



Brave attempt: Badgers pitcher Tom Bray winds up before sending down another throw

Badgers bow out to former champs

BRISTOL Badgers bid to follow up their AAA South league title-winning success with a end-of-season play-off victory was ended at the semi-final stage last week-end.

The Failand-based outfit were handed a tricky assignment with a clash against last season's champions – Oxford Kings – in what was the fledgling Bristol club's first appearance in the end-of-season play-offs.

Bristol were favourites when the fixture had been announced after dominating AAA South throughout the season – but a weather-affected calendar meant the dates of the play-offs had to be changed, which forced a spate of player withdrawals ahead of the clash.

Only ten of the 17 rostered players were available to co-manager Tom Hollies and the patched up side eventually came up just short, losing 11-7, despite a brave display. The Kings went on to lose to Liverpool Trojans in the Grand Final on Sunday afternoon.

The disappointments of falling just short of the final hurdle, however, failed to take the gloss of what was the best season in the four-year-old Badgers history after they claimed 19 victories from their 24 outings.

"Oxford were last season's champions so we knew it would be tough, but we still backed ourselves and gave it our best," said Hollies.

"It wasn't to be on the day, but we'll get over the disappointment of losing the game. It doesn't really take anything away from what a

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great season we have had. We held a few indoor practice sessions over the winter and the take up was excellent.

"We had a few new players join us, so the additional strength in depth really helped us turn things around from last season."

The club will hold their annual awards evening on September 23 where they will look back on some of the highlights of their league-title winning success, which included grand slam home runs by Jonathan Brownlee; a powerful offense led by Brad Freeman and José Bobadilla; a core of five strong starting pitchers; and a Great Britain Junior call up for 17-year-old Luke Looney.

"Our hard work has paid off in a big way," Hollies added. "We should be able to field a second team next season, which will hopefully play games in the West Country area.

"There is a club in Plymouth, and a new club has set up in Devon called the Torbay Barons. With the success of the Bristol Badgers this season, it looks like their maybe a renaissance of the sport in our region."

For more details on the Bristol Baseball club visit www.bristolbaseball.co.uk.