

# Shortstaffed minor bantam Sox ousted in OBA semis

*Gutsy Milton staves off elimination three times*

By Steve LeBlanc  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

The numbers game finally caught up with the minor bantam Red Sox.

With their backs to the wall and their ranks at the bare minimum nine players, Milton fended off elimination three times Saturday to reach the semifinals of the double-knockout OBA 'A' championships in Guelph.

But that last hurdle to the finals proved to be a bit too much for the short-staffed Red Sox, who despite staking themselves to an early 8-1 advantage against Paris wound up getting outdistanced 22-18 by the eventual champs.

"I think if we'd had Mason (Whiting) he

would have given us that added bit of offence we needed to get to the finals," suggested head coach Richard Creamer, referring to the late-season injury of his heavy-hitting outfielder. "However, this was a hugely-successful season and to win three games Saturday with just nine players was a major accomplishment."

Brady Riml delivered some strong mound work through the initial stages of the semifinal slugfest, while Milton used a handful of other pitchers the rest of the way in an attempt to hold opposing bats at bay — which proved fruitless for both sides.

Among the Red Sox relievers were fellow standout hurlers Eric Piniero and Erik Post,

who worked one frame despite still suffering from a banged up rotator cuff.

Noticeably rusty after being off for a full three weeks, the COBA league and playoff champs short-circuited defensively en route to a 7-5 loss to Quinte last Friday evening.

"We had nine errors and not one run in that game was earned," explained Creamer, whose team also won the major bantam Mitchell Tournament along with reigning supreme in COBA.

Quickly regrouping from that initial setback, the Red Sox swept through their day-two competition — with a 12-2 mercy of Toronto Playground book-ended by one-run decisions over two of their league rivals.

The latter of those was especially sus-

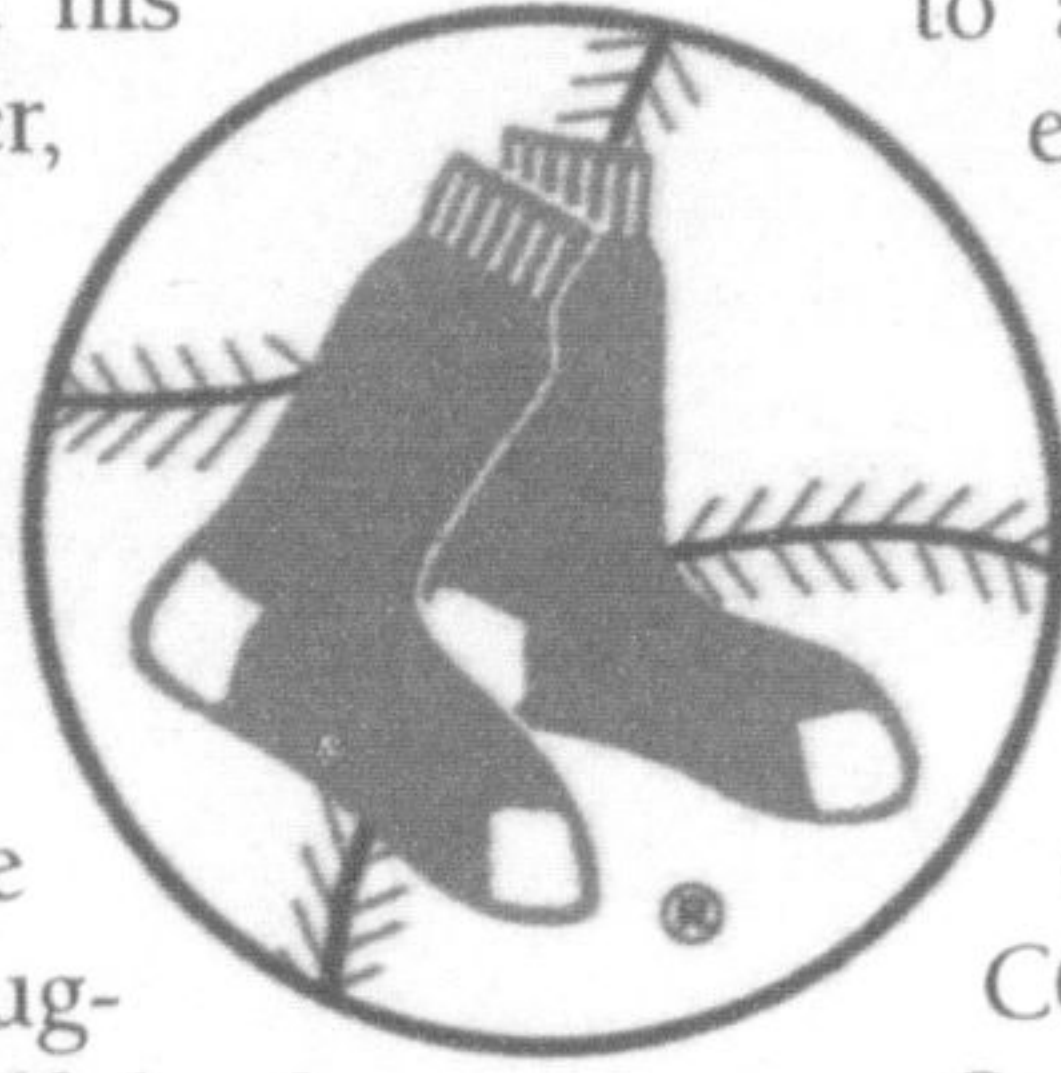
penseful, with Milton down 8-6 heading into their last at-bat against Burlington.

