting crown, and was named a first team all-star for a fourth consecutive season. Catcher Todd Hayward, coming over from the defunct Hillers, became the first player in Intercounty history to be named an all-star at four different positions (other than DH). Arden Eddie, at age 50, played in just two games, hinting that retirement was just around the corner.

In a rematch of the 1996 final, Kitchener again beat Toronto in an exciting seven-game series. Medvin again shone, going 4-1 in the playoffs with an ERA of 1.49. He lost once, but won twice in the final series against the Maple Leafs. Also, the Intercounty lost one of its brightest stars in November 1998, when Russ Evon died near his Port Stanley home.

With a new century just around the corner, the Majors played five home games at Hall of Fame Field, at the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame &

4

Museum in St. Marys - a fitting venue for the end of a century which has brought baseball fans in southwestern Ontario more than 80 years of exciting Intercounty baseball. Again, the Panthers and the Maple Leafs battled for the title. This time, Toronto ruled after a tough sevengame series. Curran hit .485 to capture the Reid Buck Memorial Trophy as batting champ, and won the home run crow with 14 round trips, for 113 lifetime.

To begin a new century, the new St. Thomas Storm and Waterloo Tigers ballclubs have boosted the Intercounty ranks to eight clubs. Next year, Barrie enters the league. Indeed, the Intercounty Major Baseball League is alive and well, and living in southwestern Ontario. Here's hoping for 80 more successful years.

Jeffrey Reed was Intercounty P.R. director, 1995-97. He is author of EBBA - 40 Years Of Baseball.



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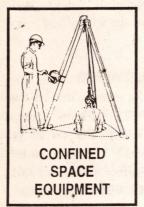
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Jeffrey Reed's All-Time London Majors Team

While choosing amongst hall of fame outfielders Willie Mays, Joe DiMaggio and Ted Williams - not to mention Roberto Clemente, Duke Snider and Mickey Mantle - is tough enough, try picking the cream of the crop who have pulled on the pinstripes of the London Majors since 1925.

Individual records previous to the Second World War are painstakingly difficult to find, some non-existent. The calibre of Intercounty Major Baseball League play over the past 79 years has ranged anywhere from professional Rookie Ball to Triple-A baseball. Rosters can change drastically every season, and most Intercounty careers are short- Livelier aluminum bats were used from 1977-1994; today's gloves are bigger and baseballs livelier; and today's athletes are for the most part superior to those of yesteryear.

Of course, any all-time team is a personal list of greats, the common denominator being the selected players' talents would stand the test of time. I'm sure there will be arguments over my selections: why was Fergie Jenkins not selected as the Majors' best right-handed pitcher, when he's enshrined in Cooperstown? Read with interest my list of all-time London Majors greats. I look forward to hearing yours.

Right-Handed Pitcher - Tommy White
White's three victories for London in the 1949
World Sandlot Championship earned
him Canada's Outstanding Baseball Player of the
Year award. He amassed a 108-57
lifetime Intercounty record and when he was at
his best, was invincible on the mound at Labatt
Park. His best years: 1947 (11 - 1) and 1949 (133). White's .917 won-lost percentage of '47
stands as the best in the post-war (1946-57) era.
A workhorse, and a true professional, White's
presence is still felt on the mound at Labatt Park.
Honorable Mention - Jon Owen with 23 seasons,
four-time all-star, ranks third in games (177),
third in innings (1020 2/3), fourth in wins (67)

and fourth in strikeouts (778), incredible .723 strikeout-to-walk ratio, outstanding 3.44 ERA in aluminum bat era; Fergie Jenkins ('nuff said); Phil Schmidt.

Left-Handed Pitcher - Neil Ambrose

Like Owen, Ambrose ranks among the best with 132 appearances (8th), 802.1 innings (6th), 48 wins (7th), and 454 Ks (10th). Played 11 years (1975-85), all-star 1976 and '77. Ambrose never led the league in wins during a season, but he finished with a respectable 3.96 ERA during the aluminum bat ERA, and his longevity and dependability make him the Majors' top southpaw. His father, John Ambrose, was an allstar right-hander in the late 1950s-early 1960s. Honorable Mention - Mike Kilkenny (former Tiger 9-0 during London's Detroit championship season); Roy McKay (crafty lefty, former pro); Frank Colman (former New York Yankees, Pittsburgh Pirates outfielder/infielder was Intercounty MVP and batting champ in 1936, thanks to stellar pitching and powerful bat).

