

Senior Red Sox sweep opening day

By MURRAY TOWNSEND

Special to The Champion

Jeff McLeod wasn't satisfied with being the hero once, so he did it twice, leading the Senior Red Sox to a season-opening 6-4 win over the Ontario champion Etobicoke Rangers Saturday afternoon at Ninth Line Park.

Trailing 4-2 in the top of the final frame of game one of a seven-inning double-header, Kevin Cooper led off with a double. Then Reese Davies and Mark Sgrignoli got aboard with walks, loading the bases for McLeod — who drove it down the first base line to score two and tie the game.

In the second extra frame, Nick Aalbers led off with a walk, and was sacrificed to second, setting the table once again for McLeod. This time he cleaned it off completely, pounding the ball over the right field fence.

It was then left up to closer Nate Tami to

finish off the Rangers in the bottom of the ninth. Adam Ahearn started and went four innings, his only major hiccup being a three-run homer in the fourth. Matt Dickson struck out two and didn't allow a run in one inning of relief, and then Tami took the mound. He was perfect over four innings, allowing no hits or walks, and striking out four.

In the second game, the Red Sox blanked Erindale 3-0.

Adam Finkbeiner earned the win with six outstanding innings, allowing just two hits while striking out 11. Mike Grabauskas kept the Cardinals off the scoresheet for the final inning to pick up the save.

Duane Johnson drew a bases-loaded walk in the third inning for the first run, and that was followed by a Brent Teboekhorst single. A Tayler Lawton double in the fifth drove home McLeod.

"I can't remember ever starting with two

wins against teams of that calibre," said manager George Moore. "It's nice that we're number one, but I never get too high or too low."

Despite the fact that the pitching was outstanding, it still causes Moore some worries. "I'm very optimistic about the start, but I'm a little concerned about the pitching yet because that's our strength and we rely on it more. Most teams carry nine or 10 pitchers, but we're down to seven, with one hurt."

The Red Sox are a relatively young team by COBA standards, which is good in some respects and not so good in others, according to Moore. Many of the top teams have more mature hitters, but Moore is impressed with the enthusiasm shown by the young Red Sox, and especially with the pride they're showing in their defense.

The Red Sox continued an extended season-opening road trip last night in Oakville.