That's when weekend sparkplug Brandon Nicols lashed out a big double to spark a do-or-die rally, which subsequently saw Nick Creamer, Connor Lander and Hayden Mancini belt out RBI hits that collectively kept the Red Sox alive.

Going 8-for-11 overall at the OBAs, Nichols also provided some credible relief pitching against Burlington, as did Alex Cunningham.

Lander and Aaron Beehoo pitched well to start the day off with a 3-2 squeaker over Hamilton, in which Matthew Perrott ignited the scoring with a well-placed double.

Paris went on to topple Vaughan Sunday afternoon for the OBA title.



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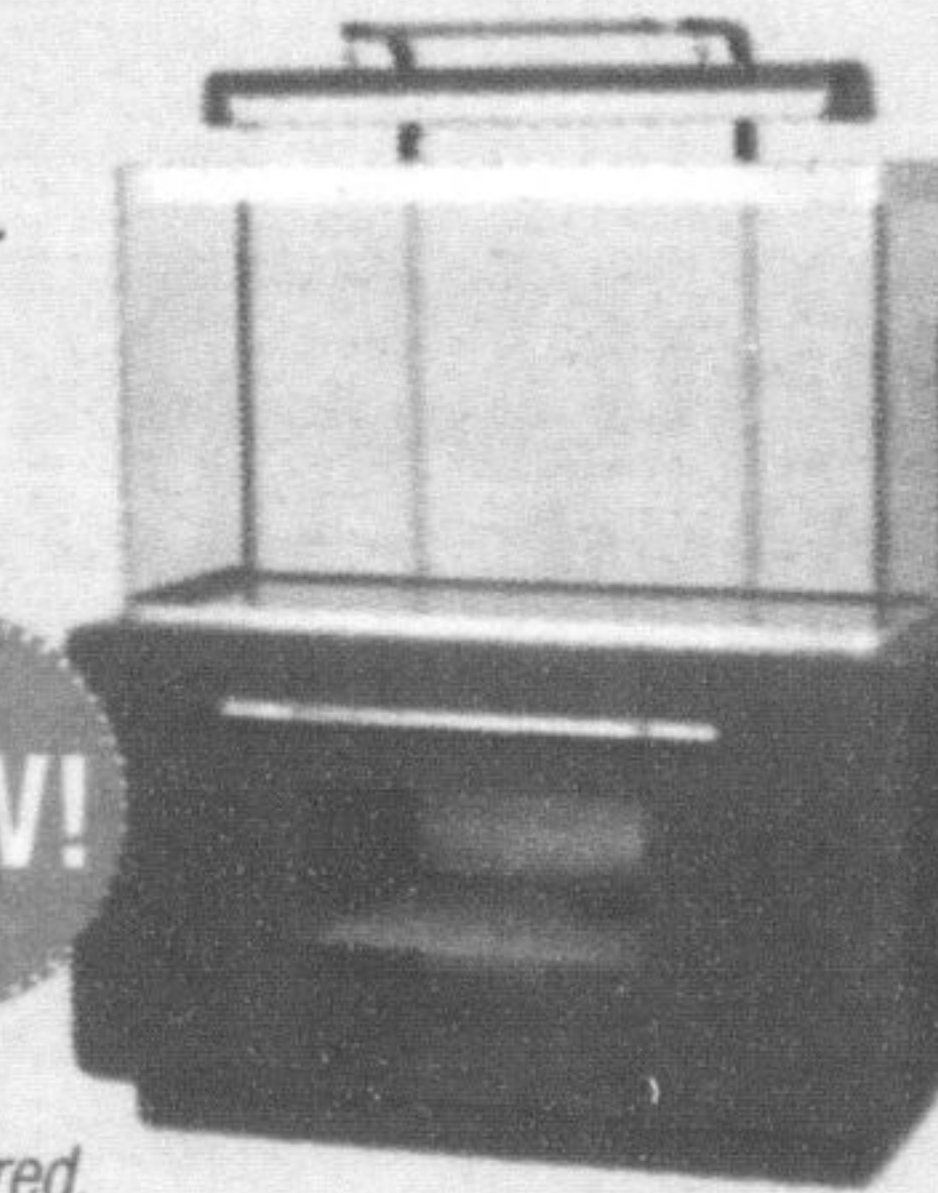
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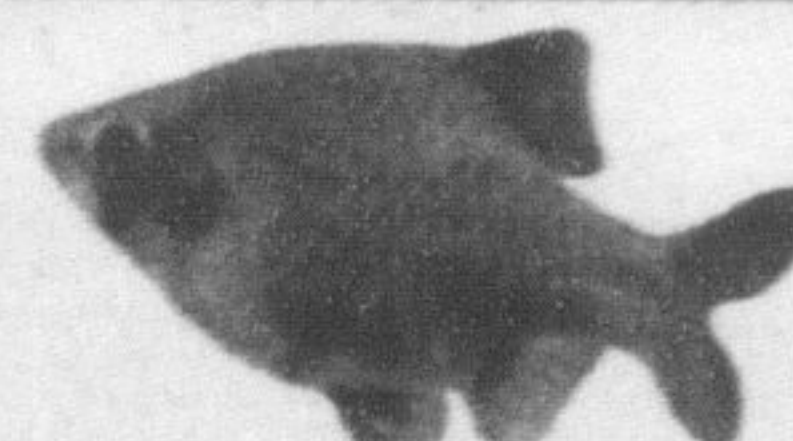
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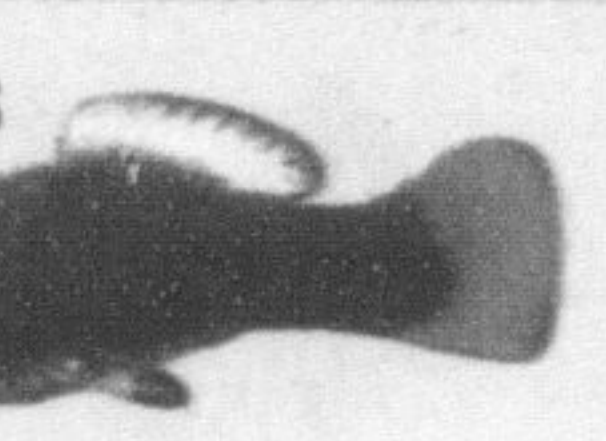
