

SPORTS

Stephanie Jones

Year-round athlete who can do it

By **BOB OWEN**
STAFF WRITER

This girl can do it all! Cramahe Twp's Stephanie Jones is building a reputation for excellence.

The 14-year-old grade-nine student from St. Mary's has already drawn notice in both hockey and baseball at the elite level.

This will be only her fourth season in organized hockey, but already she has shown poise and skill.

Figure skating was her first winter pursuit.

Starting at age five in Colborne she quickly amassed a collection of trophies, earned her Blues and Waltz dances, and all her Junior Bronze dances and jumps.

At age nine Stephanie had advanced to a point that her Cobourg coach Rhonda Provost was recommending that she train in Toronto. She was already working on her double axel, double salchow and double loop.

The expense and time involved made that an impossibility. She took a year off and learned to play hockey on the back yard rink built by her dad Stephen for Steph, brother Jordan and sister Megan.

After a year of atom and pee-wee hockey in Colborne she headed to Cobourg once more, this time to try out for the girls' select pee-wee team. She not only made it, she was moved up to the top bantam team where she put in a full season on defence. The Cobourg team came within a goal of going to the Provincial Championships, losing out to Belleville.

This year she's decided to try out at centre for the same Bantam BB team. There's no doubt she has the skating skills. At 12 she possessed the same effortless stride that earned her dad a try-out with the Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds a number of years ago.

Stephanie readily acknowledges that her speed is one of her strengths along with a defensive sense. Last year that speed allowed her to join the rush and get back into position to make the check at the other end. She's working on her face-off skills and preparing to make an impact at her new position.

But hockey is not the only sport to fill up her winter hours.

At the invitation of Cobourg Angels' coach John Hayden, in January 1998 she went to a pitching clinic at C.D.C.I. East in

Cobourg.

She had been playing ball since she started as a t-baller at five in Colborne. She'd already been

approached as an eight-year-old to join the Angels organization but stayed on in Colborne where she put in a couple of seasons playing for her dad.

Hayden must have liked what he saw.

After three months of clinics juggled between hockey games she made the Angels' team as its fourth pitcher.

She didn't see as much action as she would have liked in that first year, but she made an impression. Late in the season she pitched a no hitter against Stouffville in the North York Women's Softball League playoffs.

The Angels finished the season third in a league of 23 teams. Stephanie took home the award for the most promising player.

Under the tutelage of Hayden and former national level pitcher Elaine Devlin she came out of the 1999 clinic in possession of a drop, a knuckle ball, a change up, a natural curve and a fastball.

Her Angels team played 56 games. She played in 75, adding about 15 games in a Bantam Angel uniform and a handful with the Colborne Free Spirits ladies fastball team.

At the plate she batted a hefty 407, picking up 79 hits in 168 at bats and 71 RBI's from the right side of the plate. Her on-base percentage was an even 500. Twenty-three of her hits were for extra bases and she averaged a run a game on her own.

On the mound she was 12-6 with a 106-60 strikeouts to bases-on-balls ratio.

Playing tournament ball for the older bantams her ERA was a sparkling 1.43 and she was named MVP twice.

Her Junior Angel team was once again third in the league. In five tournaments played across southern Ontario they took gold three times and silver once, beating teams from Kingston, Ajax and Barrie.

In the final game of the league playoffs the Angels lost 1-0 with the only opposition run coming in the bottom of the seventh.

But the highlight of the season came at the Cobourg Angels Awards ceremonies held on Sept. 17.

Stephanie was named the winner of the Connie Oliver Memorial Trophy as the player in the organization "Best Combining



Pedigree and credentials

PHOTO BY BOB OWEN

Stephanie Jones can do it all in more than one sport as her medals will attest. The talented teen is a standout in fastball and hockey, playing both at the elite level.