

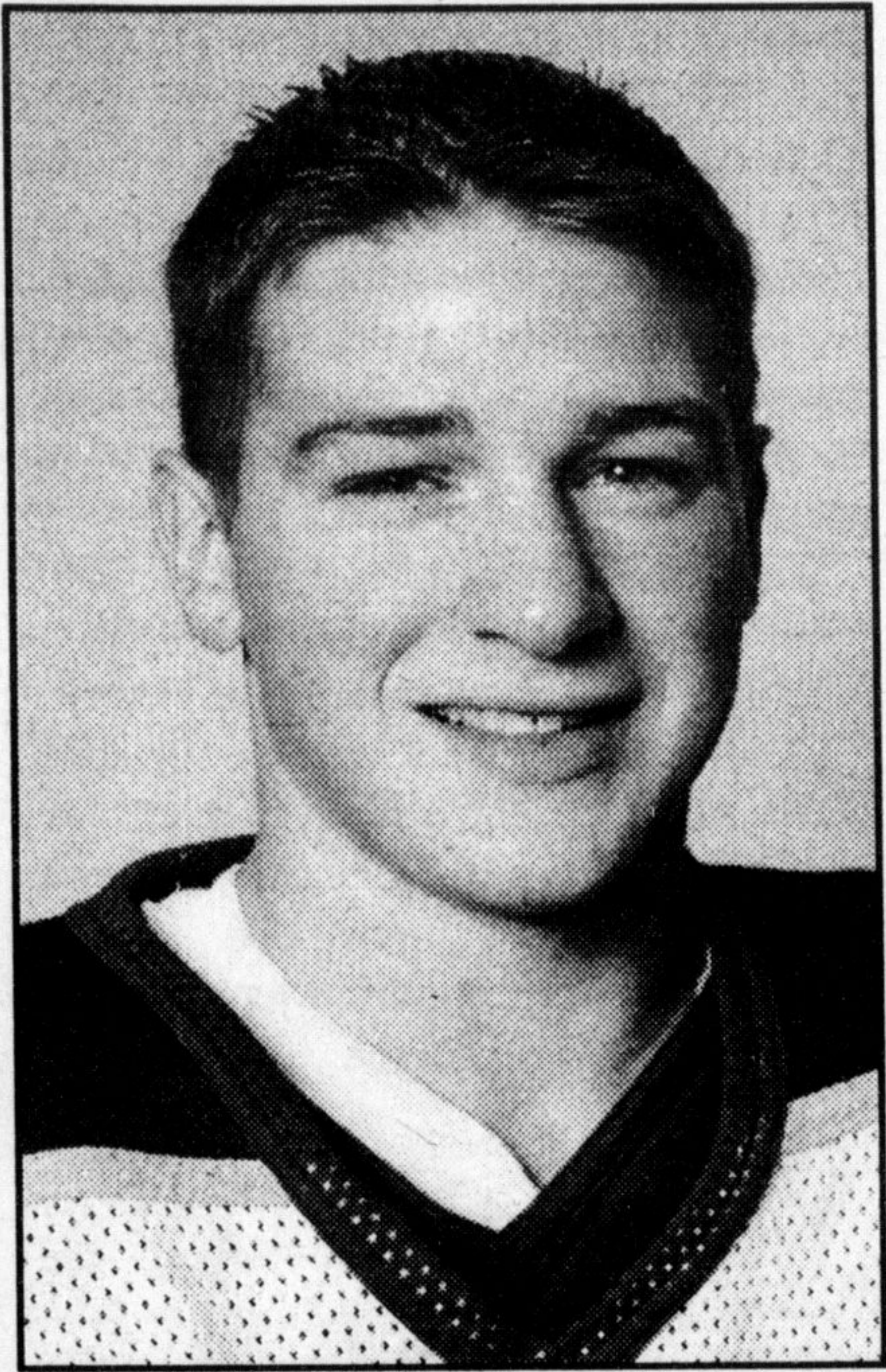


SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1999

Aggio impresses right off the bat



Jeff Seeds

Bad Seed for Milton

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

Nine months after unloading Jeff Seeds, Milton is still trying to shake him.

