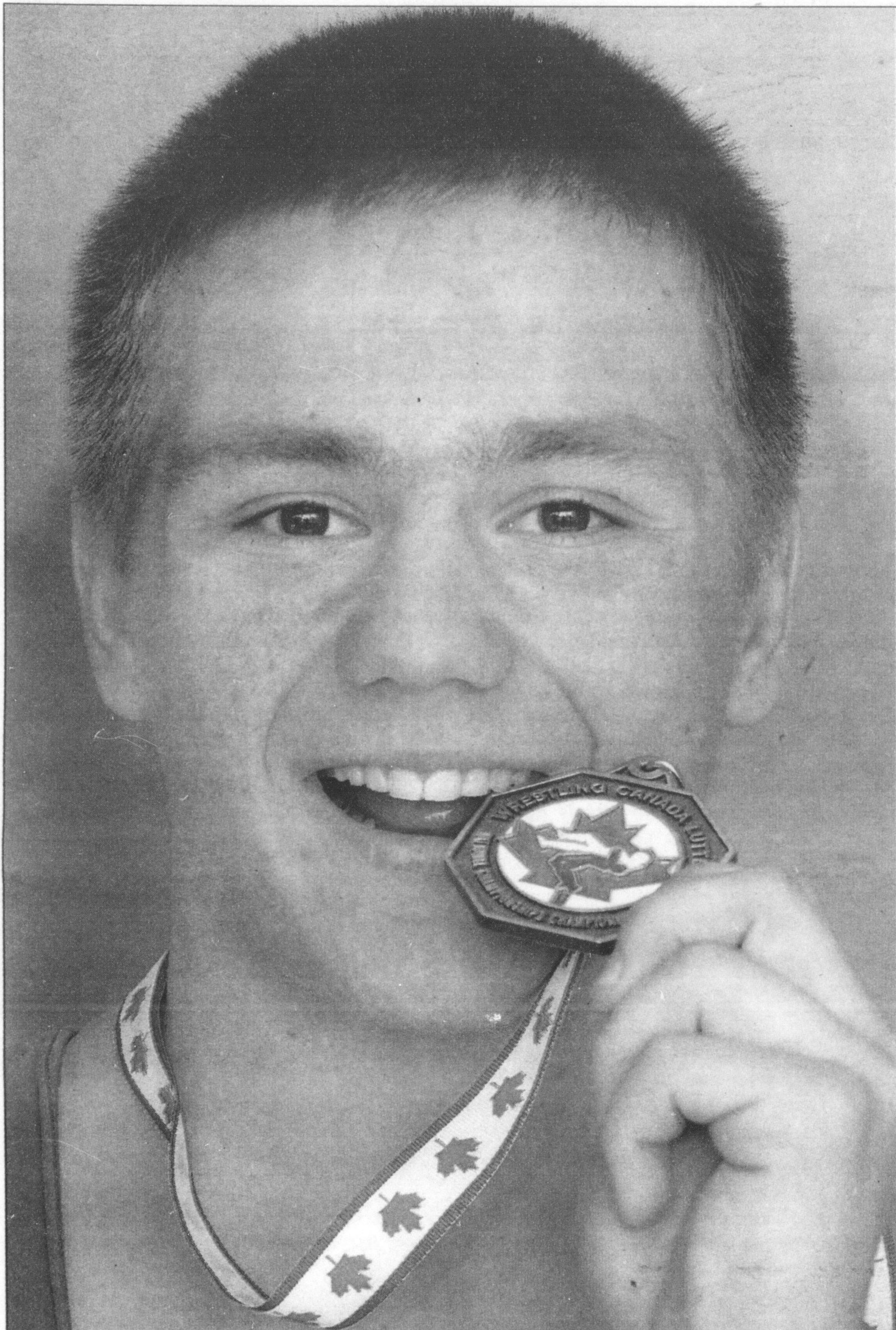


# SPORTS

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GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

**SAVOURING HIS SUCCESS:** Alan Moffat is all smiles as he tastes the silver medal he claimed last weekend at the national junior wrestling championships in P.E.I. For full results, see page A21.

## Novak's Lakers capture D3 title

*OT win in national championship caps huge weekend for local defenceman*

By Steve LeBlanc  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Mike Novak was passing blood one day, and passing around a national trophy the next.

The combination made for the most eventful and exhilarating weekend of the 21-year-old defenceman's hockey career, which was highlighted with Sunday's 4-3 overtime victory against the three-time defending champion Middlebury Panthers in the NCAA Division 3 finals in Superior, Wisconsin.

"It felt surreal," said the six-foot-three-inch, 202-pound blueliner, of his Oswego Lakers' sudden death deposit by fellow sophomore and Provincial Jr. A League graduate Garren Reisweber. "At first I didn't know it went in, and even then I don't think it (winning nationals) really sunk in until they gave us the trophy."