Catcher - Wayne Fenlon: "Doggie" did everything but dog it during his 22-year career (1968-88) behind the dish for the Majors. A member of three championship clubs, including his rookie year, Fenlon was a three time all-star as a player, and an all-star manager with London during his last season. In 1986, he won the Tim Turow Trophy for outstanding achievement. Fenlon finished with 508 games (4th), 577 hits (3rd), and 309 RBI (6th). Honorable Mention - Jack Fairs (member '48 Sandlot Champs); Kane Godwin (outstanding backstop, left us too soon).

First Base - Larry Haggitt - From 1974-94, Haggitt terrorized Intercounty pitchers, finishing his career with 47 round trips (tied 12th) and a .320 BA. After an all-star campaign at third base in 1974, he made the transition to first in London's last championship season, and was named a first-team all-star in both 1975 and '76.

Haggitt won the batting championship in '75 with a .412 average. Although not a terror on the basepaths, Haggitt was a gold glove infielder whose clutch bat helps him rank among the Majors all-time greats. Honorable Mention - Tom Burgess (former pro, member Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame); Arden Eddie; Dave Lapthorne; Jamie Cooke (own players feared his power during batting practice).

Second Base - Barry Boughner - This was by far the toughest position to rank in the infield Although a talented utility player, and former allstar third baseman and DH, "Boogie" was an allstar at second base in 1974, and played the position during parts of almost every season during his 17-year career (1966-84). A rare combination of power, speed and finesse for most of his career. Tough-as-nails former NHLer, the Pride of Delhi helped London capture three league titles with his professionalism, competitiveness and never-saydie attitude. Honorable Mention – Jamie Hodge: Billy Breene.

Third Base - Dave Lapthorne - A well-rounded player, "Whitey" Lapthorne was an all-star at the hot corner in 1967 and '70 during his 17-year career (1960-76); he was an all-star first baseman in 1967 and 1970. A career .275 hitter, "Whitey" posted .346 BA in 1963. He was a key member of three championship squads, and appeared in six championship series. A competitor in the 1970 National Baseball Championships, Lapthorne was a team leader and rightfully team captain during the memorable 1975 season. Honorable Mention - Ken McFadden (another '48 championship team member); Barry Boughner; Larry Haggitt

Shortstop – Tie: Tom McKenzie and Dave Byers

You call this one. Although this 14-time all-star shortstop played most of his 21-year (1960-80) career with Kitchener, McKenzie's infield wizardry and clutch hitting didn't go unnoticed during his early days (1960-65) with the Maiors.

An all-star in 1964 and '65, Mckenzie batted a career .315. His 570 hits rank him 4th all-time. 155 stolen bases second. A former Kitchener manager (four-time all-star). with championship rings as a Panther, McKenzie established himself as an Intercounty hall-offamer with the Majors. Dave Byers was a sixtime all-star at shortstop, playing most of his 18year career (1970-87) with London. A Cal Ripken-type infielder, Byers impressed equally with his glove and his bat. He has a career 551 hits (tied 6th), 317 RBI (4th), 74 HR (tied 5th), 105 doubles (4th). Won batting crown with .457 BA in 1977. Teamed up with Alex McKay to form a deadly double-play duo. Honorable Mention - Bobby Deakin (talent wise the best, but pro ball beckoned, and injuries ended career).

Outfield - Arden Eddie, Russ Evon, Stan Anderson, Richard Thompson- Yes, there are only three outfield positions, but all four of these players deserve a spot amongst the Majors' alltime greats. London's "Mr. Baseball", Eddie played in just two games last season. He holds numerous records, including games (843), seasons (33), at-bats (2,909), hits (769), RBI (382), stolen bases (179) and walks (669). Six of Eddie's eight all-star selections followed outstanding seasons in the Majors' outfield, where he began his career with speed to burn. He later switched to first base and DH (wouldn't you at age 50?), but it says here he'll forever be known as one of the Majors' all-time great outfielders. Sadly, Russ Evon passed away last November 1998 while walking near his Port Stanley home. He was 81. Evon was the best all-around athlete ever to don the Majors' uniform. An 18-year Intercounty star, Evon's 12 triples in 1950 still stand as a league record. He amassed a .345 career batting average, hit .355 in '48 Sandlot Series. Both Stan Anderson and Richard Thompson were nicknamed "Gabby." Both let their bats and gloves do the talking. Anderson was a six-time, first-team all-star He patrolled the Majors' between 1958-65. outfield for 12 seasons, finishing with a .339 BA.