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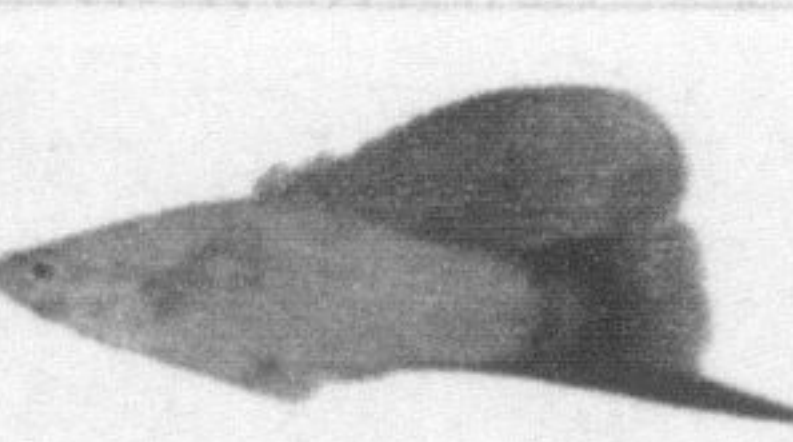
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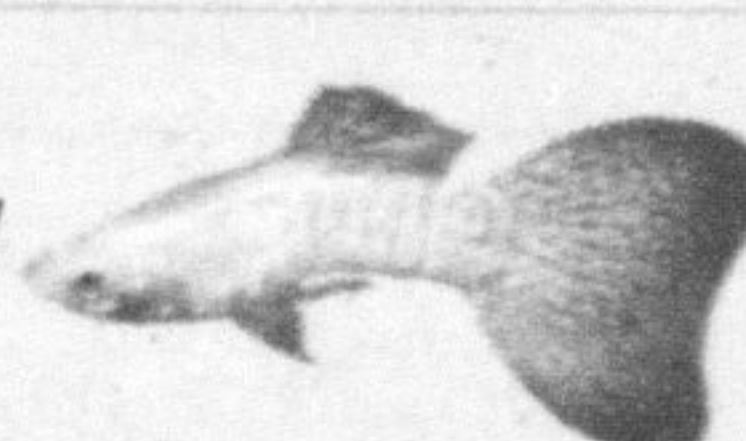
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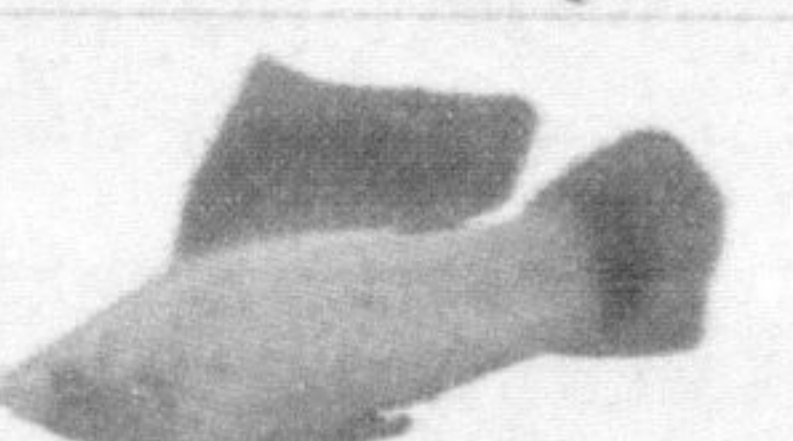
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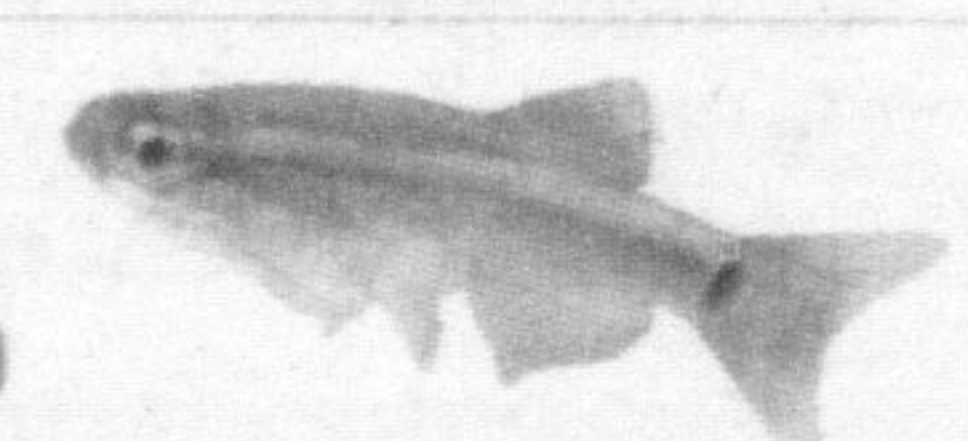
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