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RINGETTE

By KELLY CONNELLY
 Sports Editor

Ringette. The name itself conjours up images of some ballet silhouette on ice; images that are not only demeaning but totally erroneous for a sport that looks and operates much like ice hockey.

Still, a general public ignorance towards ringette has prevailed through the years. Where media hype can turn almost any recreational activity into a household name, ringette (a predominantly female sport) has had to rely on word of mouth for societal acknowledgement.

Understandably, a lack of awareness or shortage of advertising has undermined its growth. But things are starting to change said an official for the Ontario Ringette Association (ORA). "Albert, very slowly."

Mike Nowasad, managing director of the ORA, points out that ringette membership has incurred an annual increase of five per cent. Presently, there are about 50,000 registered and unregistered players in Canada. In Ontario, 8,000 registered skaters, 1,500 referees and 2,000 coaches participate in the game.

"We enjoyed a 10 per cent growth up until 1982, then it seemed to plateau," the director noticed.

"But internationally, ringette is going strong in Finland and the border towns of the United States... and that certainly affects the awareness."

When the ORA was formed in 1970, an aggressive membership drive "fueled a lot of interest in the sport that requires almost the same protective equipment be strapped on as that of a hockey player."

To the unfamiliar spectator, the only visible differences between ringette and hockey is the use of a bladeless stick, the rubber air-filled ring which replaces the puck, and some distinct player-positioning rules. And officials are quick to vent their distaste to people who, casually refer to the ring as a "donut". It's that type of slang, they say, that gives ringette a blithe, inferior image.

Ringette competitors, unlike their hockey neighbours, don't stickhandle which makes it difficult for the team without possession of the ring to reclaim it or at least knock it off a rival's tapered stick.

"Although a centreman can go anywhere on the ice, a defenseman can't penetrate the other team's offensive zone (ie. pass their blueline),

and an offensive skater is prohibited from entering her own end to check an attacker.

There's also no such thing as an end-to-end rush by one player. The ring must be passed twice between teammates before it can be fired on net.

That the above rules seem more complex than your average hockey game irks Ringette Canada president Betty Shields. "I don't know why people keep comparing us to hockey... we are another activity... just like soccer is different from football," she contests.

"We're more floor hockey on ice. The game wasn't developed as an alternative to hockey or to any sport... it was developed back in the '60s to give girls, especially those in the rural areas, something to do."

Nowasad agrees. "This sport is a unique entity... the philosophy and rules offer a unique perspective to the amateur sporting scene."

Still, both officials concede the comparisons to hockey won't go away overnight.

However, in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville the comparisons don't even exist because ringette doesn't exist.

Stella Macdonald, a resident ringette player, can't fathom that the sport, which for the past six years attracted a group of older women to compete in the old arena every Sunday night, has gone the route of the abandoned facility on Park Road.

She has failed so far in her attempt to organize a ladies squad for this season. Her recruiting advertisements in the new arena and in Claremont have drawn only two phone calls from interested parties.

"I can't understand it... maybe it's the morning ice time; evening ice is probably more convenient these days for women who work," she figures. "The league fell apart last year. When I think about it, most of the ladies who played used to travel from places like King City and Agincourt... at most, four were from Stouffville."

Still, Macdonald relented that Whitchurch-Stouffville is a hockey town at present, and unless the merits of ringette are advertised more vigorously, the game which was founded in North Bay, Ontario in 1963, will remain a ghostly apparition in the old rink.

NEXT WEEK: Part 2 — The birth of a World Ringette Council promises to put the sport on the map; rule changes will heighten competition; a duel hockey-ringette player speaks out.

Here we go again! Spartans on a roll

By KELLY CONNELLY
 Sports Editor

Fletcher's boys did it again! The senior volleyball team from Stouffville Secondary out-muscled, out-blocked, out-smashed and just about out-everything'd its opponents to capture its 16th straight York Region Championship on Nov. 7 in Newmarket.

The Spartans defeated Father Brasaniti (15-9, 16-14) in the quarter-finals, Thornlea in the semi-finals (15-10, 12-15, 15-12), and finally Woodbridge (15-12, 12-15, 15-13) for the region crown.

An obviously elated coach, Jim Fletcher, who throughout his first season behind the bench had to subtly compete with and maintain ex-volleyball coach and victory messiah Jim Rehill's accomplishments, proved to be the right man for the job. His ability to make every player feel an integral part of the club paid off.

"Most of the other teams relied on one or two players to carry them through the season but if those guys folded up or had an off day their team would get beaten," noted Fletcher. "Sure, I was tempted to use that strategy but I decided to spread the dependence around... all the guys can produce on my team. I have six consistent players and that made the difference... nobody felt left out," he explained.

The Spartans smashed their way to a 14-0 lead against Woodbridge in the first game of the final. With Derek Stem's glowing acrobatics saving some valuable points, the team continued to press.

stubborn Aurora drive in the final quarter to secure a slim but well deserved win. The local team out-scored its rival 22 to 13 in the first three quarters. Top scorers were Sled and Klein with 12 points respectively.