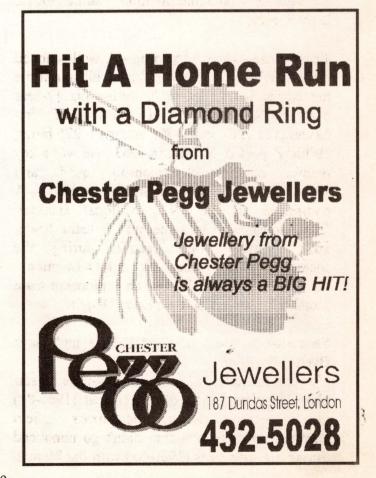
A one-time professional, he won two Intercounty batting crowns, was runner-up twice, and captured two MVP awards. In 1963, "Gabby" Anderson was a player-manager. Thompson, who announced his retirement in 1998 after eight seasons in centre field, was a modern-day Evon, an all-round athlete whose main attributes were a keen batting eye and speed. "Gabby" Thompson was named to six all-star teams since his Rookie of the Year season in 1988. Switched from aluminum to wood in 1995 and promptly won the batting crown with .415 average. In fact, hit better with wood than aluminum. His father and great-grandfather were also local baseball stars. Top three outfielders? You make the call. Honorable Mention - Joe Bechard: Reid Heffernen; Brian Pearen; Ty Crawford; Hank Czerwieniec

DH - Arden Eddie - The only Major I name an all-time great at more than one position. While many have taken their turn at bat, Eddie is the senior member of the Majors' DH fraternity. His all-time record 669 walks will never be broken the closest to him is retired slugger Bill Byckowski with 269. He was an all-star DH in 1994 at age 47.

Manager - Roy McKay - McKay was a talented pitcher, a born leader and displayed all the class which every Major strives for during his career. Managed Majors for most of 15 seasons (1969-72, 1974-76, 1981-86, 1994-95) and put together a record of 257-201 (.561). Guided the 1969 London Pontiacs and '75 Majors to Intercounty championships. Sadly, McKay died on Christmas Day, 1995. His son, Alex, was a longtime Majors second baseman who managed the Majors in 1996. Honorable Mention - Frank Colman (brought professionalism to London when he purchased the Majors in 1955); Tom Burgess (another pro, hall-of-famer, all-star manager 1964-65); Clare Van Horne.



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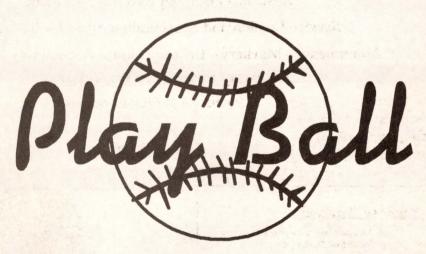




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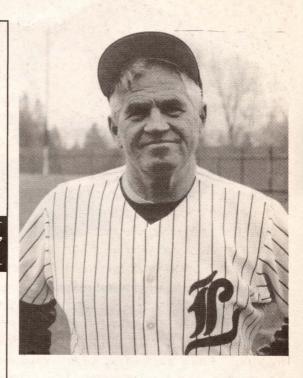
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London Majors History by Jeffrey Reed

For about 150 years, baseball has been played at the forks of the Thames. Today's London Majors continue that tradition with their involvement in the Intercounty Major Baseball League. This is their charter season. The rest, as they say, is history.

The moniker "Majors" is traced to 1944, when a group of Londoners, including Clare Van Horne (who would operate the team for a decade before Frank Colman took charge) tagged the senior club with its current handle. But history buffs can research all the way back to 1855, when the London Baseball Club played just north of where Victoria Park now rests. Of course, the legendary London Tecumsehs amateur club began play in 1868; they were the forefathers of today's And in 1877, the professional Majors. Tecumsehs - who were also 1876 Canadian champs - beat the Pittsburgh Alleghenies to win Canada's first major-league baseball championship.

