

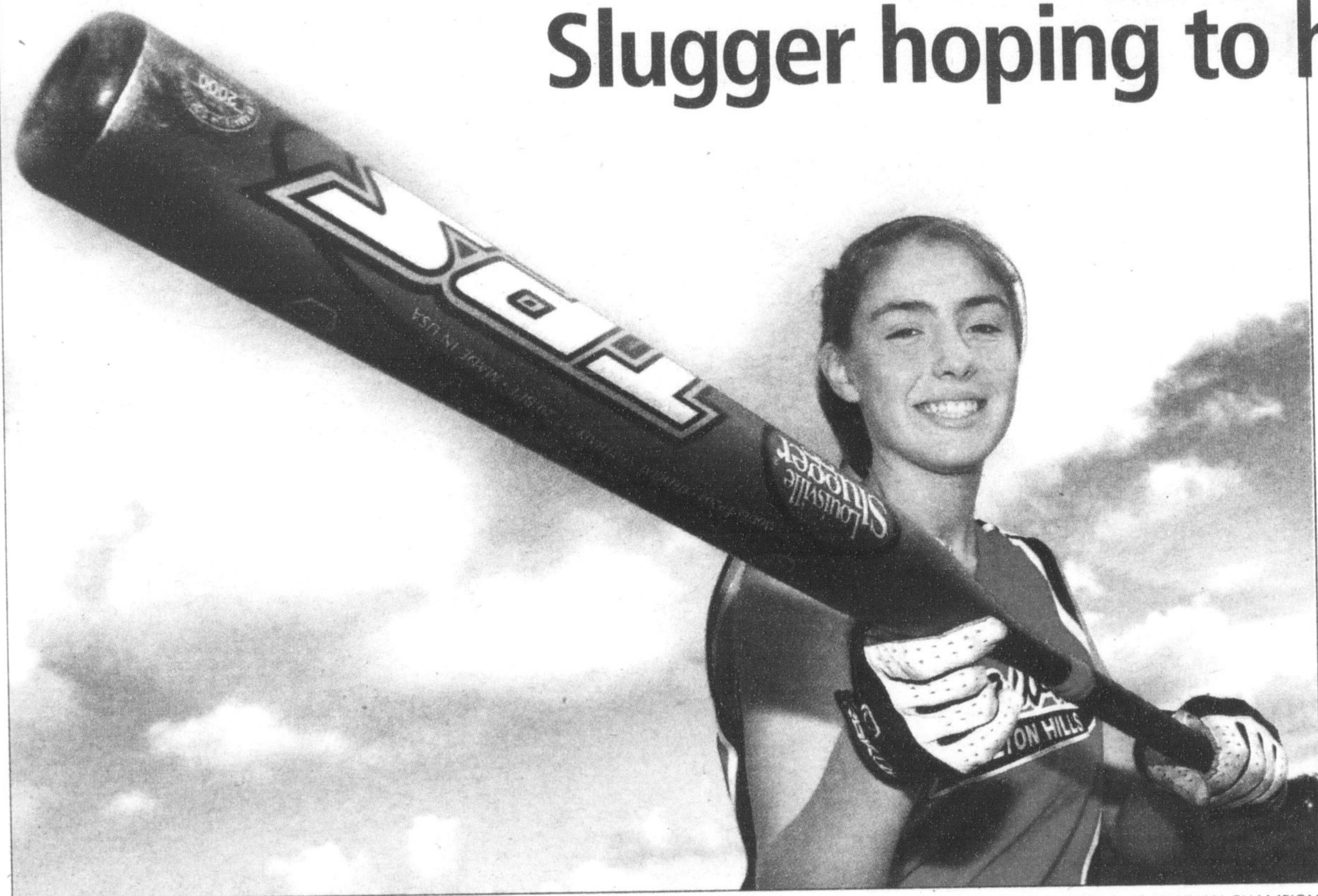
# SPORTS

SPORTS EDITOR: STEVE LeBLANC e-mail sleblanc@miltoncanadianchampion.com

## Slugger hoping to help Hawks soar

*Del Rosso's novice fastpitch team to compete in this week's nationals*

By Steve LeBlanc  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF



GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

**A BIG HIT:** Katarina Del Rosso is hoping to deliver at the plate this week, as her novice Hawks head into national championship play.

