

Quality hockey slipping away

As the current hockey season winds down in Whitchurch-Stouffville, one that was somewhat lacking in both quality and quantity at the upper levels, one is left wondering about the state of the great Canadian game in this town.

Sure, the Novice rep team is a shoe-in to take its zone title, which is as far as she goes at that level. And I would imagine that the men's amateur hockey league is healthier than ever.

In addition there is men's shinny, which is forever taking place at the Recreation Centre along with the high school's fun league. But that seems to say it all when it comes to hockey in Stouffville — no one wants it to be anything more than "fun" anymore. Which, I suppose, is not such a bad thing.

Except when you have "adopted" the Uxbridge Bruins as your own personal cause for the past couple of months and have been glued to your seat as the Junior C squad fought its way to the playoffs before being finally edged in a nip-and-tuck seven-game series.

All it did was leave me wondering which we can't have that type



Sport notes
Bruce Stapley

of competitive hockey in Stouffville, despite the negative responses of some that there isn't sufficient interest at either the player level or with the fans.

Keith Jewett, who used to score his share of goals for the old Stouffville Red Wings in the 1940s, made the point recently that in his day, kids didn't even begin to play organized hockey until they were 14. Before that age they would play shinny on the pond.

Now, he says, a lot of kids are just plain tired of hockey by the time they turn 14 and have no interest in competing at the all-star level, or at all, for that matter.

And there is the matter of cost. Bill Harris, who owns and operates Arena Supply in Ballantyne, a sports equipment wholesale house, says hockey has

become a game for the elite. It costs as much as \$3,000 to outfit a kid for competitive hockey these days, says Bill, and most families just don't have that kind of dough.

Keith also mentions that there are so many other interests for the teens of the '80s that hockey just doesn't cut it as a high priority pursuit. Other sports, as well as part-time jobs, are now taking the time that was once devoted to hockey.

Also, the social life of a teenager today tends to see him involved in a plethora of activities that doesn't leave time for the commitment to a program like rep team hockey.

Still, it's a shame when the likes of Dan Larmer, Darren Baston, Paul Sinclair, Chris Winn, Jason Underwood, Craig Stronach, Jamie Showers and Aaron McWilliams have no place to go in Stouffville once their Midget days are through.

So what happens is that those kids end up thrilling them in Markham, Uxbridge and Vaughan, leaving the Stouffville fans with precious little to satisfy their appetite for good hockey at the local level.

I suppose it's just another sign of our increasing urbanization, a condition that tends to negate both the need and the demand for the activities that were once so welcomed in a rural area with little to become involved in during the winter.

But I suspect we're missing out on something. An avid hockey fan at heart, I couldn't remember the last time I had jumped out of my seat to cheer a goal the way I had done during the Uxbridge Bruins-Wellington Dukes series.

But perhaps it's time to accept the fact that, in Stouffville at least, I am among the dinosaurs who will always yearn for a bygone era.

Skating on

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Adult Skating Club invites all adult skaters to join them Tuesday, March 28, from 7:30-9:30 p.m.

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Last Chance Registration
Sat. April, 1st 1989
10 a.m. - 12 noon
For further information contact
Sue Kea 640-4839 or Bob Tilley 649-3146

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