

## UConn frosh to enter draft

HARTFORD (AP) — Connecticut freshman basketball player Ater Majok, whose name has come up in recruiting allegations against the school, declared Thursday for the NBA draft.

Majok, a 6-foot-10 forward, said he won't hire an agent and intends to assess where he stands with the NBA and return to school. He has until June 15 to withdraw his name and retain his eligibility.

### Curry going pro

Davidson guard Stephen Curry will skip his senior season and take his sweet shooting stroke to the NBA.

After weeks struggling to decide, the nation's leading scorer announced Thursday that he'll enter the NBA draft, where he could be a lottery pick.

The 6-foot-3 Curry moved to point guard this season and averaged 28.6 points



Hour photo/MATTHEW VINCI  
Norwalk starter Andrew Merritt delivers a pitch during Thursday's game against Stamford. The Bears lost, 6-4.

## Black Knights down Bears

From B1

An infield error allowed Cohen to tie the game, putting Milliman on third base. Milliman then stole home without a play to give the home team a short-lived 2-1 advantage.

The Bears again stranded a pair of runners, adding to their total of eight runners left on base over the final five innings — including a bases-loaded scenario in the fifth that went for naught.

"I think Coach Bruno said it all when he said we need to be aggressive, but we weren't today," Cohen said. "No one got that big hit. I don't think this is an issue to worry about. This is a good ball club."

Connor Garrity, who started the game in right field but came on to earn the save with two-and-a-third innings of relief pitching, began the crucial top of the fourth by working out a walk.

One out after that left fielder Justin Gale drew a base on balls, and a wild pitch moved those runners to second and third.

Orgera delivered his second run-scoring single to left field, and second baseman Mitch O'Meara then legged out an infield hit to score Gale for a 3-2 Stamford lead.

Chaz Kiernan began another scoring frame for Stamford in the fifth with a base hit to right field off losing pitcher Andrew Merritt.

A single from third baseman Chris LoRusso moved Kiernan to second, a passed ball pushed him to third, and Kiernan scored when Hagedus produced a two-out single to center field.

"We definitely need to play as a team, that's something we strive for," Garrity said. Scotty pitched a great game, and today I got to pick him up."

The damage could have been worse for

Norwalk. After scooping up the Hagedus hit, center fielder Brian Jacoby threw a strike to catcher Kevin Daniele to cut down LoRusso trying to extend the lead past 4-2.

"Andrew just had too many balls in the dirt, and he fell behind too much," Bruno said. "(Will) Marr and (James) Cooksey did a good job in relief, but Andrew Merritt has to do a better job for us to win. But we're not winning many games by scoring one earned run."

After Stamford put up two more runs in the top of the seventh, Norwalk challenged to make a game of it in its final at-bats.

Daniele and first baseman Leon Fleming both rapped hits, both moved up on a passed ball, and both crossed home plate on an infield throwing error to create the final score.

"We'll keep changing guys around until we find guys who can hit," Bruno said.

## Senators keep closing in, but never quite catch up to Andrew Warde

From B1

After two quick outs in the fourth, McGowan hit Burns with a pitch. Ralph Fidaleo hit a line drive off the glove of Coppola, who took over at shortstop, and the ball went into center field. Burns came around to score when the ball was misplayed in the outfield to give the Mustangs a 6-2 lead.

The Senators had a great chance to cut into the lead in the bottom of the fourth but a disputed call didn't go their way.

With one out, Jack Culnane and Aleko Petridis worked back-to-back walks. McGowan put down a bunt right in front of the mound and Halliday fielded the ball and fired to first on a close play with McGowan called out.

"I thought he was safe but obviously the umpire disagreed," said Cross, who vehemently argued the call to no avail.

Halliday escaped when he induced a grounder to short to end the threat.

Warde mounted another charge in the fifth, also with two outs.

Eric Burns singled down the left field line and pinch hitter Dan French walked. Dan Warren hit an RBI single to center for a 7-2 lead. Patrick Donohue relieved McGowan and was able to retire leadoff batter Marc Moreno, who went 3-for-5 with a solo homer to leadoff the game and a double, on a groundout to third.

"Offensively, we put seven innings together," Warde head coach Mark Caron said. "Every time McMahon scored a run,

we responded."

McMahon tacked on two more runs in the bottom of the fifth to only trail 7-4.

