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# 'Mr. J' receives Royal treatment

By BRUCE STAPLEY  
 Martin Johannessen, the man who guided the Stouffville Royals soccer team from infancy to maturity, met with his boys for the last time on Saturday. The occasion was to honor the players and their coach, a successful combination through 11 memorable years. The Royals have come to the end of the road — education and careers are beginning to take precedence over sport. For Martin, crossing the goal line a final time allows him an opportunity to stand back and reflect on his involvement with this group of teens, lads he's coached since they were old enough to boot a ball. "We've travelled all over North America together," Martin says, thinking back. **Three consecutive wins** The Royals won the York Regional Soccer Championship three years in a row. They were edged 2-1 in the 1988 final. They've played in Dallas, Connecticut, Calgary and Quebec. They've also hosted teams from Europe.

**Stouffville soccer club bids fond farewell to Martin Johannessen, a veteran coach who led the team to 11 years of success**

Martin's justly proud of the fact club members have been fine ambassadors for the sport, both on and off the field.

"Never once did they let our town down. Their conduct has always been gentlemanly. No one has ever run afoul of the law," he says with pride.

**Expects dedication**

Martin feels the boys have learned much about life through the game of soccer — character development plus lasting friendships.

Most important, he says, they've learned team work — that you win together and you lose together, he explains.

Losing, however, was something the Royals knew little about. They completed last season with a 12-1-1 record, tak-

ing the league title and falling just short in the regional finals.

"I've always expected dedication," he says, "and they never let me down."

While the Royals could have competed in the Newmarket and District Soccer League this summer, Martin realized the time had come for his boys to pursue other life concerns. It'll also give him a much deserved rest.

"I'll still be involved in special coaching clinics," he notes, "and I'll remain on the executive of the York Region Soccer Association as a director of player development."

But basically, he's taking a year off.

For Martin, coaching was a four-night-a-week commitment.

He has been involved with soccer all his life, beginning as a kid

in Glasgow, Scotland. Before moving to Stouffville in 1976, he was active as a player in the Toronto and District Soccer League and a Toronto industrial league.

After taking up residence in Stouffville, he immediately became involved with the local Soccer Club.

"The organization had just started," he remembers. "I went to a meeting and the next thing I knew, I was the treasurer."

Soccer wasn't his only sports interest, however. Martin also served as a coach of several house league hockey teams on which son Craig was a member. But soccer was and still is his first love.

**Adults needed**

Martin is a firm believer in the adults of the community giving of their time and talents towards developing the character and talents of youth.

"It disappoints me to see some of the 'old school' European soccer types in Whitchurch-Stouffville pulling out of the Club. Kids in the 15 to 17 year bracket should be kept busy. They need people to come out and help get them involved."

Too many fathers, he says, are too interested in furthering their own playing interests. Also, he admits Stouffville is no longer the stay-put community it once was.

"The qualified people are playing old timers' soccer," Martin explains. "I guess it's a carry-over from the 'me' generation. They want to do their own thing. It so often seems to come down to the ultimatum; you announce that if no one shows up, the club will fold."

As for the changing nature of Stouffville, Martin says it's difficult to obtain long-term commitments when folks are coming and going continually.

**Interest increased**

"People are transferred or just move on. There's not the stability here there once was," he says.

However, there's been a recent upswing in interest that has him optimistic concerning the future of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Soccer Club.

"I'm encouraged by the support the Club is receiving from new people here. Perhaps the pendulum is swinging back," he states.

Regardless, after 11 years of dedication, a time out for Martin is appropriate. It was three cheers and a tiger, Saturday night, with the roster of the Stouffville Royals leading the last hurrah.



Photo: JIM THOMAS

With the Stouffville Royals Soccer Club trophy in the foreground, veteran Royals Coach Martin Johannessen gives his farewell speech to club supporters and the teen members of his successful squad. After 11 years of leading the team to countless victories, Martin is taking time off to do other things.



Martin's involvement with the Royals in the last decade was officially recognized by town officials at his farewell roast when he was awarded a town pin by Ward 1 Councillor Margot Marshall. Martin's love of soccer has its roots in Glasgow, Scotland where he was an avid player and fan as a boy.

## Emotional farewell

Soccer coach Martin Johannessen planned to honor his players. However, the players (and their parents) turned the tables.

The team served as hosts. 'Mr. J' was their guest. The boys, some travelling many miles to attend, honored their 'headmaster' of 11 seasons at a 'Royal' reunion, Saturday in Stouffville's Latham Hall.

The auditorium was beautifully decorated in blue and gold, (the team's colors), with photos and clippings lining the walls. Each of the boys addressed the gathering, some recalling interesting little anecdotes. All praised 'Mr. J' for his sportsmanship, enthusiasm and knowledge of the game.

"The association, thanks to Mr. Johannessen, has made me a better man," said one, "it was an experience I'll never forget."

Other speakers included — Tony Casole of the York Region Soccer Association; Casey Van Maris of the Ontario Soccer Association; League President Bob Tilley and Councillor Margot Marshall, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

The evening's emcee was Rick Hollin.

Mr. Johannessen was presented with a huge trophy bearing each of the player's names.

A Town Pin was presented by Mrs. Marshall.

Mr. Van Maris called it "a fantastic 11 years in soccer."

Mr. Casole said Mr. Johannessen represents the wisdom of a coach, the knowledge of a player and the pride of a parent.

"Martin is a combination of all three," he stated.

Mr. Johannessen, in reply, said win or lose, the Royals had always given it their best. "That's all you have to do in life."



Martin took time to discuss the finer points of soccer, among other things, with Len Mussell and Ron Cook, two fathers whose boys play on Martin's winning team. After 11 years together, team members are hanging up their jerseys to concentrate on education and careers. Martin vows to remain involved in local soccer by conducting special coaching clinics and remaining as the director of player development for the York Region Soccer Association.



Royals players Lindley Mussell and Jay Edwards have put in a lot of time with the squad over the years. Here, they ham it up at the team's farewell party for Martin, whom they affectionately refer to as 'Mr. J.' Under Martin's direction, the Royals were led to a number of league and tournament honors in their 11 years together.

**Saddle up**  
 Horsing around is serious business to the Howe family of Stouffville. Turn to Page C-3

**Uphill climb**  
 There's no business like snow business for Dagmar, a soft owner. Turn to Page C-5

**No mercy**  
 Trespassers will be prosecuted, say railroad operators. Turn to Page C-14