

Brewers fall behind Ivy Leafs early in second round of NDBL playoffs

By Jake Courtepatte

The Bolton Brewer were handed their first taste of defeat Sunday, falling to the third-place Ivy Leafs in the first game of the North Dufferin Baseball League playoffs second round.

With the Brewers up 2-1 in the bottom of the sixth, Leaf Todd Gowan hit a solo shot to tie the game. Gowan led the Leafs in home runs in the regular season with nine.

Then with two outs and nobody on base, an error put the go-ahead run on first.

“Unfortunately, it seems to be a rule of thumb in baseball,” said Brewers' coach Mike Wallace. “You make a two-out error, and they always seem to come back and bite you.”

Starting pitcher Zack Riddell hit the next batter, then gave up a double to bring in both runners.

After a scoreless seventh inning for the Brewers, the Leafs would take the game 4-2.

Despite the sixth inning fallout, Riddell threw a solid, complete game, giving up five hits and four runs.

The Brewers swept the Clearview Orioles in three games in the first round, giving them a week's rest before taking on the Leafs.

Despite Sunday's loss, Wallace believes that the team benefited from the extra time off.

“It was probably beneficial for us health-wise,” he said. “A couple guys were a little dinged up. So it was nice to get some time off and get them healthy. Hopefully with these next couple days we can recover even more ? we've been battling the injury bug all year.”

The second-place Brewers opened their sweep against Clearview at home. Pitcher Mike Blackwood took the mound, setting the pace early by striking out the first three batters he faced.

In the top of the second, he would make his only mistake of the game, allowing a double to centre, bringing in the first run to make it 1-0 for Clearview. However, two batters later he would pick up his fourth ‘K’ of the game to strand two runners in scoring position. Blackwood would finish with eight strikeouts on the night.

The Brewer bats would open up in the third inning, taking the lead 2-1 off three hits and a walk.

Neither team could muster up much offence after that, with Bolton taking the first game of the series 2-1.

The series then moved to Clearview, where the second game saw plenty of offensive production. The two teams would combine for 22 runs, with the Brewers taking a stranglehold on the series in a 13-9 win.

The third outing of the series was back in Bolton, giving the Brewers the opportunity to take the series on home field. Similar to the first match, it was a defensive and pitching battle that resulted in a Brewer 4-2 win.

Andrew White pitched five and two-third innings for the Brewers, allowing two earned runs.

Despite the two-run win, coach Wallace said the game was closer than the score indicated.

“They seemed to kind of nip-and-tuck us a little bit,” he said. “They would consistently get the first two guys on, but luckily Andrew would kind of battle and hold down the fort.”

Ivy's route to the second round proved to be slightly more difficult, tying their first game with the Mansfield Cubs before winning three in a row to finish the series last Wednesday.

Moving on, Wallace said he believes the team needs to get their bats back in check in order to take control of the series.

“We had our chances in that game, we just couldn't get the hits we needed to,” he said. “The bats need to come alive. That will be the big thing for us, we've got to start hitting the ball again.”

The teams split the season series, each winning one game at home.

Game two in the Ivy series goes tonight (Thursday) in Bolton, with Mike Blackwood taking the mound for the Brewers. For full playoff schedules and stats, visit www.ndbl.ca