Also that year, the pro Tecumsehs club moved to Tecumseh Park, today known as Labatt Park, a gift to the city of London from the Labatt family. It remains a city landmark, and home of the Majors.

London ballclubs, amateur and professional, would form and disband, but baseball would continue to grip Londoners. During the Second World War, the London Army Team won the Canadian Sandlot Congress title in 1943 and '44. In 1945, the team first used the Majors name, in honor of Canada's fighting soldiers. The Majors continued a winning tradition, capturing the 1947 and '48 Congress championships.

1998 marked the 50th anniversary of the World Sandlot championship, won by the 1948 Majors, perhaps London's most accomplished athletic club of all time. London beat Fort Wayne in a best-of-seven affair which ended at Labatt Park in late September of that year. Tommy White of London, who would become a St. Thomas sporting legend, won three games for that '48 team. His friend, hitting legend Russ Evon (who sadly passed away in November 1998), was also a member of that squad. Other members of that

dream team help make up a Who's Who list of local baseball heroes: Stan "Gabby" Anderson; Tom Burgess; Jack Fairs; Ken McFadden; and former long-time Majors coach Norm Aldridge, who was a trainer with the '48 champs, just to name a few.

In 1955, Frank Colman, the former Pittsburgh Pirate and New York Yankee, purchased the ballclub and promptly brought London the 1956 Intercounty title. Jumping to the Great Lakes-Niagara District Association in 1957, the Majors won the Great Lakes portion, but lost the championship to Niagara Falls. London returned to the Intercounty in 1958.

The 1960 and '61 ballclubs, known as the Chester Pegg Diamonds, briefly became the Majors in 1962 under manager Dave Taylor. But in 1963, sportswriter Bob Ferguson came to the rescue, purchasing the club and gathering sponsorship from London Motor Products. The new London Pontiacs finished first in 1964, '65 and '68, but failed to win the Intercounty title. The 1969 team, under former pitching legend Roy McKay, finished first and won it all.

And that was it for the Pontiacs, who became the Avcos for four season, 1970-73. The El Morocco Majors played ball in 1974 and '75; that '75 ballclub, under manager McKay, was London's last senior Intercounty championship club. Arden Eddie, London's "Mr. Baseball," purchased the club after the 1976 season, and has continued to keep the Majors alive and well, and living at Labatt Park. Including last season, Eddie played 33 years of Intercounty baseball; he holds many records, including seasons and games played, hits, walks, and stolen bases.

More importantly, Eddie continues to keep the London Majors "a community team, not just a team in the community." The Majors have led the Intercounty in attendance every year since Eddie purchased the club. Since 1990, he and his wife, Shelley, have helped the Majors raise more than \$160,000 for local causes. And you, the fans, have helped the Majors donate 45,000 pounds of food for local food banks over the past nine seasons. Congratulations!

Take a look at some "Major" accomplishments: pitching champion Brian Murphy turned in a 0.93 earned run average in 1968. The popular Joe Bechard won the league batting title in 1949 with a .424 average. Hank Czerwieniec equaled that feat with identical numbers in 1962. Then Dave Byers hit at a .457 clip in 1977. Home runs came often, too. Legendary river shots blasted off the bats of Evon and Larry Haggitt, routinely hit balls out of the park onto Riverside Drive and was an important member of the 1975 squad when he hit .412 and knocked in 22 RBI.

Many Majors stars of recent times, including Steve Busby, Jon Owen, Mike Shewan, Chuck Westman, and recently-retired all-star center fielder Richard Thompson (whose great-grandfather, "Bull" Thompson, was a member of that legendary 1877 Tecumsehs ballclub) have continued to keep London's field of dreams alive. Names like Bobby Deakin, Fergie Jenkins, Wayne "Doggie" Fenlon, Kane Godwin, Alex McKay, and the Mendham boys – current coach Dan "Uncle Buck" Mendham, his late brother, Dave and Dave's sons, current Majors Dan and Pete Mendham – all come to mind when you consider the last 75 years of Majors baseball.

These are just a few of the people who have made London Majors baseball a London institution. As you watch today's Majors, take a good look around Labatt Park. The ball yard is the best in the world. With the Majors calling Labatt Park home, London baseball fans have the best of both worlds.



