

Senior Red Sox make valiant run in COBA playdowns

But fatigue and a lack of depth finally does in defending champs

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

By Saturday evening the Senior Red Sox were running on fumes.

In fact even those were in short supply at the tail-end of a three-games-in-eight-hours stretch that saw Milton stave off elimination twice before finally being ousted by the eventual champion Erindale Cardinals in the double-knockout Central Ontario Baseball Association (COBA) playdowns.

Despite missing a few key players, the defending champs staged a valiant run following Thursday's 2-1 heartbreaker to the Oakville As — delivering a couple of decisive wins at Burlington's Nelson Park to hold off their 2008 exit for as long as possible.

Here's how Saturday's run played out.

Milton 7, Burlington 1

Hopes for a lengthy day looked a little bleak after the opening frame, as the Red Sox suffered a couple of mental glitches and had their 1-0 lead wiped out.

However, Ian Zettle continued his late-season prowess — scattering four hits over a sharp complete-game performance — while a four-run second inning propelled Milton to a commanding win over its regional rivals.

Half of the Red Sox's 10 hits were of the extra-base variety, including a two-run homer by seasoned third baseman Joe Jurus, who drove in three runs overall to help eliminate the second-place finishers. Junior call-up Sean Mathé — at shortstop — drove in two runs on a pair of hits, while also recording RBI were catcher Curt Davies and centre fielder Carlos D'Costa, who scored twice and aided the second-inning surge with a two-out triple.

Zettle didn't allow more than one hit in any inning, while a line-out double play by second baseman Kurt Mitchell in the bottom of the fourth served as a huge blow against the still hopeful Brants.

Milton 6, St. Catharines 3

It looked as though the Red Sox's penchant for leaving runners on base might come back to haunt them like it did in round two against Oakville.

But Milton came through in the clutch, scoring five times in their final at-bat — with four runs coming on two outs — to send the regular-season champion Metros packing.

D'Costa and DH Matt Tales powered the Red Sox's late drive with RBI doubles, while Mitchell also drove in a run and had two hits. Other RBI were recorded by first baseman Kevin Cooper and Davies, moved over to left field after Nick Mazzorato returned behind the plate.

Milton had a modest five hits heading into the last inning and had stranded seven on base. Allowing them to stay in the game was an exceptional effort by southpaw Brian Stewart — who gave up just two hits before Steve Spiers came in to close things out — and error-free defence.

St. Catharines scored two in the bottom of the seventh to add a little suspense.

Erindale 8, Milton 0

Deserving a closer finish after such a hard-fought run, the Red Sox kept the Cardinals scoreless until the fourth inning, but just didn't enjoy the breaks necessary to extend their season.

Young Scott McTrach was impressive in his first start with the seniors, working his way into the fifth inning, and collected five strikeouts to keep things close. Damian Campbell wrapped it up on the mound and Milton was quite strong in the field.

But Erindale — with more in the tank, having played two games to the Red Sox's three — came up with a few terrific defensive plays. Meanwhile, Milton left seven on base while the game was still up for grabs and stranded nine overall.

The Red Sox finish the season — which included a 2-2 showing at the Ontario 'A' Eliminations and a 14-11 regular season — at one game over .500.



Lawn bowling ladies trio advance to provincials

Talk about a reversal of fortune.

Hammered 18-2 in the second round of the recent double-knockout district championships in Brampton, Milton's lawn bowling ladies trio was the clear-cut underdog for a do-or-die rematch with the same Port Credit squad in the finals.

Only thing is, someone forgot to tell them that.

Making the round two loss look like a complete fluke, the Nicola Austinsmith-skipped team staved off elimination with an 18-8 decision and then took a winner-takes-all game 18-10.

"Our game just came together on Sunday," said Austinsmith, whose

triples team is rounded out by vice Silvia Linder and lead Lynda Miller. "We just said 'Let's go for it' and all played well. We didn't make any huge shots, we just played really consistent.

"They (Port Credit) had a good game on the Saturday, though. I wouldn't want to take anything away from them and say we played that bad."

The local ladies had a bit of a scare thrown into them in the final contest, as Port Credit scored four points down the stretch.

"It made things a little more exciting at the end," said Austinsmith, who played vice for a Milton team that was beat out in the district semifinals last summer.

The ladies recorded 24-8 and 21-7 decisions over two other Port Credit squads earlier in the tournament.