With two outs, Dillon Roberts singled to left and was lifted for pinch runner Tyler McEwan. Taso Petridis singled to short left and the runners advanced to second and third on a wild pitch. Restivo hit a grounder to Dan Warren at third and he threw the ball wide of first for a two-base error that allowed McEwan and Petridis to score.

The Senators gave a run away in the top of the sixth.

Kyle Burns led off with a single to center and Fidaleo reached on an outfield error. Donohue uncorked a wild pitch but Culnane, the catcher, tried to throw out Burns at third. His throw was off the mark and Burns tried to score

but was thrown out by Coppola with Fidaleo reaching third.

Enzo Cardillo plated Fidaleo on a fielder's choice to third. Third baseman Taso Petridis threw home on the grounder but hit Fidaleo in the back with the throw home to put the Mustangs ahead 8-4.

McMahon touched Halliday for two earned runs in the sixth.

Bryan Daniello worked a one-out walk and Zach Ruther hit an RBI double to left, advancing to third on the throw home. That was Halliday's last batter as he ended up going 5 1/3 innings, allowing two earned runs on five hits with four walks and six strikeouts.

"Halliday is a gutsy pitcher," Caron said. "When he controls his breaking ball, he's effective."

Ken Burns came on in relief and retired Stenger on a bunt attempt but gave up an RBI base hit to right by Coppola to get the Senators within two, 8-6. Burns retired the next batter on a grounder to second to end the inning.

The Mustangs added two more runs in the seventh off reliever Stenger. They capitalized on two McMahon errors in the frame and Fidaleo had an RBI base hit to center.

The Senators tried to come back in the bottom of the seventh with a walk by Restivo and Culnane's second hit of the afternoon but Burns got a double play to end the game and record the save.

"We have to play better," Cross said. "We swung bats better than we have in a while but we're still not hitting on all cylinders."

## Tough economy's impact has been felt by local youth leagues

From B1

er, call friends of friends, knock on a few different doors. Lucky enough we came up with 25 sponsors again this year and that's a tribute to the community. They were still available. Even though some can't, some could."

A basic team sponsorship in the Cranbury League costs \$300 and they also have what's called a "Home Run Package" for \$1,000.

"That includes a banner, sponsoring a regular-season team and also a postseason team," Longmuir said.

"We had some people who had to drop out of that this year."

Cal Ripken has a similar \$1,000 sponsorship package which include the sponsor's name on a banner hung in the outfield, sponsorship of a regular-season team and sponsoring one of the league's four age-group all-star teams.

"The sponsor's name is on the back of the (all-star's) warm-up shirt," Parlanti explained. "Those packages are very difficult to sell, but here again four sponsors stepped up and we were able to do them again. A couple of last year's sponsors came back and we picked up two new ones."

But even with new sponsors to replace the ones that left, it's still a struggle to keep up with expenses.

"You have to remember all our expenses are up front," Parlanti noted. "Umpires are expensive. We use patch (certified) umpires in our major leagues and they're \$64 a game. By the time we're done with

our majors and minors, we spend about \$6,500. Then you got baseballs. That's another \$3,000. Then you have to buy uniforms. The money adds up.

"I would say, and this is probably typical of any of the leagues in town, it costs around 20 or 25 thousand dollars to run a league."

And, remember, they can't apply for a federal bailout if they lose money.

But while some local youth leagues are feeling the financial pinch, others haven't felt much, if any, effect.

In fact, the Norwalk Little League, beginning its third season since merging three longtime Little Leagues in the city, has practically been recession-proof this year as far as sponsors go.

"We have 98 per cent of them coming back," Larry Halloran, the league president, pointed out. "One of the ones we lost went out of business, but I don't think it was an economic thing. It's a family-run business and they decided (to close up) last year before the economy went bad."

"So it hasn't affected us. We have a lot of longtime sponsors who are pretty dedicated to us. One of them, Monker Grotto (an original American LL sponsor) gave us an extra \$500 (on top of the standard \$500 sponsorship fee) to go toward our Challenger team."

Norwalk LL has a total of 36 teams — eight majors (11-12 years-old), nine Triple-A (9-10), 10 minors (7-8), eight tee-ball (5-6) and one Challenger team, King Industries.

"They sponsor that team every year," Halloran said.

That's not the only league in town, however, bucking the trend.

"It's something we talked and something we thought might happen and we prepared alternatives if we did lose sponsors," Roger Knight, in his first year as president of the Rowayton Little League, said. "But it turns out we had no trouble at all. We have every sponsor we had last year."