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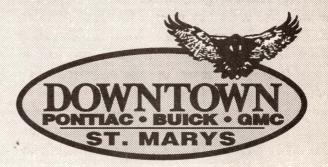
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Labatt Park, The House That Evon Built

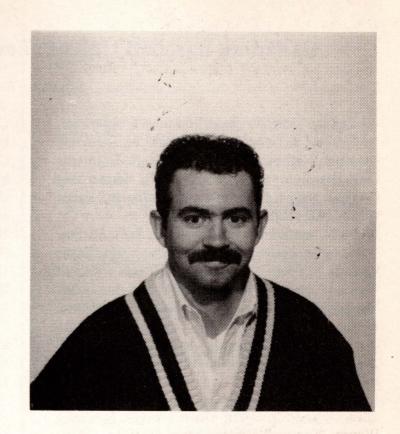
by Jeffrey Reed

In November 1998, the local sports community lost perhaps its greatest all-around athlete ever to grace the playing fields of Southwestern Ontario. Russ Evon - "Russell the Muscle" - the legendary Majors centre fielder, passed away while walking with his wife, Helen, near their Port Stanley home. He was 81.

An 18-year Intercounty star with both London and the St. Thomas Elgins, Evon hit .355 while helping the Majors capture the 1948 North American Sandlot championship. During his Intercounty career, Evon amassed a .345 batting average. His 12 triples in 1950 still stand as a league record. And, while Evon was a wellrounded baseball star, a Majors game doesn't pass without someone mentioning his legendary blasts into the Thames River. Some doubt the magnitude of Evon's homers, but their memory is stuff of which legends are made.

During his earlier years, Evon was a successful owner of a laundry and dry cleaning business. His unmatched athleticism wasn't limited to the diamond. Evon was a star in basketball, bowling, fastball, golf, hockey, and swimming; he was also a hockey referee for three decades. In Bob Ferguson's Who's Who In Canadian Sport, he credits Evon with being involved in more than 30 rescues of potential drowning victims. Evon was a top-ranked 10-pin bowler; a star in the Ontario Hockey Association; and a standout in the International Hockey League. During the summer of 1998, Evon shot a hole-in-one on the links.

But it was the baseball diamond where Evon was a real ace. Born in Windsor in 1917, Evon was ranked amongst the top five fastball players in Canada during his teenage years. An all-time Majors great, Evon's No. 4 hangs in the grandstand of Labatt Park The House That Evon Built



Jeffrey Reed
Freelance Writer, Photographer



James A. Harris Funeral Home Ltd

...best wishes from Jim & Steve Harris to the

2000 London Majors

Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame Legend Frank Colman

by Jeffrey Reed

For more than 40 years, thousands of young ballplayers in London have recognized Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame member Frank Colman's importance to local baseball. The former big leaguer played a key role in forming the Eager Beaver Baseball Association.

In 1984, the annual EBBA Labatt Park All-Star Day (also known as Labatt Day and Eager Beaver Baseball Day since 1955) was renamed Frank Colman Day, honoring an important league founder. Colman, a quiet man by nature, spoke for Gordon Berryhill, another soft-spoken gentleman who is credited with founding EBBA. He handed the reins to Colman; the rest is history.

Colman, one of eight brothers and sisters, was born March 2, 1918, just outside northeast London. His parents, Frederick and Harriet, owned a London shoe store on Hamilton road. Frederick helped organize the Colman Hockey Club. In fact, Frank is said to have loved hockey more than baseball. His older brother, Roy, once said he remembered "all of us playing baseball together at Argyle Park when Frank was in his teens." Frank's sister, Joan Fraser, once remembered being "surrounded by baseball."

When Frank attended H.B.Beal Secondary School, his incredible baseball skills surfaced. Harry Nielsen, an EBBA founder "played on a 1934 city championship junior team. Frank was a pitcher. I knew him very well." Vic Byers, another EBBA founder, who lived in the same rural area as the Colman family once recalled pitching against Frank at Tecumseh Park, during a junior city league contest.

Colman developed his skills early. He joined London's Intercounty ballclub in the mid-1930's, and by 1936 had gained a reputation as a pro prospect. By then, he was known as "Lefty" Colman, a top Intercounty hurler whose bat spoke for itself: he won the league batting title and MVP award. The scouts noticed.

