

## talents to the test

By Joanna Phillips  
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Joseph Belford has not just drive, but talent.

The Milton resident captured gold in auto painting at the Halton Skills competition in April. He went on to win the Ontario Technological Skills Competition (OTSC), which secured him a place in the Canada Skills competition.

Both are run by Skills Canada, which has evolved into a pan-Canadian organization offering skilled trades and technology competitions at the regional, provincial/territorial, national and international levels.

This year's Canada Skills competi-

knowledge test.

Belford placed in the middle of the pack, and therefore didn't qualify for WorldSkills Calgary 2009. He isn't about to quit now though, as his interest in cars has spanned his entire life and shows no signs of petering out.

Formerly a student at Milton District High School, Belford transferred to Robert Bateman in Burlington this school year at the prompting of his automotive teacher, Mike Adamiak.

At Robert Bateman, he took the opportunity to participate in the Ontario Youth Apprentice Program (OYAP), which offers students a co-op in a skilled trade that can lead to an apprenticeship.

Since the transfer, his mother, Carol, says she has seen a world of difference in him. She points out that he hasn't

Zamboni (an ice resurfacing machine).

He also dreams of opening up an auto shop in California, having been influenced by car and bike television shows.

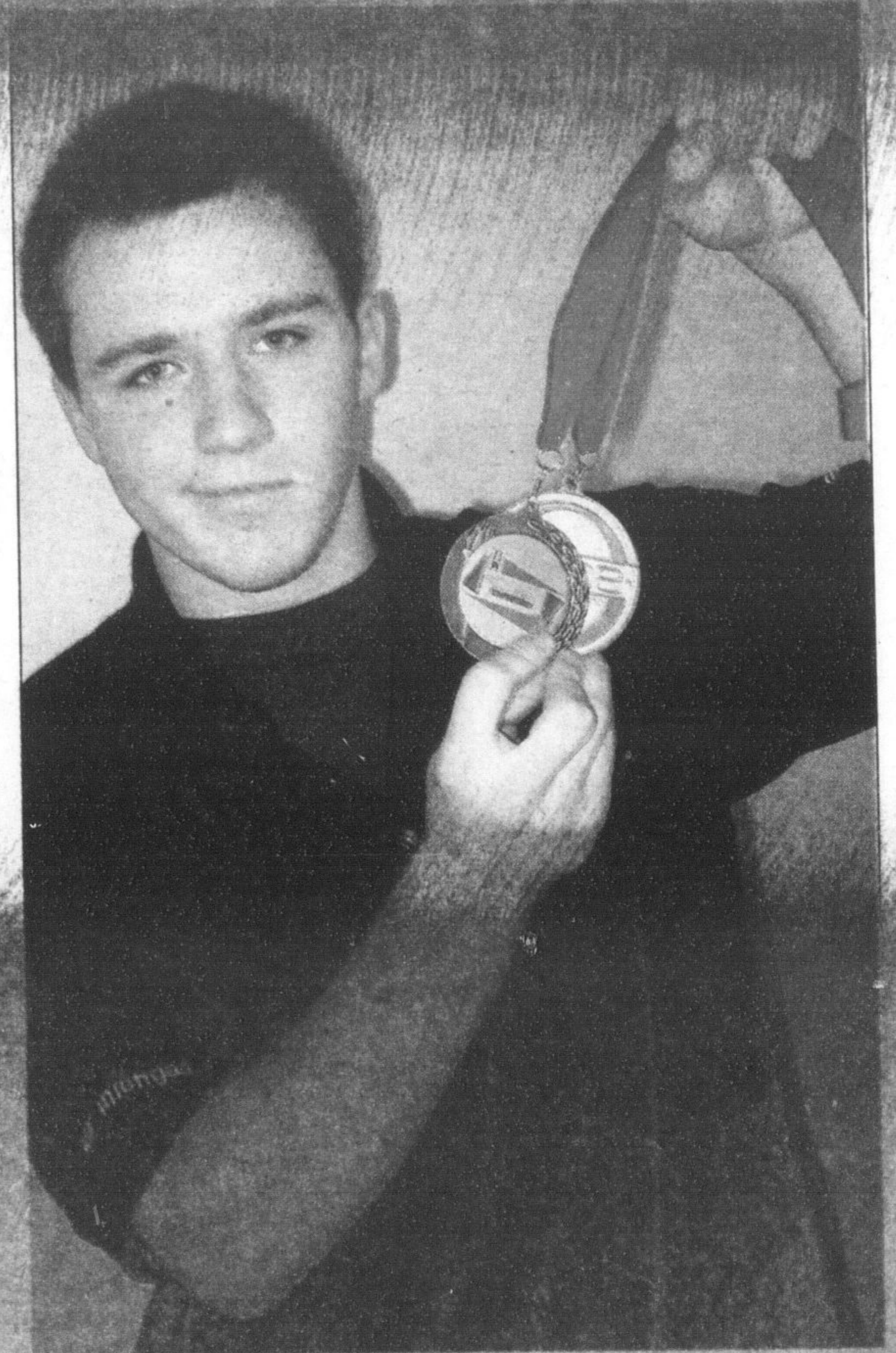
The reality doesn't seem far off, as Belford is used to facing tough challenges.

At the nationals, 18-year-old Belford was competing against university students, in some cases four years his senior. He was not only the youngest contestant, but also the one with the least experience.

He credits his teacher at Robert Bateman, Ron Postma, for inspiring him.

"He makes every student feel they can do it," says Belford.

Belford supplemented his studies by spending two days at Burlington's History



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