

Dodgers set to open postseason against powerhouse Knights

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and Bill Rea

The AA Bolton Dodgers have their work cut out for them.

With back-to-back wins to close out the North Dufferin Baseball League season, Bolton has squeaked into the eighth and final playoff spot, with the postseason set to begin next week.

That has set up a first-round date with the New Lowell Knights, the reigning NDBL champions and a powerhouse since reentering the league last season.

In one game at home and one on the road this season, the Knights swept the Dodgers 2-0. They carry a 21-4-1 record into the postseason, compared to the Dodgers' 12-11-3.

The Dodgers closed out the regular season with three wins in their last four outings.

Forget the fourth inning, and it was a pretty even and entertaining match July 13 night between the Dodgers and the Aurora Jays.

But the fourth did happen, and it resulted in the 6-2 final for the Dodgers.

?Great pitching and timely hitting,? was the secret as far as Dodgers' Coach Andrew English was concerned.

And for sure, the Dodgers got a solid outing from Tysen Hansen who put in the complete game. The only times things looked shaky were in the third and sixth innings. Both times, he allowed three base hits in a row, and that's when both Aurora runs came in.

The Jays were first to score, but the Dodgers were quick to tie things up in their end of the frame. Designated hitter Nick Taconga led off with a hit, and his fleetness of foot enabled him to get to third when second baseman Luke Ratcliffe advanced him with a sacrifice bunt and first baseman Michael Gemmiti got him home on a double.

Bolton took command in their end of the fourth. Andrew English, who was playing third base, got on when he was hit by a pitch, and centre fielder Shawn Hansen advanced him and reached base with a bunt that stayed on the fair side of the third-base line. Left fielder Shaun Bijai advanced both runners with a sacrifice bunt of his own, and Ratcliffe got the pair home on a single. Ratcliffe was able to get to third when he started to steal as catcher Jon Bloomfield connected for a single. Gemmiti was able to get them both home with a double.

The Dodgers added their sixth run in the fifth when right fielder Marlon Young opened with a double, and then Taconga got him home on a bases-loaded single.

Aurora was able to get their final run in the sixth.

?Tysen pitched a hell of a game,? Coach English said at the end, adding his admiration for the offensive output of both Gemmiti and Young.

The only real problem in the game came when the lights at the North Hill Park diamond went out just as the teams were going into the top of the fifth, and they stayed out about 15 minutes. Coach English said it was frustrating, especially since that was the second week in a row something like that had happened. But he said his guys were able to keep their focus.

The following Sunday saw the Dodgers drop an 8-3 decision to the Knights in New Lowell.

Ratcliffe, Bloomfield and Young picked up the Bolton runs.

The Dodgers were up 2-0 by the time the first inning was in the books, but the Knights replied with six in the second, and added two more in the sixth to take the win.

It was a different story later in the afternoon when they travelled to Mansfield for a match against the Cubs.

Bolton scored three runs in their end of the first and four more in the second, and that was all the offence they needed for the 7-2 win. Ratcliffe, Gemmiti and Colin McKeen each crossed the plate twice, and Young notched a single run. Shawn Hansen pitched the entire game, allowing five hits.

The Dodgers closed out the campaign last Wednesday with a 5-3 at home over the Barrie Angels.

They were up 3-0 going into the fifth inning, but Barrie tied it in their end of the frame. But Bolton added two more when they came to bat and that ended the scoring for the evening.

Ratcliffe, Gemmiti, Andrew English, Shawn Hansen and McKeen crossed the plate for the victors.

Bolton will have to rely on their heavy bats to get the job done against the Knights and the best pitching staff in the league, who combined to allow just 67 runs in the regular season. Veteran Gemmiti once again proved to be one of the top hitters in the NDBL this season, boasting an impressive .494 batting average to lead the league.

His 38 hits were also tops individually, five more than his next closest opponent.

Bloomfield, meanwhile, was a key player in crossing the plate for the Dodgers during the regular season, and ranked tied for fourth

in the league in runs scored with 24. He also notched three home runs on the year, along with McKeen.

On the mound, Shawn English will once again be counted on to shut down opposing offence. The veteran all-star gave up only 19 runs in 50.1 innings pitched this season, striking out 61 batters, good for fourth in the NDBL.

He and Knights all-star Todd Gowan should provide some exciting pitcher's battles on the mound.

The Dodgers were eliminated in five games of the first round last season by the Clearview Orioles, the first time the young team had reached the postseason. The 2015 Dodgers carried a similar record following the regular season, at 14-12-0.

The schedule is to be set today (Thursday) at a league meeting.

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



Dodgers' pitcher Tysen Hansen was hoping for pickoff, but Jays' runner Ted Beadle was too fast for him.