But a strange turn of events would forever shape

Colman's baseball future. An arm injury dictated that he would have to rely on his bat. Frank Colman Jr. said, "Dad probably ruined his arm by pitching too often. He was lucky enough to be able to hit the ball, too. He made the big leagues on his hitting."

But not before he paid his dues. Colman played for various development teams. In Willmington, Del. In 1940, he batted .363. As a slugger with the famed triple-a International League Toronto Maple Leafs, he led the tam in hitting in 1941 (.295), and 1942 (.300). In 1942, Colman signed as an outfielder with the Pittsburgh Pirates (who incidentally operated a PONY League team at Labatt Park in 1940-41). In 10 games, he batted .135. He played some outfield for the 1943 Pirates, batting .271. In Louis Cauz's 1977 book, Baseball's Back in Town, Cauz writes that Colman was a valuable member of the pennant-winning Leafs of 1943.

Colman played in his major-league high 99 games in 1944 (batting .270), and played his first big league game at first base. He would remain with the Pirates as a first baseman-outfielder until late into the 1946 season, when the New York Yankees signed him strictly as an outfielder (although he did practice at first base). 1947 Yankees were World champions, beating the beloved "bums" - the Brooklyn Dodgers. That season Colman started in right field, playing with Joe DiMaggio and Tommy Henrich. He batted third behind Phil Rizutto, saw action in 22 regular season games but never had an official at-bat in the Fall Classic. Roy Colman recalled "Frank Colman Day in Detroit in 1947. "We went down to watch. He was warming up at first base for the Yankees. It was quite a thrill."

Frank left the major leagues, possibly because of a leg injury which eventually ended his pro career. But the thrill wasn't gone. Still a pro, Colman hit .319 with 19 home runs and 98 RBI for Seattle of the Pacific Coast League in 1949.

In 1950 he batted .310 for that club. Returning to Toronto of the IL, Colman was player-coach, 1951-53 under owner Jack Kent Cooke.

London was Colman's home so he returned to the Majors signing as a playing manager under owner Clare Van Horne in 1954. Farguharson, PUC director of recreation was G.M. in 1953. With a little left in his arm, Colman actually pitched a four-hitter during his first year back with London. In 1955, Colman purchased the Majors: he now wore three hats, as player-manager-owner. On January 15, 1955, Jack Park wrote in the London Free Press: "The sale of the Majors ball club to Colman is one of the best things to happen to baseball here in many years. He is a local product, a former major leaguer and a baseball man through and through. He know what this city wants and deserves in the way of ball..."

Colman's brother, Jack, helped coach the 1955 Majors, who attracted 4,000 fans to a September playoff game against Brantford. Colman's team won the Intercounty championship in 1956, and the 1957 Great Lakes title (but lost to Niagara Falls in the GL-NL final). Colman guided the Majors to the Intercounty championship in 1958, and operated the Majors until the end of the 1959 season. All this time, he was putting in endless hours as leader of the EBBA.

Majors coach Norm Aldridge recalls a funny Colman story: "He told me a fellow goes down to a major league training camp and he was hitting the crap out of the ball! He wrote a letter home: 'Dear Mother, great success. Please send me \$10.' Two weeks later he wrote: 'Dear Mother, coming home. They're starting to throw curveballs!"

In his later days, Colman took a maintenance position with the University of Western Ontario. On Feb. 20, 1983 he died from cancer at age 65. The next year, EBBA renamed it annual all-star festivities Frank Colman Day, in honor of a great London Major, a proud major-league ballplayer, and simply a great man. Colman was elected to the London & District Baseball Hall of Fame in 1987.

Six major-league seasons, 271 games, and a .228 batting average can't say enough about Frank Colman, one of London's top sporting legends,

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Bill Slack Boston Red Sox

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Dave Rozema Detroit Tigers, Texas Rangers

Denny McLain Detroit Tigers, Washington Senators, Oakland Athletics,

Atlanta Braves

Dave Byers St. Louis Cardinals
Jim Rodrigues Detroit Tigers

Reid Heffernan Chicago Cubs, Pittsburgh Pirates

Dave Moharter Washington Senators
Derek Brandow Toronto Blue Jays

Mike Lumley Detroit Tigers, Mazatlan (Mexican League)

Kenny Williams Detroit Tigers

Harry Muir Toronto Blue Jays, Montpellier (French League)

