

stouffville sports

Challenge Cup raises \$3,500 for Children's Wish

BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

Music Mania may have been packing them in just a few hundred yards to the east, but it was a full house at the Stouffville Recreation Centre Friday as well as the first annual Challenge Cup benefit hockey game provided a pleasing assortment of thrills, ovations, and irony.

The thrills came as the Stouffville Clippers' former provincial champions edged a squad of past and present Uxbridge Bruins 6-4 in a fast paced, exciting contest. The game was a benefit which raised \$3,500 for the Children's Wish Foundation in the name of the late Dan McNeil.

The loudest ovation of the night came when Jeff Cowley, well on the road to recovery after a coma and injuries which saw him restricted to a wheel chair and canes, dropped the puck to officially begin the night's activities.

The irony came with 32 seconds remaining in the match when Tim McNeil, Dan's brother, took a pass from Darrin Hardy and streaked down the right wing, blasting a slap shot past Bruins' goalie Wayne Patterson for the winning goal.

The Stouffville squad clinched it when Dan Larmer scored into an empty net with 13 seconds on the clock.

The game started as a shoot out, with five goals scored in the



PHOTO: CELIA BRONKHORST

Uxbridge Bruins player Todd Williamson, black sweater, battles for a loose puck with former Stouffville Clippers including Kirk Smythe, 8, during the Challenge Cup benefit game Friday night in Stouffville. Goalie Scott Evans, 31, keeps a close eye on the play.

first half of the opening period. Dave Fockler scored from Brent Brown and Larmer to put the Clippers ahead. Lee Brown tied it for the Bruins a minute later

on a wicked slap shot, with Jamie Showers assisting.

Mike Feasby netted his first of two scores minutes later, from Ken Burrows. Uxbridge squared

it again on a tic-tac-toe passing play, with Todd Williamson flicking it into the net. Trevor Clark and Jason Underwood assisted.

Feasby made it 3-2 Clippers on a goal from Burrows and Kent Smythe.

The Bruins tied it once more as Tim Evans clicked, but Scott Sutherland restored the Clippers lead with a goal on an innocent looking shot which went in off Bruins' goalie Brian Harnden's skate with just over a minute left in the middle period. Feasby assisted.

In the third stanza, the Clippers' McNeil looked like he was through for the night when he left the ice with a cut over his eye after just missing a semi-break-

away opportunity. But he returned with a temporary stitch covering the wound.

The game became a defensive struggle, with both Harnden and Clippers' goalie John Carrick coming up with some outstanding saves.

Underwood finally broke through for the Bruins, knotting the game at four goals apiece on an effort from Chris Winn and Williamson.

The Bruins pressed for the tie breaker, but Carrick held them off until Hardy sent McNeil on his way for the game winner.

After the game, the Clippers were presented with the Challenge Cup, which was donated by Clippers' coach Bill Hutchison and his wife Linda. The names of Dan McNeil and Bill Hutchison Jr., who was also killed in an accident, were inscribed on the trophy.

Stouffville's Joe Infurnari was the winner of the Keith Acton hockey jersey which was raffled off. Mt. Albert's Wendy Fordham won the Brad May hockey sweater.

Bob McNeil, the father of Dan and Tim, was overwhelmed by the size of the crowd.

"It's unbelievable," said McNeil. "I've never seen anything like it here. It's a good feeling."

McNeil's wife Sheila, along with the couple's daughter Cindy was also in attendance. The McNeil's daughter in law, Elaine McNeil, along with her son Bradley, were there as well.

Cowley, who spent much of the game moving throughout the crowd talking with friends, said he was happy to have been involved, even though he had to be careful when he went out to drop the opening face off.

"It was a little slipperier out there than I thought it would be."

When asked if he would be able to lace up the skates next fall, Cowley said he'd try.

Angie's take silver at provincial's

The Stouffville Angie's peewees took the silver medal in the B division at the Provincial Women's Hockey Championships over the weekend in Mississauga.

The Angie's squad, which got an overtime goal from Gina King to give them a 4-3 overtime win against Cobourg in the semifinals, fell 5-1 to Bluewater in the title match.