Katarina Del Rosso hasn't just been a big hit with her Halton Hills Hawks, but a timely one as well.

Recently developing into a clutch performer at the plate, the 14-year-old Miltonian is part of why the neighbouring novice girls' fast-pitch team not only finds itself as a participant at this week's Canadian championships in Montreal, but a medal favourite to boot.

"I've never been to anything like this before. It's going to be awesome," said Del Rosso, before heading out for the nationals, at which her club is ranked second. "I'm really excited."

Not content to merely qualify for the 12-team showcase — which gets underway today (Wednesday) — the Hawks grabbed the second of five berths allotted for Ontario with a silver-medal performance at the recent provincial championships in Guelph.

Halton Hills would get hammered in its first and final games by the powerhouse host Guelph Gators, but prevailed in all other outings — thanks in no small part to Del Rosso. She'd highlight the weekend with a huge effort in round-robin play against Stratford, with a two-out triple and two-out single accounting for all of the runs in a 5-4 nail-biter.

Two games later she'd come through with a pair of hits and an RBI in a 7-2 semifinal decision over the Oakville Angels — with whom she'd originally tried out for last fall.

"I just got into a groove (at provincials). I guess I've always been a good hitter and now I'm out of my slump," said Del Rosso, referring to a mid-season dry spell.

Added Hawks coach Ian McLaughlin, "Kat's definitely had some timely hits for us. In the past month or so she's been pretty consistent."

Of course the club's lone Miltonian has contributed at more than just the plate.

"This is the time when hitting catches up to pitching, and with mostly right-handed batters Kat gets a lot of balls hit her way in left. She's quite solid out there," said McLaughlin.

The Hawks certainly hope that continues this week, as they look for a much-anticipated gold-medal rematch with the Gators.

"That would be great. We've got a real chance to do it; I've got the best teammates and coaches," said Del Rosso, whose father, Sandro, is an assistant coach with the team.

The top-seeded team for its division, Halton Hills kicks off round-robin play this afternoon against the host Lions Lac St-Louis. Championship play is slated for Sunday.

## Junior Red Sox ousted in COBA semifinal

This past weekend's thundershowers put a serious damper on the Central Ontario Baseball Association's junior playdowns.

A number of teams had already opted out of the league tournament, and a few heavy downpours took any remaining lustre out of this year's competition — at least for the Red Sox.

Normally a double-knockout tournament, the COBA playdowns underwent a series of impromptu and questionable revisions throughout the weekend, which eventually saw Milton facing lowly Erindale in semifinal action Sunday night at Clarkson — the only field still playable.

The Red Sox had played only one other game on the weekend — an 8-0 dismantling of eventual finalist Oakville Saturday morning — and had to wait around two hours before facing the Cardinals for a trip to the championship.

Needless to say, the steam had gone out of the weekend before they even stepped onto the field.

So while a 4-2 loss to a team they'd dominated in regular-

season play was still rather surprising, it wasn't quite as disappointing as it would have been under an ideally-run tournament.

"Yeah it didn't really mean as much this year," said manager Glenn Turner.

Unable to take advantage of Erindale's sub-par pitching and fielding, Milton left 11 runners on base in the narrow semifinal defeat.

A measly one-hit campaign marred some fairly strong pitching by John Brady and Sean Mathé, and afforded Erindale a highly-improbable berth to the final.

Much more impressive before the storm hit Saturday, Milton got four perfect innings from Scott McTrach and enjoyed a balanced attack to dump Oakville.

Craig Howse essentially put the game out of reach with a two-run double in the sixth, while a strong defensive effort factored heavily into the lopsided victory as well.

The Red Sox cap 2008 play this weekend at the six-team OBA 'B' championship in Chatham.



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