While his teammates no doubt spent Saturday evening wrestling with anxiety over the monumental challenge that awaited — especially with Middlebury having won two dozen straight playoff games, dating back to 2003 — Novak's concerns lay with whether or not he'd even be able to compete.

That's because just a few hours earlier he'd taken a thunderous check into the boards in a 4-3 OT semifinal win

over St. Nobert that left him severely banged up and his kidneys in bad shape.

"I was passing blood and didn't know if I'd be playing Sunday. My whole left side was pretty screwed up," recalled the hard-hitting defenceman, whose perennial contender Lakers made the most of their huge second chance with a re-seeding into the national tournament after being knocked off by Fredonia in round one of the SUNYAC conference playdowns. "I guess it kept me from actually worrying about the game, but it was still

nerve-racking, not knowing if I'd get to play."

His condition would improve enough to get last-minute clearance to compete — less than a half-hour before the opening puck drop — and Novak was not only in the lineup for the epic showdown but on the ice when Reisweber clinched Oswego's first-ever national title 12:55 into the extra session.

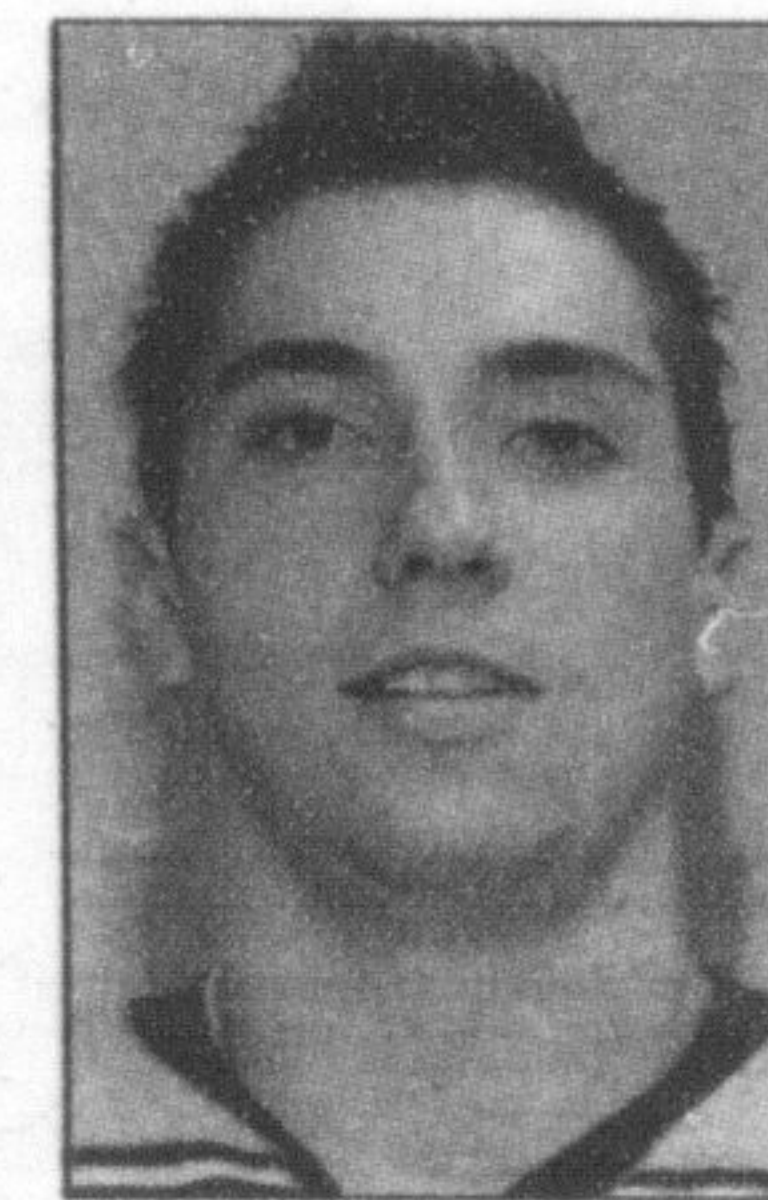
"It was an incredible weekend," he said.

The key to the Lakers' triumph, he suggested, was simply delivering a good solid effort and not getting too hung up on Middlebury's seemingly-endless playoff run. That latter part wasn't especially difficult, since Oswego was ranked much higher than its championship rivals throughout the season and headed into the finals with a 22-3-3 record.

"We were careful not to give them too much respect."

And the fact that the Lakers had won in overtime just the day before and gone to sudden death five other times this season likely gave them a level of

• see OSWEGO on page A22



Mike Novak



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