With its overall win, the team advanced to this coming weekend's provincial championships in Sarnia.

Milton's men's entry — led by last year's district champion vice John Chow — made it to Sunday play before getting put out by a Port Credit team.

Meanwhile, fellow Milton Lawn Bowling members Helen Kret and Christine Wild brought home bronze from the recent Ontario Senior Games in London.

Representing Halton Region, the duo grabbed third-place honours among an overall field of 32 teams.



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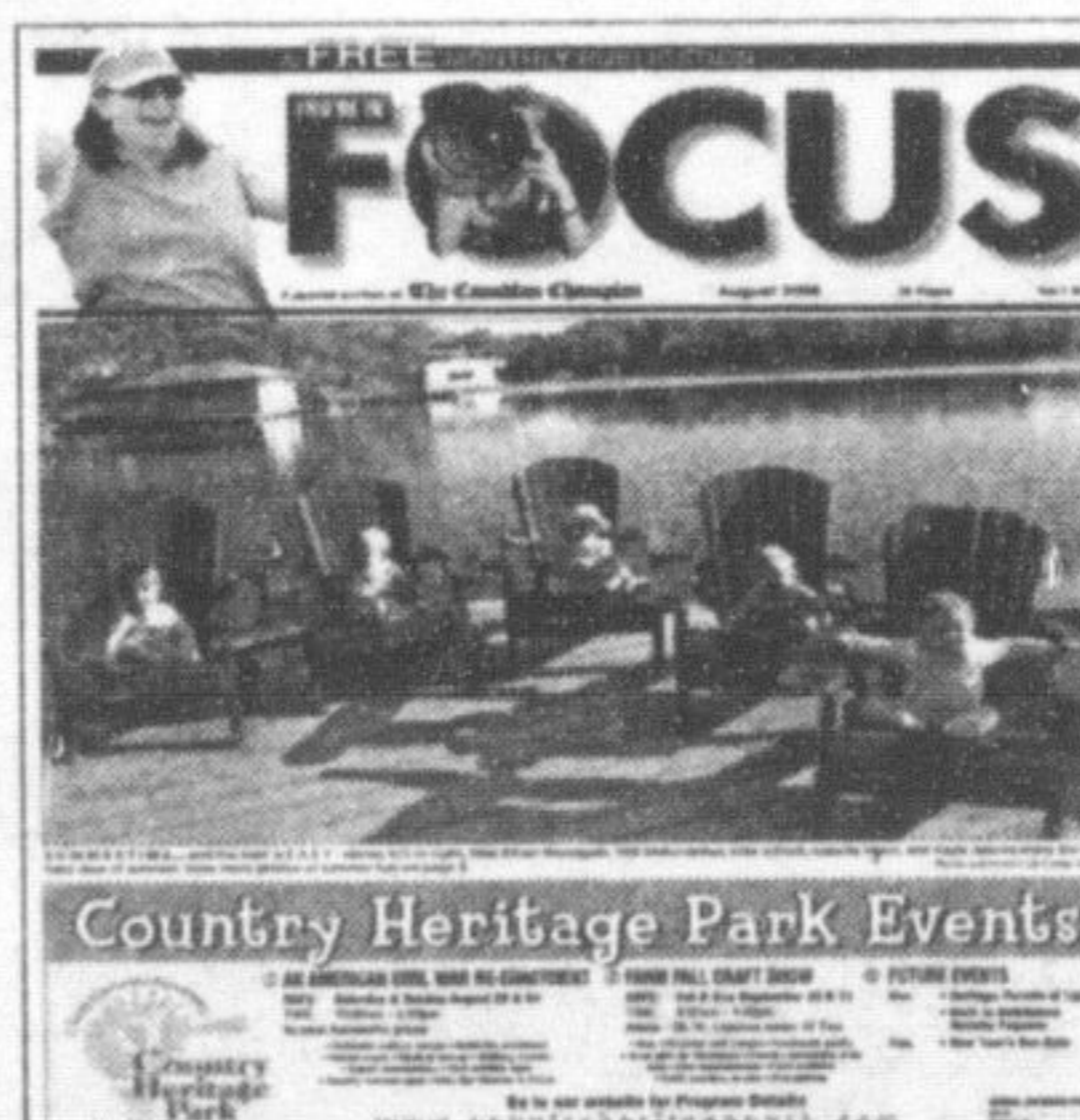


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