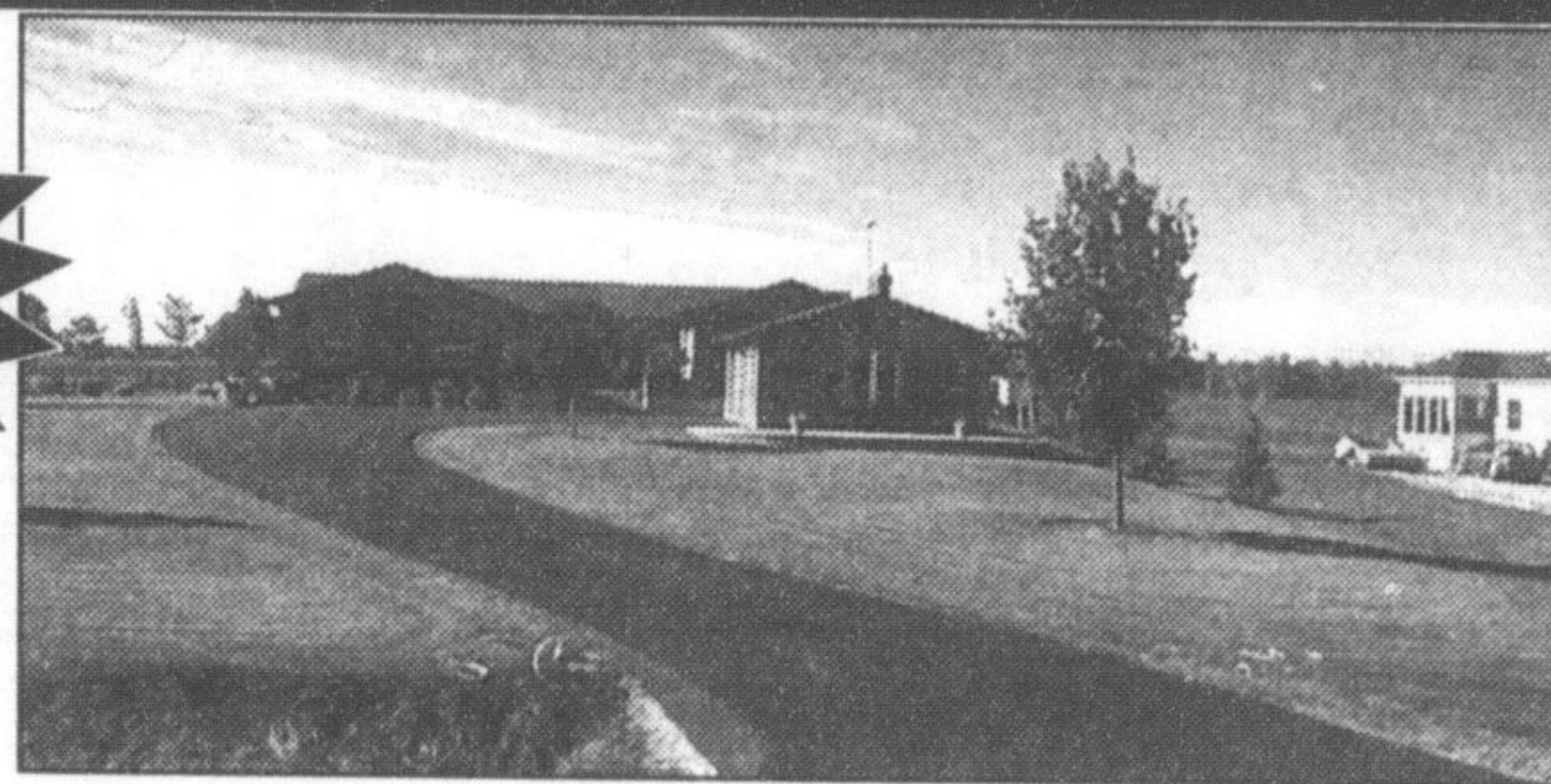


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PGA Tour, here I come

In the spring, a young man's fancy turns to romance.

That means golf, of course — girls are around all year long.