Sled again set up some high percentage shots in the final game of the week against an aggressive Newmarket team. Although the Spartan girls were leading 18-14 at halftime, they gave up one too many baskets to lose the encounter 29-27.

Junior coaches Bob Tooker and Ken Jones agreed the contest was too close for comfort. However, both were impressed with their squad's stubborn resistance to accept defeat even in the final two seconds of play.

SEASON OVER

The senior Spartans ended their season with a nail-biter 31-30 loss against Newmarket.

Although both teams started off sluggishly, the pace eventually quickened and the two schools battled to 11-11 and 19-19 deadlocks. Still, fouls proved costly in such a tight match and Stouffville found itself trailing Aurora by one basket in the final minute.

Kelly Cowan's bonus shot moved the Spartans within one point of the opposition with a few seconds left on the clock but time just wasn't on Stouffville's side. Cowan hooped 13

The Spartan defense thwarted a points in the game.

In earlier contests, teammate Camille Rutherford scored 11 points enroute to a 24-7 victory against Sacred Heart. Coach Al Piette was pleased with the win but admitted his team's performance was "not very polished".

A disastrous third quarter cost the club another game; a 44-39 loss to Aurora in mid week action. Rutherford slammed 16 points in that confrontation.

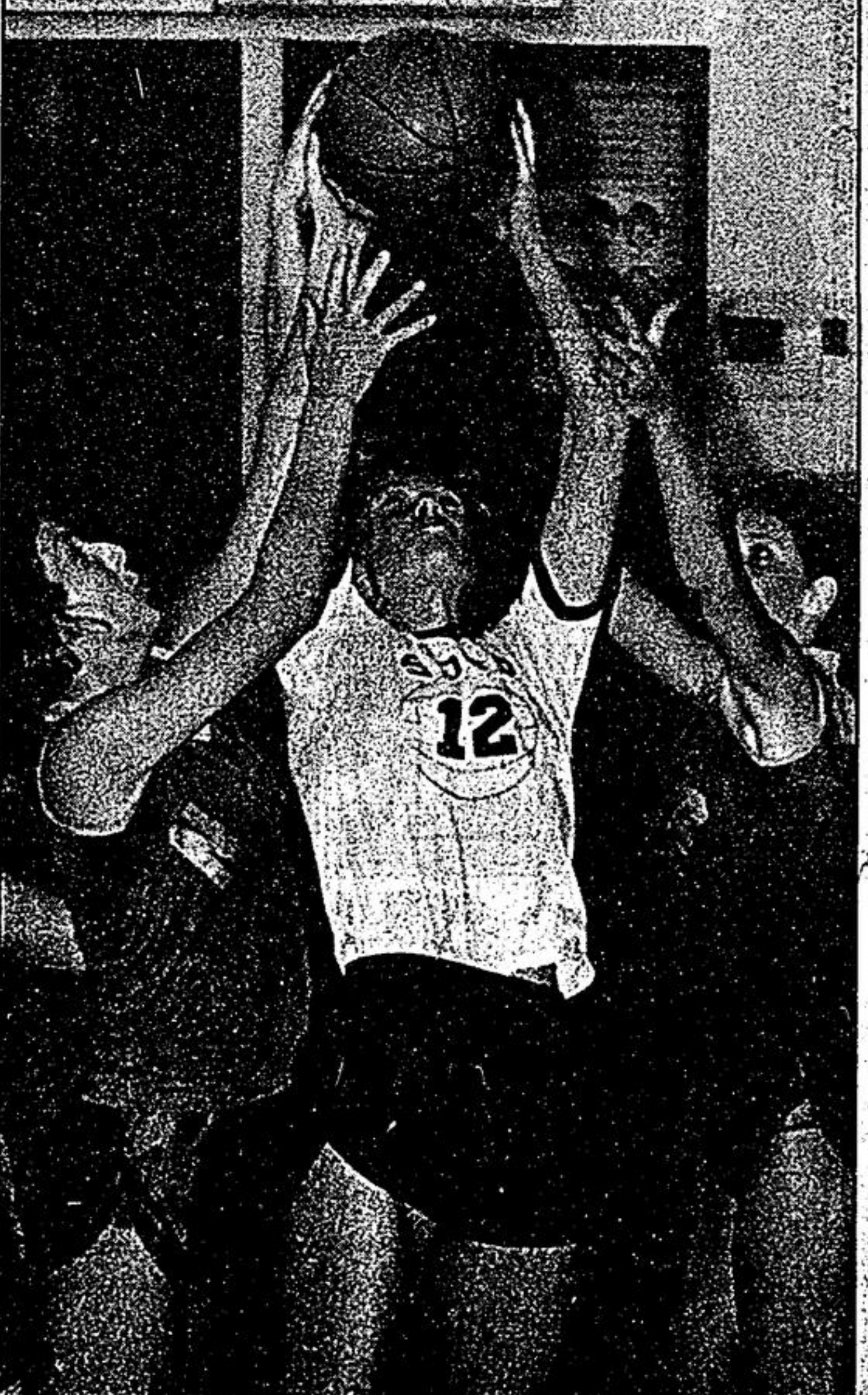
MIDGETS STUMBLE

Coach Sue Kofler's Drive of 85' ran into some engine trouble last Thursday as her midget volleyball squad succeded the York Region Championship final to Aurora in three games (15-3, 11-15, 11-15).

