**Ponies make another early exit from eliminations - 2006**

**Two losses extend tournament lost streak to eight games**

By: Claude Scilley

***LOSE TWO AND BARBECUE***.

It’s an old refrain from ball players seeking solace in the fact that it you can’t fare well in a tournament, at least you get a head start on the refreshments.

It’s also become an unwelcome mantra for the Kingston Loyalist Farms Ponies.

For the fourth year in a row, the Ponies were eliminated from the Baseball Ontario senior elimination tournament in the minimum two games. They were edged 2-1 by the Thornhill Reds Friday night, and ousted after a 9-4 defeat at the hands of Oshawa Royals Saturday morning.

In the last four years the Ponies are 0-8 at the tournament that determines the Ontario representative for the Canadian senior championship. They have scored 11 runs in those eight games, three of them in the seventh inning of Saturday’s loss to Oshawa.

The Ponies wasted a splendid pitching performance by Sean Light Friday night. Light allowed just four hits and struck out six while walking only one, but Kingston, which managed just four hits as well, couldn’t muster a run until Ken Huggins homered in the top of the seventh inning.

Saturday, Kingston pitcher Ryan Babcock surrendered a three-run home run to Darryl Reid in the first inning. It proved to be too much for the Ponies to bear.

“That first inning, combined with the disappointment of the night before, you could see us sort of sink there and we never did recover,” said Ponies manager Tom Carty.

“Guys try and battle. Everybody tries to do that, but you could see emotionally we were down a bit. That’s the way it was.”

Carty suggested the Ponies deserved a better fate.

In the seventh inning against Thornhill, for instance, with his team trailing 2-0, Babcock hit a high bounder that appeared to be going over the head of six-foot-four Reds pitcher Harman Brar. “The guy jumps up and gets it,” Carty said. “Then Huggins comes up and homers.”

“If the ball gets over (the pitcher’s) head, it’s a tie game. That’s just how fine it is.”

Instead, Brar, just back from pitching for India in an international tournament in China, put the finishing touches on an eight-strikeout, one walk performance.

Saturday, Oshawa quickly put two men on base against Babcock. “The first guy bounds a ball down the third base line, it hits the bag and the ball kicks sideways and we don’t get him,” Carty said. “The next guy, a right-hander, the ball gets in on the handle and he bloops one and it drops on the right field line. The next guy hits a bomb on an 0-2 pitch.

“If we could have got into two of three innings (before giving up any runs) or ever got ahead of them, but we fell behind in the first inning and certainly we were down.”

Light choreographed a ritual Sunday morning – “sort of mock voodoo,” Carty said – to put away the curse.

“Coming back to the residence (Saturday), the guys were down pretty good,” Carty said. “That was designed to be a laugh and it was. Everybody had a good laugh out of it the next morning.”

Carty said he was taking some comfort in the fact that East York, which advanced through the draw undefeated, is the third-place team in its league. Of the final four surviving teams, “one of them was a team from Toronto that’s 7-15 or something like that.”

“You have to keep telling yourself these things, “that you’ve just got to get hot, that we’re competitive still, even though at our record, you have to sort of say we’ve got to look at this end and see (if it’s worth still going).”

Carty estimated the cost of the trip to be about $6,000.

“It’s a lot of money,” he said.

In Saturday’s game, Babcock also gave up a two-run home run to Matt McGovern in the fourth inning as Oshawa took a 6-0 lead.

In previous years the Ponies held Babcock in reserve but never last long enough for him to get into a game. Carty was determined to use him this year, even though he hadn’t pitched in two weeks. “He just had a tough outing,” Carty said.

Reid’s second homer, a solo shot in the fifth, made it 7-0 and Reid drove in the fifth run of the game in the sixth.

An RBI single by Huggins in the bottom of the sixth inning got the Ponies on the scoreboard and Kingston, which had just seven hits in the first 13 innings of the tournament, parlayed four hits into three runs in the seventh. A base-hit by Ben Anderson drove in two of those runs.

Brad Devine had three hits, including a double, for Kingston in the finale.

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