Angie's opened up the tournament with a 2-1 loss to London. The Stouffville girls then caught fire, blanking Ottawa 2-0, and defeating Stoney Creek 4-1. The two wins earned the team a

berth in the semifinals.

Deanne Hibbert and Kellie Cornell each scored three times for Angie's in the tournament. Dawn Williamson, Kristi Thompson, Morgan Dubkowski and Lisa Thompson had solo markers.

The Stouffville Stars novices could manage only a pair of ties in their A division show down.

Lindsay McCafferty scored all the Stars goals

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Mountain biking a fun way to blow off some steam

Mountain biking is alive and well and surviving both the recession and our uncertain climate.

Actually, it may well be the funny economy and the weather which is causing so many people to want to somehow scrape the money together for a half decent mountain bike and just get out there in the bush and blow off steam.

Whatever the reason, mountain biking events are on the increase. The season-opening March 28 Uxbridge Ice Breaker Enduro in the Durham Regional forest attracted a large gaggle of cyclists.

The next biggie on the horizon - the Silent Sports Backwoods Bash at Pleasure Valley May 2 - is expected to draw 500 thrill seekers, an increase of 100 or so over last year.

According to Terry Porter, the Silent Sports partner and Muselman's Lake resident who is organizing the Backwoods Bash, the mountain bike craze simply refuses to slow down.



"It's a zoo in here," he told me the other day, referring to his Thornhill retail operation. "We keep thinking it's going to taper off, but it doesn't. People are in here buying new bikes, having repairs done, and adding things like suspension forks to their bikes."

Suspension forks, for the uninitiated, are the mountain bike version of shock absorbers. They absorb front end bumps, which, when you're romping through uneven forest trails, can spare a rider a lot of kidney discomfort. In a nutshell, they allow the rider more speed with less fatigue and wear and tear on the old bod.

And with more adults taking to mountain biking as a form of recreation, comfort becomes a

definite factor, according to Porter. Especially those embarking upon a vigorous program to recover their lost stamina after finally giving up smoking after a number of years, said Porter.

As for the upcoming Backwoods Bash, the event counts as a Provincial Team Selection race, for those who take the sport seriously.

The race is open to anybody who can come up with the \$25 registration fee, provided they have a helmet, a reasonably sound bike (there will be a bike check), and an Ontario Cycling Association licence. If you don't have the licence, they can arrange to get you a one day ticket upon registration.

The registration fee includes Pleasure Valley park admission, as well as a swell Backwoods Bash cap.

Riders are to be broken up into 31 classes at the Bash, based on age, gender, and ability. The various divisions fall into four overall categories - Novice, Novice Senior, Expert, and Sport Class.

Novice includes Novice Junior, Veteran, and Masters flights; Expert consists of Expert Junior, Senior, and Veteran plus Pro Elite categories; Sport Class is made up of Sport Junior, Senior, and Veteran. Obviously, nothing is left to chance in the rugged sport of mountain biking!

Porter said the endless classifications allow for everyone from the fiercest of seasoned competitors to the greenest newcomer to participate.

"There are so many different categories, there's something for everybody," said Porter. "We even get people out sometimes who just want to try mountain biking."

The Pleasure Valley course itself consists of two trails. The smaller four-kilometre loop is for beginners and the less adventuresome. It is less technical and less hilly, according to Porter. It is to be used by the various Novice divisions, who will cover it from two to three times in the race.

The Expert and Elite Class rid-

ers will use the eight-km trail, circling this tougher route five times. Sport Class riders will go three times around the eight-km route. There will be cash prizes totalling \$1,500 for Expert-Elite riders, with Nike biking shoes and other biking-related prizes for the others.

The event, which will be running for the fifth consecutive year, gets underway at 9 a.m., with registration any time after 8 a.m. Porter reports that interest in the event has grown steadily since 100 riders showed up for the inaugural run five years back.

For Porter, the Bash is just one of several mountain biking events he will involve himself in this spring as he encourages people everywhere to just do it. He plans to be involved in a tour enduro in Barrie May 29-30, and will be presiding over a women's riding clinic June 20 at Pleasure Valley.

So oil up your chain and grab your helmet. It's time to get out there and commune with nature.