"But we took the approach that some of them might not be able to come back and we tried to come up with ways to enhance the value of a sponsorship," Knight added. "Like including the sponsors in our opening day festivities, provide coupons to their business at games, put them on our Web site, and do a spotlight on each sponsor in our monthly newsletter. When you add it all up, they really get something back for their sponsorship."

"We wanted to give our sponsors more visibility. I don't know if it made a difference, but I know we got every sponsor to come back. Rowayton is a small community, anyway. Our sponsors have been with us forever."

Depending who you talk to, the economy may or may not have had an effect on enrollment numbers this spring. Cal Ripken has 290 kids ages 4 to 12.

"That's the highest we've had in a long time," said Parlanti, who noted over a hundred of them are in the second-year tee-ball program for

4-, 5- and 6-year-olds. "We're usually around 220 or 230. But the program has grown the last few years and I attribute that to the hard work people in the community have done. They made it grow."

"We went up a little, too," Halloran of the Norwalk LL said. "We have about 400 kids and over 200 of them are eight and under."

Some leagues, however, swung in a different direction.

"We experienced a little bit of a decline in the number of kids in our baseball program," Knight, who coached 15 years in Rowayton before taking over as president,

said. "We have less older kids and more younger kids. But overall we're up a little because we added a new softball team in the 9-10 age group."

Cranbury, perennially the biggest league in the city in terms of kids, has 425 kids enrolled in all its programs, although that's actually down from last year.

Longmuir thinks it could be indirectly tied to the challenges of the economy.

"No. 1, I think with kids playing two sports, their parents are now making them pick one," he said. "Or if kids are playing in two leagues they're having the same conversation. I've talked to other PONY Baseball people around the state and they're in the same situation. Everybody's numbers are down."

"Our seven- and eight-year-old numbers are down, but there was also a drop in population in that age group," Longmuir added. "Cranbury School had

one or two less classes in that group."

But shortfalls of sponsorships and players aren't restricted to just the lower-age leagues.

"We were very fortunate that we have sponsors for all 10 of our teams — six in the 14-15 year-olds and four in the 13 year-olds," Norwalk Babe Ruth President Jim Parlanti, Joe's brother, said. "But I found the same thing as some of the other leagues. I had to go out and solicit new sponsors. We picked up some new ones, but we lost a few existing ones. Some of the old timers couldn't come back."

In addition, numbers are down in the 13-year-old division.

"We have about 52 kids, which is down about 12 kids from last year," Jim Parlanti said. "You do the math and that's about 18 percent. So we took a big hit."

"The registration fee is \$170," Gerald Anastasia of the Norwalk Recreation and Parks Department and a longtime Babe Ruth coach said. "That's a lot of money and if baseball is a secondary sport, I could see why a parent would have trouble paying that."

One sport, however, that certainly doesn't seem to feel any backlash from a struggling economy is slowpitch rec softball. The city had no trouble getting sponsorships for all its teams.

"We don't really get involved with sponsorships," Anastasia, who also oversees softball in the city in his role as the recreation department's athletic director, said.

"Guys can come in here off the street and call themselves the Knuckleheads as long as they chip in and pay their sponsor fee. So we're still getting enough sponsors."

"Our numbers are up, too, as far as teams and we're happy about that," Anastasia added. "It's still the cheapest recreation sport around. Fifteen guys get together, split the cost of the sponsor fee, and they get to play a lot of games all summer."

"So I don't think the economy drop off affects the adults as much as the youth."

That Norwalk youth will be in the spotlight on Saturday as all the leagues, which have already begun regular-season play, stage their official opening-day ceremonies. The Cranbury League will hold theirs at 10:30 a.m. at Tim Devine Field and will be dedicating the 2009 season to Tom Corbo, who retired as league treasurer after 45 years but is still coaching.

The Norwalk Little League kicks off its festivities at 11 a.m. at Veterans' Park, the same time the Rowayton LL celebrates the start of another season at Bayley Beach. A half-hour later, at 11:30 a.m., the Cal Ripken League will usher in a new season at Fox Run School.

"Everyone is excited," Longmuir concluded. "It's opening day, the beginning of summer, the weather is supposed to be great. You couldn't ask for anything more."

Well, maybe just a stimulus package to make sure no more sponsors are lost.