The Merchants had very little success at this within the confines of Memorial Arena last Friday. Their 20-year-old former teammate — a local player who was dealt to Georgetown at the midway mark of last season — outshone his hosts through much of the exhibition clash.

He amassed four points, tallied twice and deposited the game winner inside the final minute of play to lead the visitors past Milton 5-4.

These efforts gave the Raiders their first win at Memorial in several years — and handed Milton its first pre-season defeat since 1996.

Seeds says he no longer feels any animosity towards the Merchants for trading him away. However, he's hardly about to ease up against them on the ice.

"I don't hold a grudge anymore, but there'll always be extra incentive whenever I play them," said the talented winger, who along with 1998-99 MVP Stace Page could help form the most productive line in the league this year. "I'll always have something to prove against Milton."

The veteran player — who used a break-away deke to beat Milton's Joel Cameron with 52 seconds remaining in the third — sees this spirited showdown as the first of many between the two rivals from north

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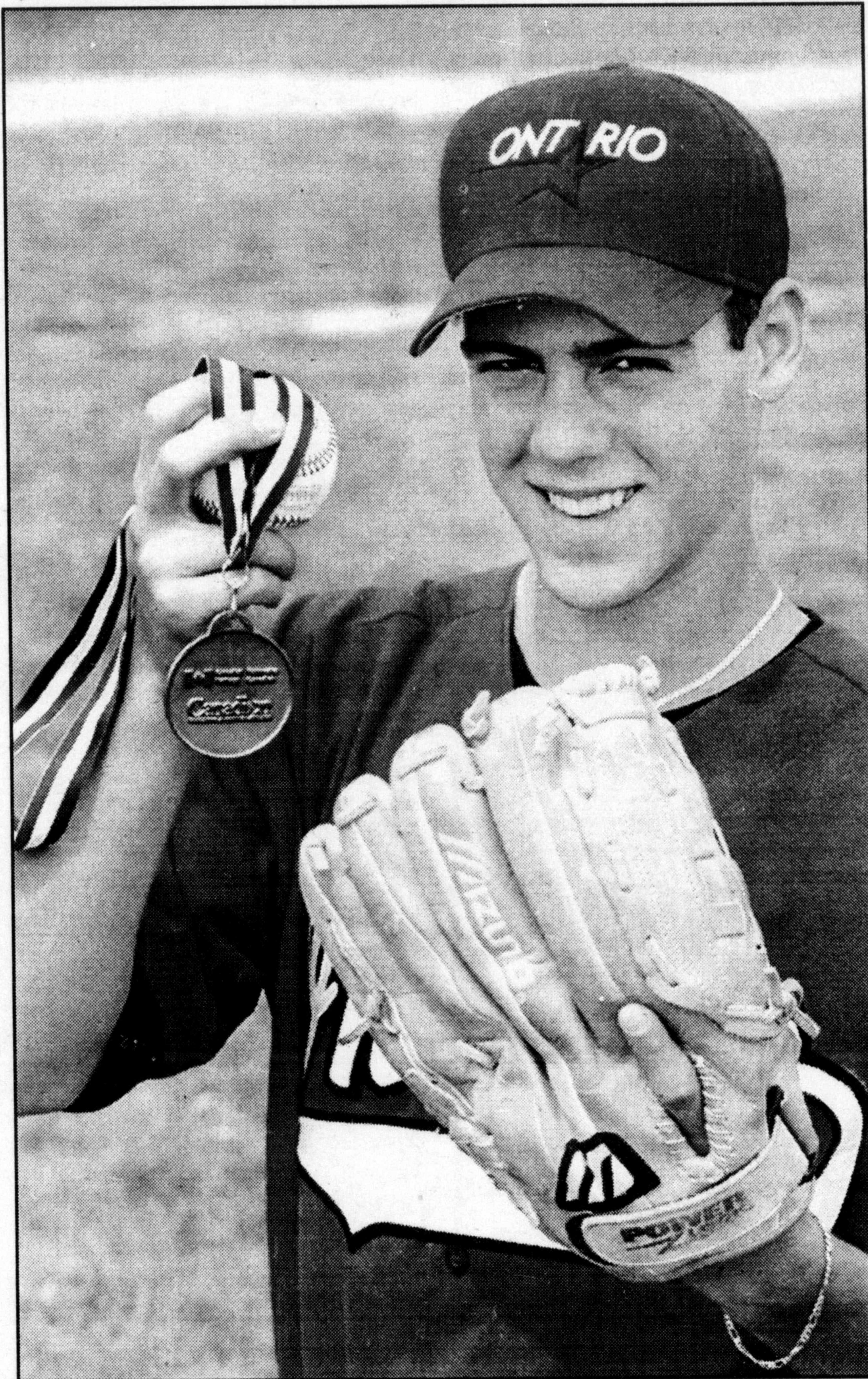