I love golf. I watch it all the time. I'd play it every day if I could. I'd play on the PGA Tour.

So much for fantasies. I play a couple times a year now, I can remember most of the birdies I've ever had...on one hand, and I can remember the time I broke 100.

But I think I could be good, same as all golfers, because every once in a while I hit a great shot and I start thinking that if I can do it once I can do it all the time.

I talked to Izzy Markic, the club pro at Royal Ontario Golf Club, which is in Milton on Trafalgar Road just below Derry Road. Markic is the Director of Instruction at the Royal Ontario Golf Academy, and he agreed to give me a lesson.

Royal Ontario is a public course, but you'd never know it by looking at it. Even though it's only a couple years old, it looks as good as any championship course I've seen.

"It's the best value in the GTA," notes Markic, as we head out for our lesson.

Or rather head in, because first we go to an indoor training area.

Markic is a part-time mini-tour pro who has a handful of top-five finishes on the Great Lakes Tour. He qualified for the Ontario Open on the Canadian Tour, and has attempted several times to qualify for the Canadian Open.

The indoor area has a carpeted tee area and mirrors for swing training, as well as a computer for swing analysis.

Markic has developed his own instructional program. "Everybody teaches differently, my advantage is that I incorporate rhythm and timing into the instruction."

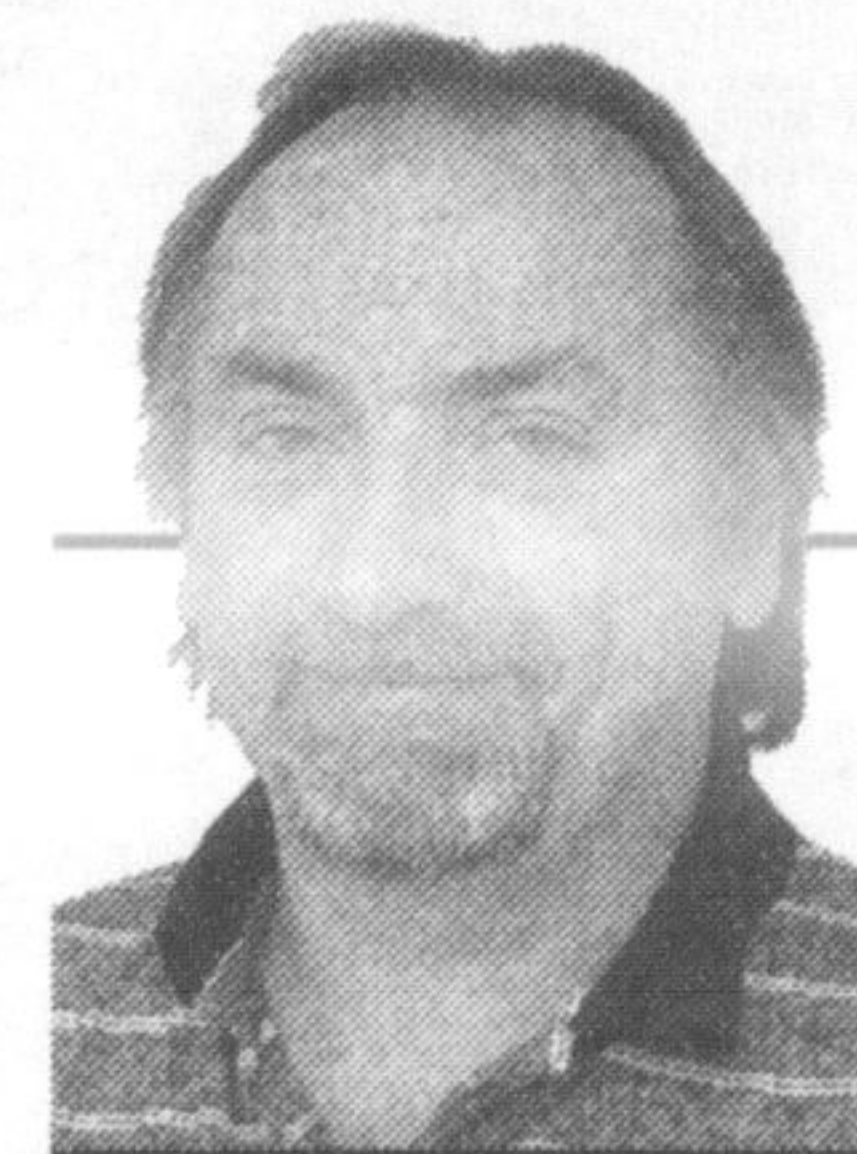
We talk about that for a while, Rhythmic Golf he calls it, watch some video of impressive changes in individuals, and it all makes perfect sense when he explains it.