Steve Charles Toronto Blue Jays
Dave Hammond Detroit Tigers
Barry Brundencamp Texas Rangers
Ken Benjamin Dodgers

Jim Price Detroit Tigers
Larry Haggitt Detroit Tigers

Rick Birmingham Braves

Tom Burgess St. Louis Cardinals, Pittsburgh Pirates, Los Angeles Angels

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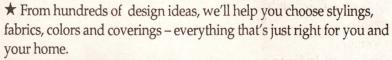
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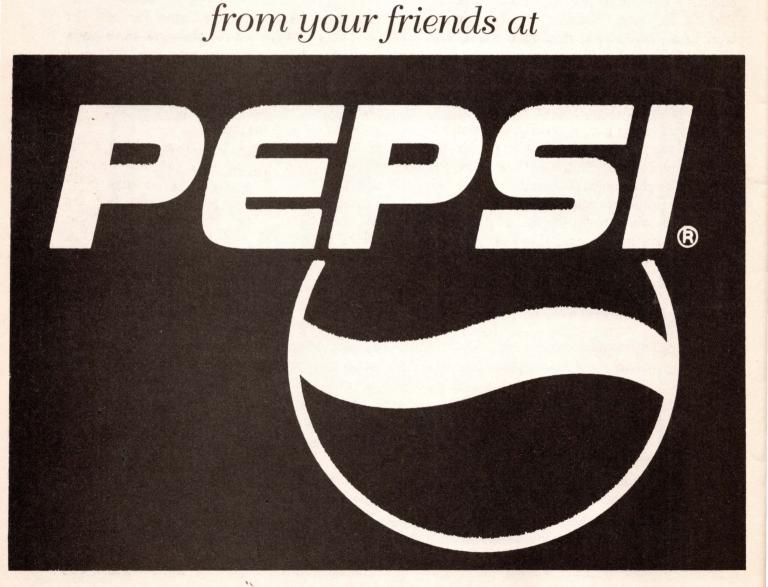
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Good Luck London Majors



Majors 1999 Recap

by Jeffrey Reed

The 1999 season held a great deal of promise for a rebuilding Majors ballclub. It could have been a season the Majors reached the Intercounty Major Baseball League final, for the first time since 1982. But instead of challenging for the Jack and Lynne Dominico trophy, the Majors failed to make the playoffs - for the first time since 1981.

Last season, gone for a variety of reasons, mostly retirement: batting champion, and all-star centre field, Richard Thompson; all-star catcher Todd Hayward; RHP Pete Mendham; RHP Kevin Thomas; LHP Kirk Martin; 1B/DH Chris Pollock; RF Dave Rawlings; utility infielder Craig Sloan; John Faragher, the best utility player in the league; and third base coach, Ken Frohwerk.

The Majors headed for Christie Pits on May 9 for the traditional Opening Day clash, won 6-1 by the Leafs. The Majors were 1-6 and in last place, before finally putting together a win streak that saw them tied for third (5-7) with the ballclub which would be their '99 nemesis: the much-improved Hamilton Cardinals.

The Majors would never place higher than fourth after June 23, when the Cards crushed them 13-1 at Bernie Arbour Memorial Stadium. London was 6-9 in May and June, 8-11 in July and August. They finished 8-9 at home (including a 2-3 record at the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame Field in St. Marys), 6-12 on the road, for a record of 14-21 (.400), 12 ½ games behind the pennant-winning Leafs.

The Majors' playoff drive came down to the last game of the regular season against - who else? - Hamilton. After losing 7-6 to Brantford at home Aug. 1, the Majors put themselves into a hole, one-half game behind the Cards for the last playoff spot. After beating Guelph 12-1 on Aug. 2, their season ended in Hamilton Aug. 3, with an 8-4 loss.

In fact, London won only one season series - five games to two over the sad-sack Guelph Royals, who lost a handful of star players to the London Werewolves, and finished last (9-25). The Majors were 7-4 in one-run games. They were

fifth in hitting at .261 - 42 points lower than in '98; scored 158 runs (last); and hit just eight home runs.

Steve Charles, a former Toronto Blue Jays farmhand, cracked the top-10 in hitting, with a .344 average. The 25-year-old speedster was a human highlight film in right field, crashing into walls and diving all over the outfield to save runs. He led the league in doubles (10), and tied for fifth with seven stolen bases. His .427 on-base percentage led the Majors.

