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Heat Set To Host Brisbane Shorter Season Makes Every Game Bigger

By Dan Vaughan / Perth Heat

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PERTH, WA - The blue print for a successful baseball season is to win your series at home and split them on the road. During the past Major League Baseball season eight of the 10 clubs to make the post season had winning records at home and played .500 or better on the road. Of the other 20 teams to not make the post season only four clubs could boast that they had the same formula.

With round two of the Australian Baseball League that goal takes on an even bigger meaning. In seasons past there have been 56 regular season games to the fixture but this year the league lowered the number to 40. As the Alcohol. Think Again Perth Heat get set to host the Brisbane Bandits the stakes are as big as ever with a shorter season.

"Absolutely. It's going to be a massive series for us and hopefully it gets us back into the mix at the top of the standings," said Heat Manager Matt Kennelly.

The Heat enter the game after a tough series loss (1-3) at Melbourne while the Bandits come in after winning their series (3-1) at home over Canberra. The Bandits also enter as the reigning Claxton Shield winners and the team that sent the Heat packing their bags into last off season with a four game sweep at Brisbane.

For the Heat the story was the long ball in round one as Melbourne went deep in all four games. Yet, the Heat out hit the Aces but they did not leave the yard while doing it. Perth actually has out hit the league with an ABL leading .276 average but have only five extra base hits. Sydney leads the ABL with 11 while the Bandits have nine after one round. The Heat seem to have the hitting part down so should we expect big adjustments?

"Not too much (Adjustment wise). The guys had good at bats over the weekend so we will continue our solid approaches and hopefully some balls start finding the gaps," said Matt Kennelly.

Luke Hughes is off to a hot start going 7-for-14 and was joined by rookie Ulrich Bojarski (5-for-16), Jake Bowey (4-for-12) and Matt Kennelly (4-for-12) who all had a good series for Perth. Hughes going back to last season is 23 for his last 64 a .359 average in his last 14 games.

Pitching wise the Heat also had some great signs and maybe a little poor timing. The bullpen gave up only three earned runs with the emergence of Conor Lourey and the debut of Baltimore imports Lex Rutledge and Will Dennis. The pen should give the Heat something to build on into round two.

While the Aces did do their damage with the long ball the Heat starting pitchers would settle down in each outing and put up solid innings behind the damage. In the last three games of the series after the home run ball the Heat starters tossed 11 innings giving up just two earned runs. Those numbers seem to indicate that there is no need to make any major overhaul to the staff but use a familiar approach according to Matt Kennelly.

"As we do each series (our approach) is to win each and every game. (Nick) Veale has the ball in game one so we'll be looking to get the weekend started on the right foot Thursday night with a win."

The Heat will adjust the rotation slightly sending out Nick Veale Thursday then having import Mike Lee go behind him on Friday. Saturday the nod will go to Tom Bailey in

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game one and Daniel Schmidt in game two.

The big adjustment is on the other side of the ball on offence. Perth will get one of their big bats back in Tim Kennelly. "TK" is second for the franchise in home runs with 29 behind former Heat catcher Allan de San Miguel who hit 33 for the west. The Heat are also getting a career .289 hitter in 176 ABL games and a history of being a difference maker in Tim Kennelly.

"It will be great having Timmy back in the lineup. His presence and gameplay has been a huge key to our success and he brings great chemistry into the clubhouse. The boys are looking forward to having him back in the uniform," said Matt Kennelly.

The fifth game of 40 begins Thursday night at the Baseball Park in Thornlie with the Heat ready to write their own blue print to the 16-17 season.

Pitching matchups:

Thursday 7:00 pm AWST- RHP Nick Veal (0-1, 15.00) vs LHP Rick Teasley (0-0, 4.15)

Friday 7:00 pm AWST- RHP Mike Lee (0-1, 7.20) vs. RHP Justin Erasmus (0-0, 3.60)

Saturday 4:00 pm AWST-Gm 1 RHP Tom Bailey (0-0, 7.20) vs. RHP Kramer Champlin (0-1, 11.57)

Saturday 7:00 pm AWST- Gm 2 LHP Daniel Schmidt (0-1, 9.00) vs. RHP Daniel Nilsson (0-0, 2.25)

We'd love to spend the summer with you, head to www.perthheat.com.au/tickets to secure your seat to the old ball game. All games at Baseball Park in Thornlie.

This story also appeared on our media and broadcast partner [Talking Baseball Australia's](#) site. Please follow the Heat all season long on Talking Baseball Australia and the Sporting Star Network. You will often find bonus content and longer versions of our coverage.

Dan Vaughan makes his return to Perth after spending the last several years away working with the club. He teams up with Paul Morgan as the Heat media team and will join Morgan on air as the Heat play-by-play broadcast due for all home and away games in 16-17. Follow him on twitter @DanVaughanJr. This story was not subject to the approval of the Australian Baseball League or its clubs.