"There's a good swing in all of us," says Markic. "It comes from knowledge, coaching, and practice."

Well, if there was a good swing in me, it was going to take a search party.

We go out to the range area with some balls and I swing away with a seven iron. My first one killed any worms within 50 yards of the tee, and another hooked right off the range boundaries, but then I start hitting a few good ones, impressing myself immensely, while Markic videotapes me. He'd probably want to sell the tapes of somebody who swings this well, I figured.

Then Markic takes the club. A former lead guitarist in a touring rock band, he starts to make the ball sing. It moves left, it moves right, it goes high, it goes low, wherever he says it's going that's where it



*Out in
left field*

with MURRAY TOWNSEND

goes. Markic figures he's got 70 different shots, which makes him effective helping scratch golfers as well as beginners.

We go back to the training room, and examine my swing on the computer, and I wait for my praise.

"That's not what I'd call a good swing," Markic says. "I'm brutally honest with my students."

Then we break it apart, bit by bit in slow and stop motion, and he shows me exactly what I did wrong. It's much different when you see yourself on the video, and I can easily follow what he's talking about. Then we go to the mat and the mirrors and work on some things. I work through my exercises with mirrors on three sides, while he explains it, and I can see myself getting better before my own eyes.

When we get back out to the range, I'm so pumped I miss the ball completely on my second try. Then I settle down and start doing what I was taught. It takes a bit of thought because it's a lot to remember for one time, but now the balls are going long and straight as he points out what I have to keep reminding myself to do.

It's going so smoothly, I can barely feel the ball hit the club, as time after time I hit a nice clean shot. I could have hit balls for hours. It's never felt so good. I'm in heaven. Even Markic is impressed with my improvement.

We go back and examine the video, with both swings set up side by side on the monitor. Big difference.

I figure I learned more about swinging a golf club in half an hour than the rest of my life combined, which makes me wonder why I never did this before. I've gone to the driving range plenty of times, but according to Markic, that just means we're, "Getting good at bad skills."

At the Royal Golf Academy there are all kinds of group clinics for various parts of the game, as well as individual lesson plans. It's all on their Web site at www.royalontario.com.

People spend so much money on golf, when for a relatively tiny investment they could be much better at it and enjoy it more. Of course, I never realized that until my lesson. A lesson well learned.

You'll be able to see my improvement for yourself, oh, in about five years when I'm playing on the Seniors Tour.

Senior Red Sox win pair

Now that's more like it.

Taking their offensive game to another level this past weekend, the Senior Red Sox won both on the road and at home to improve to 4-5.

Their recent uprising was highlighted with Friday night's 8-2 rout of previously undefeated Etobicoke.

Milton delivered its first of two 10-hit performances — which included some timely plate pop against seasoned ace Roman Kula — and enjoyed rock-solid pitching by Adam Finkbeiner.

Ian Zettle worked the last two innings and amassed six straight strikeouts to stymie the top-seated hosts.

Offensively, Matt McCandless drove in three runs, while two-hit efforts were provided by Reese Davies, Todd Devlin and

Pat Mastro.

Not quite as sharp in terms of fielding or relief pitching at Brian Best Park Saturday afternoon, the Red Sox frittered away much of a seven-run cushion but hung on to shade St. Catharines 11-9.

