

FLYNN MAKES IMPACT, EVEN OFF THE MOUND

BY GREGG SARRA
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Ward Melville's Joe Flynn used to jog four miles to school to get in his roadwork. He would throw on his backpack and make the trek to the high school as part of his never-ending training regimen.

At night, he would travel a half-hour to the Performance Factory and perfect his swing with his personal hitting instructor, Joe Francisco.

"This is a young man who never stopped training," Ward Melville coach Lou Petrucci said. "He is the perfect role model and an inspiration to our younger student-athletes. He was the leader in our varsity program and the guy everyone looked up to."

And now he's the winner of the 2015 Paul Gibson Award, given to Suffolk's top hurler.

The 6-2, 200-pound Flynn, who had one of the finest careers in Suffolk baseball history, struck out 73 in 52⅓ innings and had an ERA of 1.07. He allowed 32 hits and walked 21.

The righthander, whose fastball has been clocked at 90 mph, blew away the competition this season with a 6-0 record and led Ward Melville to the Suffolk League I title and into the Class AA finals.

Flynn, who will play at Princeton in the fall, finished his four-year career with a 15-5 record and 183 strikeouts in 164⅓ innings. He was the key cog in the Patriots' 74-24 mark during that span, including four playoff appearances and one Long Island Class AA title.

"This is an unforgettable kid," Petrucci said. "He was feared when he stepped up to hit and he was unhittable when he stepped on the mound. He was the complete player."

Flynn played in 19 playoff games and hit five homers in the playoffs as a sophomore to lead the Patriots to the Long Is-



Ward Melville's Joe Flynn went 6-0 with a 1.07 ERA, allowing only 32 hits and fanning 73 in 52⅓ innings.

GIBSON AWARD

land Class AA title. Said Petrucci, "Not one of Joe's career 16 home runs was a cheap one. They were all no-doubters."

He added, "He saved his best for last every season. He could be the power pitcher or the power hitter. He struck out 14 against Connetquot in the playoffs, and that's one of the best-hitting teams I've seen in my nine years as a head coach."

Flynn hit .509 with 21 RBIs, 30 runs and 31 walks in 2015. He was hit by 11 pitches.

"I have kids that write me thank you cards for a great year in school," Petrucci said. "And when Logan Doran was in the sixth grade and Joe Flynn was a freshman, Doran signed his card like this, 'Thank you Mr. Petrucci from Logan Doran, the next Joe Flynn.' That's the kind of impact Flynn has had on our baseball program and community. Everyone should have a Mighty Joe Flynn."

RICHARD T. SLATTERY

Gagliano named top Suffolk hitter

Connetquot star batted .565 and delivered in clutch

BY GREGG SARRA
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Aaron Gagliano will look back at his senior year of high school baseball and thank Connetquot teammate Brandon Morse.

Opposing pitchers were so fearful of Morse's gap-to-gap power and home run potential that they frequently and conveniently chose to pitch around the cleanup hitter and go after the next batter. That's where Gagliano, the No. 5 hitter, made a name for himself.

Gagliano, who led Suffolk with a .565 batting average, drove in 34 runs and scored 31 runs this season. He drove in an incredible 23 runs with two-out hits.

That's how Gagliano earned himself the Blue Chip Prospects Silver Slugger Award, presented to Suffolk's best hitter, an honor that was announced last night at the Suffolk County Baseball Coaches Association dinner at Villa Lombardi's in Holbrook.

"He had an unbelievable knack for hitting with two outs," Connetquot coach Bob Ambrosini said. "Pitchers didn't pitch to Brandon and went after Aaron. And he made them pay."

Gagliano had seven game-winning hits as Connetquot (24-4) captured the Long Island Class AA title. The Thunderbirds will play in a state semifinal this weekend in Binghamton.

"I know people pitch around Brandon and for good reason; he's a great hitter," Gagliano said. "I don't feel pressure in two-out situations and I take it as a personal challenge every time I'm up in a big spot. And I would say I'm more of a patient two-strike hitter that waits for my pitch. Driving the ball the other way and staying on top of the pitch has helped me also."

Gagliano's big year has opened a lot of doors for college. He will visit Dowling and Canisius during the next week, and others are calling.



No. 5 hitter Aaron Gagliano had a big year, driving in 34 runs and scoring 31. He delivered 23 runs with two-out hits.

SILVER SLUGGER

"He hit .444 as a junior and his confidence continued to soar this year," Ambrosini said. "He does a lot of very good things. His approach and plate coverage are very good."

Gagliano credits his parents, younger brother Wade and his coach for much of his success. "If it wasn't my dad finding some time away from a very busy work schedule, it was my mom having to catch or throwing me batting practice in our backyard cage," he said. "And Wade and I always pitched to each other and worked on our swings."

There was a time during the winter when Gagliano thought he wouldn't play college baseball. He didn't know what the future had in store for him on the field.

"I honestly wasn't sure," he said. "Then our team went to Florida for spring training and it all came together for me. I can't imagine what life would be like without my baseball brothers. Coach Ambrosini has been such an inspiration and the guy that makes you realize you can be something special. He almost wills you to be the man. I went from nowhere to accepting this award — and Ambro isn't surprised. Wow!"

RICHARD T. SLATTERY