Third-baseman Dan Mendham hit .310, and was solid again at the hot corner, which he shared with former St. Thomas Elgin, Stratford Hiller (and 1996 batting champ) Darby Parsons. The St. Thomas native led the club with three home runs and 21 RBI. And, he was invaluable as a utility player, seeing action in the outfield, around the infield (where he was a standout at second base, replacing Bill Weir - separated shoulder) and on the mound.

If the Majors had an Achilles heal in 1999, it was a lack of pitching, but they did finish second overall with a 4.28 earned-run average. RHP Derek Masse, who began the year with the Majors, signed with the Werewolves, was released, rejoined the Majors, and finished seventh with a 3.96 ERA; he was 2-3, 1 save, 64 K, 24 BB. Before Derek Brandow re-injured his arm, the former Blue Jay was almost untouchable, posting a 2-1 record, with a 1.97 ERA, with 34 K, 7 BB.

Other pitching notes: LHP Neil Turnbull (4-1, 2 saves, 2.96 ERA, 25 K, 10 BB); veteran RHP Jon Owen, in his 23rd season, 2.84 ERA. Owen is third all-time with 177 games (one ahead of Kitchener LHP Kevin Curran); third with 1020 2/3 innings pitched (14 1/3 more than Curran); fourth with 67 wins; and fourth with 778 K (Curran passed him with 808 lifetime).

The Majors pitching staff posted five complete games. Former Jays RHP Harry Muir was sore armed again; he had no decisions in 6 IP; former Tigers RHP Mike Lumley was 1-1. RHP Brett Thomas returned to the club, was 3-5 with a 4.83 ERA.

Catcher Wayne Forman stepped up to the plate big-time, emerging as a team leader behind the dish. Catcher/OF Al Ready did double duty with the club. Overall in the fielding department, London turned 19 double plays. Venezuela native Simon Galarraga brought some excitement to first base, and improved his game immensely during the last week of the season.

If one Major emerged as a superstar last season, it was shortstop Geoff McCallum, a lifetime .283 hitter coming into the season. He finished .311, led the team with 41 hits (tied 4th), 29 runs (4th), and 10 stolen bases (3rd), and tied Majors first baseman/OF Ron LeClair (now managing the club) with 50 total bases. McCallum, 20, was a wizard with the glove, leading Intercounty shortstops with 61 putouts.

It's hard to believe, but with LeClair in centre field, the Majors hardly missed Thompson's glove. The amiable team leader finished .308, and was the league's third-ranked defensive outfielder. The Majors' bench of outfielders Roop Chanderdat and Jeff Teolis played an important role with their timely hits, and seven stolen bases.

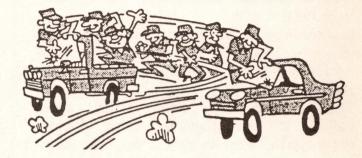
Rookie coach Dave Butt learned the ropes on the job last season, replacing Frohwerk in the 3B coaching box. To his credit, he worked hard to earn the respect of his players. Greatly missed were first base coach Dan Mendham (recuperating after heart surgery), and hitting coach Norm Aldridge, whose six decades with the club cannot be replaced.

As for Eddie, Mr. Baseball continued to add to his Intercounty records. He played in nine games, hitting .267 at age 51; Eddie turned 52 on Aug. 4. His records include: 843 games; 769 hits; 382 RBI (just 22 more than Kitchener's Randy Curran, 3rd all-time); 179 stolen bases; and 669 walks.

Last year marked 75 seasons of London Majors baseball. London's last Intercounty title? 1975. Fans can't wait for another championship title.

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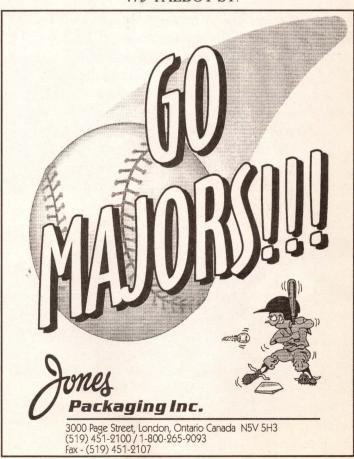
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