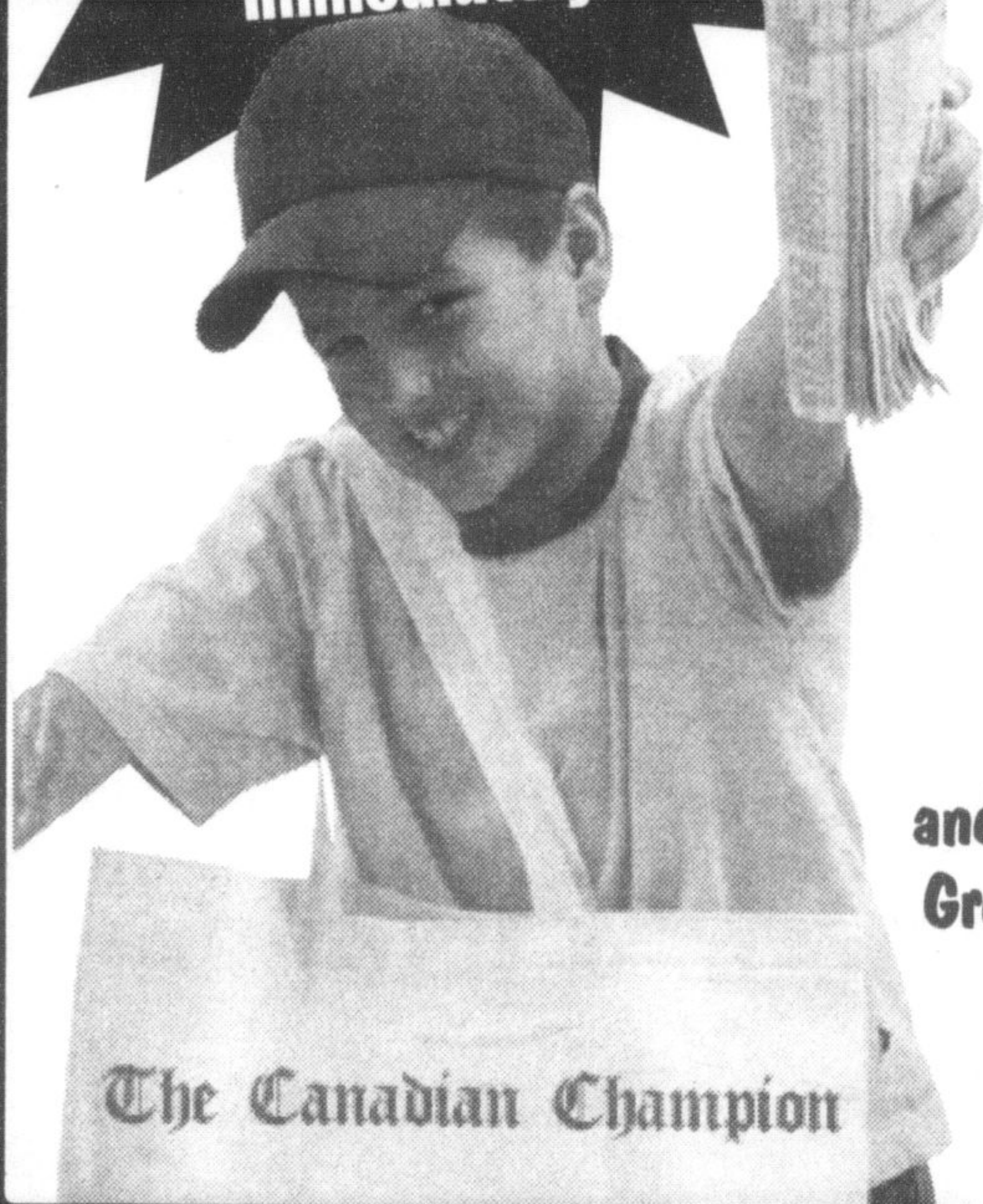
The late lapse — including five errors and some shaky work by the bullpen — followed a big performance by Adam Ahearn and another potent attack.

Taylor Lawton had three RBI, while Davies posted his second straight multi-hit game. Dwayne Johnson also had a pair of hits, while Chris Coughlin aided the win with a solo homer.

The local seniors will look to build on their recent success at this weekend's Tillsonburg Tournament.

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