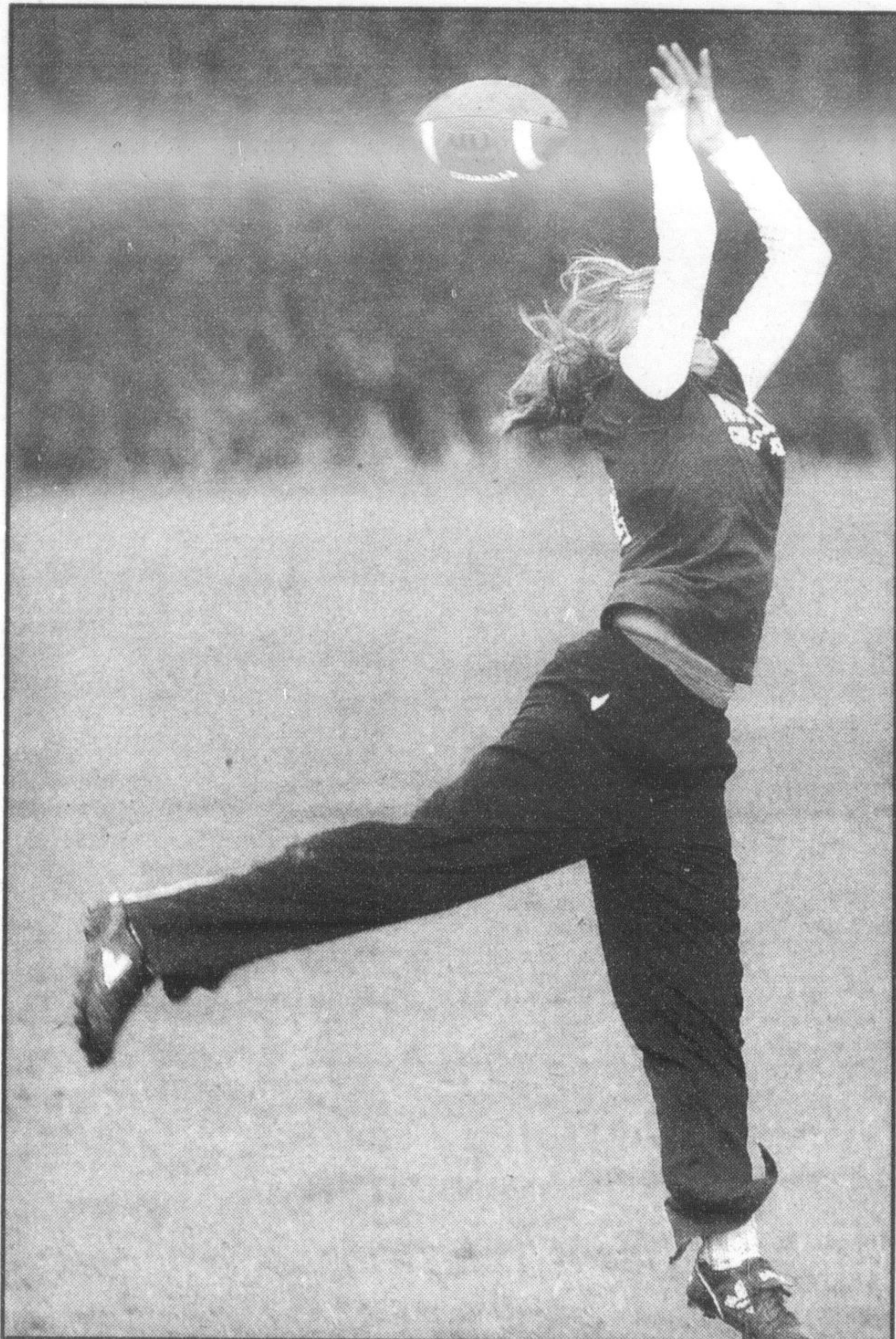


Photo by PETER C. McCUSKER

Oh, so close

Milton District High School's Natasha Brancier just misses a catch in recent girls touch football tournament play against White Oaks in Oakville. The Mustangs reached the semifinals.

Baseball 'Stangs annihilate Drury

There were a myriad of terms used to describe Friday's Milton District-E.C. Drury baseball clash at Brian Best Park.

And none of them were pretty.

MD's 23-0 massacre of their young and defensively-flawed rivals marks one of the most lopsided cross-town encounters in recent memory.

And as frightening as it may seem, things could have been a lot worse. The Mustangs were without dependable Shadlock brothers Shawn and Chris — away with their Guelph rep team — while the two teams decided to cut the game off at four innings instead of playing the usual five for mercy contests.

Seeing his first start of the season after a cut finger kept him sidelined for week one, left-handed pitcher Hallan King — of Canadian Thunderbirds notoriety — earned the win with a brief two-inning shutout. Matching his one-hit showing was reliever Aaron Mark, who also swung a heavy bat despite playing with a bandaged hand.

Pretty much all of his teammates made an impact at the plate, including ninth grader Brandon Banashewski, who appears to have all the necessary tools to be a cornerstone of the Mustangs for years to come. Jarred McCall, Justin Myers and Adam Rosanally were among the other key contributors in the blowout win, which pushed MD to 4-0.

Still in the middle of what could be a lengthy rebuilding period, the Spartans were 0-3 as of yesterday afternoon and aren't likely to see playoff action again this year.

Meanwhile, Bishop Reding broke out of its season-opening winless skid by blasting Oakville's Iroquois Ridge 9-1 Friday at Maplehurst Ball Park. Nick Mazzarato pitched four strong innings, while Lee Mathé led the offensive charge with a 3-for-3 campaign that included three RBI.

Solid relief work by young Quin Santos and a fairly sharp defensive performance also factored into the decisive victory, which bumped the young BR squad up to 1-3 on the year.

The Royals have a relatively easy finish to the season with games against EC and Georgetown's Christ the King, but could have a tough time in the playoffs, especially with the loss of reliable pitcher P.J. McColl — who recently broke his throwing hand trying to catch a ball in rep play.

Reding fared well against MD Wednesday at Maplehurst, but a few fielding glitches and effective mound work by the Mustangs cost them a 6-4 decision.

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