Kofler's boys razed Holy Trinity 15-4, 15-4 to advance to the semi-finals against Sacred Heart. Strong hitting from Steve Head and Scott Evans helped eliminate the Heart in two straight games and advance Stouffville to the final.

Game three of the showdown with Aurora proved the most exciting as the Spartans held Aurora pointless in a 10 minute stretch before yielding the tie-breaker (and Championship) to the "A" boys.

A special mention goes to Craig Stronach who filled in for an ailing Wally Barbour and did a fine job. The team moves on to the Georgian Bay Championships Thursday.



Senior Spartan Liz Sled (white shirt) struggles to hold on to the basketball during last Thursday's Stouffville-Newmarket tangle. The Stouffville Spartans lost the match by a close 31-30 margin to end their season. However, the junior girls still have the playoffs to look forward to — they hope.

Sideline Comment

ZAPPING the enemy

By KELLY CONNELLY

I climbed into a Space Invaders video game last Wednesday. "Run that by me one more time," you respond.

I said I climbed into a 6,500-square-foot video game-machine and shot enemy space warriors with a laser gun.

"You shot people with a laser gun," you echo cynically.

That's right. I strapped on 13-lbs. of space gear — stereophonic helmet, battery pack, laser gun — and along with nine other team cowboys defeated the enemy squad on a planet called ALPHA.

"Now you're on a planet," you chide in obvious disbelief.

That's right. We crawled through tunnels, hid in bunkers, ran down 30-degree catwalks, disappeared in swirling fog, shot enemy zappers in the helmet, captured their home base, and, of course, scored lots of points.

"Let me call a doctor," you suggest heading towards the phone.

No, no. This is real. I'm not fabricating some credulous story. This planet is in Etobicoke, on Albion Road, one block east of Hwy. 27. It's called PHOTON.

It's a new space sport, Canada's first ever high tech human war game. You can bet it's going to alter our proclivity towards staid leisure activities and transport us into a fantasy world of cops and robbers chases in an extra-terrestrial setting.

Heck, it's like jumping through the television screen of a video game and becoming part of the action.

"Stay right where you are," you order as your finger dials 911.

Listen. A lifetime membership fee costs you \$5 and it entitles you to compete in any PHOTON outlet across the globe. More than 70 North American cities will be photonized in the next few years. The location in Etobicoke is the only one in the world to have two multi-level playing fields — ALPHA (for rookie McLasers) and MEGA (for expert warriors).

Photon's inventor, George Carter III, a Dallas, Texas, entrepreneur engineer, went to school with movie wizard Steven Spielberg. It's no surprise he comes from that strange, eccentric lot who believe anything's possible.



CONTINUED ON B2

1st period blunders, Bruins play catch-up

By KELLY CONNELLY

Call it the first period jinx. The Uxbridge Bruins might consider building a jinx around their goal mouth to stave off all those pucks that find their way into the net in the opening frame.

The junior "C" hockey club climbed its way out of two weighty deficits last weekend to secure a 7-6 win over the Little Britton Merchants and a 6-6 tie with Lakefield.

In total, the opposing teams scored nine of their 13 goals in the opening 20 minutes. In both matches, the Bruins retired to the dressing room after the first outing trailing 5-1 against the Merchants and 4-0 against Lakefield.

Uxbridge coach Randy Hall admitted he's a little perplexed about his club's unguarded starts. "Maybe I better get someone else to give these guys their pre-game talks," the skipper reckoned. "I can't understand it... in both games we got off to bad starts but at least we didn't get down like last year's team... we just tried to get one goal at a time."

Bruins' rookie combo of John Mil-

ler, Tim Evans and Mike Brown figured prominently in the comeback against Little Britton Friday night. Miller scored a hat-trick, Brown netted a marker and two assists, and Lee Brown, Cliff Freckleton and Brian Beddows added to the spread.

Uxbridge netminder Ronn Reaman replaced a shaky Scott Irwin who yielded five points in the opening period. Reaman's relief job held off the Britton snipers; the juvenile defender only let one shot get by him for the remainder of the game.

Goalie Brian Tarleton looked to be in the same sniper fire Sunday night as his goal mate Irwin. Tarleton, too, succumbed to the early game jinx, allowing four goals before the first period buzzer sounded.

Fortunately, Beddows and Tim Evans (with the equalizer) had a busy night down the other end of the rink netting two goals respectively. Cliff Freckleton and Ken Burrows added to the tally.

The club is now 3-2 in the win-loss tie column, and five points shy of first place Bowmanville.