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

David Aggio displays the silver medal he helped Team Ontario's Burlington Bulls capture recently in national competition.

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

One mighty swing and all his butterflies went sailing out of the ballpark.

Milton's David Aggio admits he was more than a little nervous heading into the 1999 Canada National Peewee Championships in Summerside, PEI.

As one of three late pickups for Team Ontario's Burlington Bulls, the 13-year-old wasn't sure if he'd even get much play — let alone make any kind of contribution to his new club.

All that unease beat a hasty retreat just seconds after Aggio stepped into the batter's box for inning one of the tournament opener.

Not one to waste time

Wasting no time in proving his worth, and making the Bulls look like geniuses for acquiring him, the local teen took the PEI pitcher's first offering over the fence for a three-run dinger — one of two he'd deliver in a 20-0 annihilation of the maritime team.

"After that I felt good, I felt like part of the team and I felt like I belonged at the nationals," said Aggio, of his initial home run. "All the cobwebs went away."

The Miltonian — who has major league aspirations — was named player of the game in the whitewash. It was the first of several awards he garnered at the recent tournament.

Costly errors

Unfortunately, a gold medal wasn't among them — as Team Ontario made some costly errors and were offensively dry in the grand finale. The

combination equaled a 4-1 loss to Quebec, a hand-picked team from across the province.

Again, Aggio would take MVP honours in the title match with great relief pitching — to stop the bleeding and keep his team within striking distance down the stretch — and a strong catching game before that.

He was deemed best behind the plate for the entire tournament and was named All-Star catcher. Not too shabby for someone who's only been at that position for two years.

Pleasant surprise

"I kind of surprised myself," explained Aggio, referring to his defensive efforts. "I caught for a Niagara Falls pitcher who was also picked up by Burlington. He had great stuff and we worked well together all week."

Offensively, Aggio hit a sizzling .523 at the nationals — with particularly potent performances against Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan.

A 4-0 round-robin record set the stage for a semifinal tilt with Manitoba — whom Team Ontario trimmed 3-1, thanks in part to fine fielding by their lone Miltonian.

Aggio's exceptional efforts came in front of sizeable crowds in PEI. Among those in the stands was Dan Tielemans — his coach this summer with the Milton Red Sox.

"It was great of him to come down and see David," said father Albert Aggio. Of his son, he added, "Initially, I was just hoping he'd get a few at-bats, but he played the whole week and really did a great job. It was such a treat to see."

Tips available through baseball school

Think the end of summer means the end of local baseball?

Better think again.

Players 10-13 years of age — regardless of skill level or past playing experience — can join a fall instructional league that begins tomorrow at Bronte Meadows.

The Milton ballpark will be one of many facilities used for the regional program that was started

four years ago by the National Instructional Baseball Association (NIBA).

This is the first season in which fall ball is being offered locally.

"The format of the league is to have games where instruction from qualified mentors is offered immediately after a strategic or mental mistake has been made," explained J.P. Soucie, NIBA's executive director. "The immediate feed-

back is the key. Players will learn right away when a mistake is made, in a positive and constructive way."

The Halton league will play on Tuesday nights and Saturday afternoons until Thanksgiving, when a year-end tournament will be held.

Players interested in joining the local program must pre-register by calling Soucie at 877-2377 or registering on-line at www.NIBA.ca.



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