

BETTER THAN GIC'S
6.35%*
 Government Guaranteed Bonds
 • RRSP/RRIF Eligible
Call 294-1200 today
 John Niekraszewicz, B. Math, F.C.S.I.
 Dan Galszech, B.A.
 Fortune Financial Corp., Markham
 144 Main St. N. Unit 9
 *Rates subject to change
 Member Montreal Exchange and CIPF

Sports

The Works
 Fitness & Aerobics Centre
 190 Bullock Drive • (905)471-7871

A Spirited going away gift for Smith

In a perfect world, Geoff Smith would be finishing out his Junior hockey career helping the home town Spirit of Stouffville to their first ever Provincial Junior A Hockey League championship.

But for Geoff and the Spirit, it was simply a matter of bad timing. Perhaps if Spirit owner Ed Hakonson had been granted a franchise some six years back when he originally applied to the OHA, things might have been different. That way, we might have seen Geoff suiting up for a Stouffville team that was now coming into its own, helping give the team the home town appeal every Junior squad so desperately seeks.

But instead, Geoff has been given a going away present by the Spirit, who dealt the talented, hard playing 20-year-old winger to the Newmarket 87's just before the Jan. 10 trading deadline so he could close out his final Junior season with a legitimate contender.

Geoff's minor and Junior hockey story has been eventful. I remember how he helped lead a star studded atom Clippers outfit to the OMHA title in 1988. Four years later, a teenager with an attitude, he would play a major role as the bantam Clippers won both major Ontario hockey federation championships. That was the season he learned to turn the other cheek, to apply his fiery intensity towards making sure his team came out on top on the scoreboard, not on the fight sheets.

He would go on to play Junior

SPORT NOTES



bruce stapley

C hockey with the Georgina Ice under former Spirit coach Steve Sedore in that team's inaugural Central Ontario Junior C Hockey League season in 1994-95, helping the Ice make some noise in the playoffs. When the Spirit were formed last season, founder George Stavro missed the boat, giving Geoff a quick look before letting him slip away to the rival Bowmanville Eagles. When Hakonson took over the team, general manager Wally Crowder finally succeeded in bringing Geoff back home in mid-season.

Geoff told me the other day how he agreed to come and give it all he had for the fledgling Spirit last winter. "I came to Stouffville and gave it a shot playing for Steve (Sedore)," said Geoff. "He had always been good to me."

An intense competitor, Geoff never could get used to losing. And victories have been scarce for the Spirit, as can be expected with a new team. But Geoff always put out, as any regular fan will testify to. "We tried," Geoff told me. "I played my heart out. But not being on a winning team, and not having a real good chance of making the playoffs again this year, that was tough."

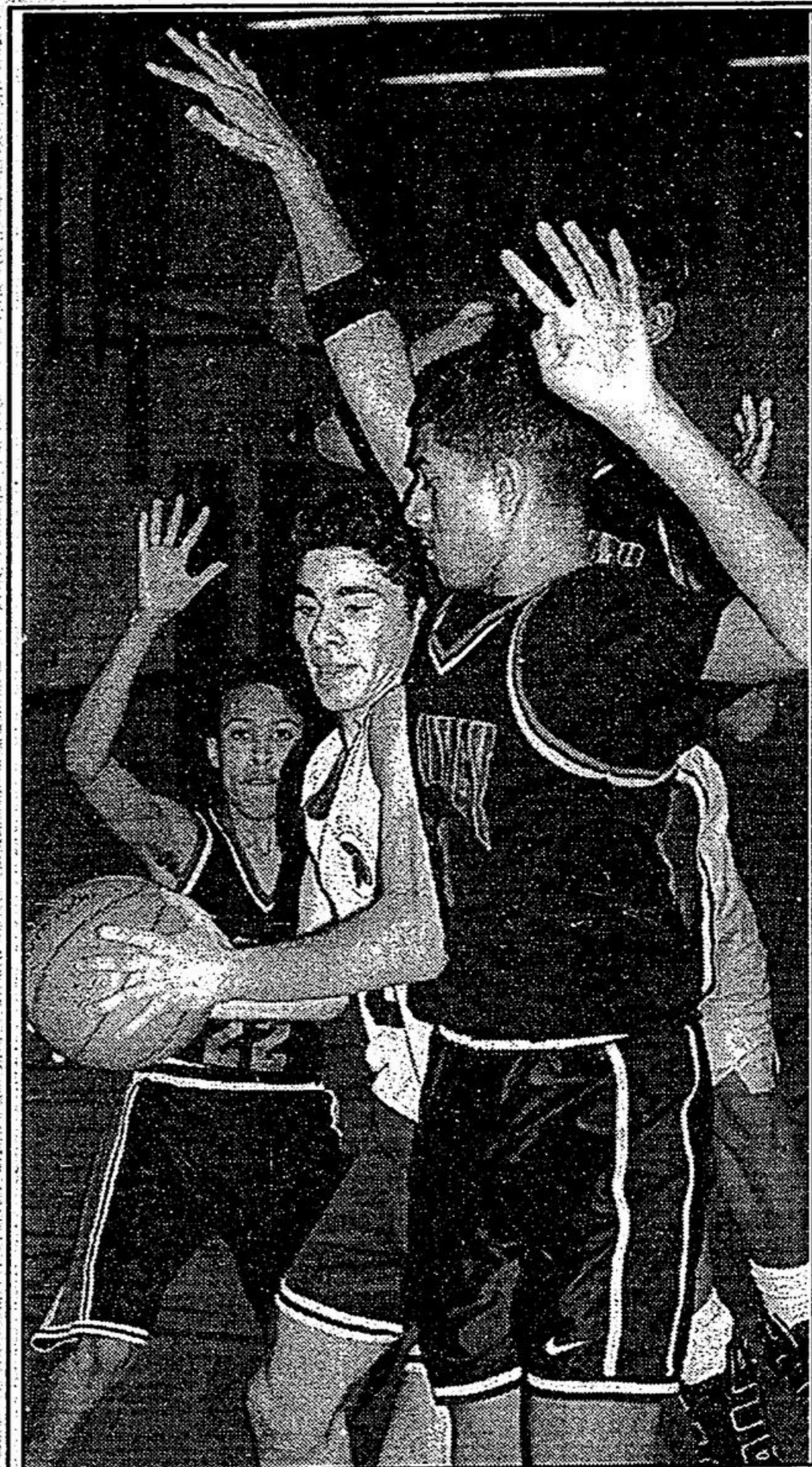
The team did win an unprece-

dent four games in a row before he left, with Geoff scoring the winner in the fourth last Monday. "It was great to put together that winning streak," said Geoff, who amassed just under 50 points with the Spirit this season. "You could see the change in the expressions on the guys faces in the team bus."

His reward would finally come with the move to Newmarket. "They're going places," he said of the provincial league front running 87's. "It would be fantastic to take it all the way to the Dudley Hewitt Cup. There will be more motivation in Newmarket. It will be up to me to prove myself there."

I couldn't help but contrast those well chosen words to what Geoff had told me after he scored the winning goal in the deciding game of the OMHA championship finals as a bantam Clipper back in 1992. Like many 15 year olds, he was just living for the day and didn't really know what he wanted to do with his ample hockey skills. Talking to him the other day as a focussed 20 year old, it was quite clear that this is a man with a purpose. That purpose is to do everything in his power to help the Newmarket 87's to their second straight Provincial League title, and perhaps even a national championship this spring.

And I'd put my money on Geoff's playing a key part in the 87's drive for the title. Simply because this is a talented and determined young man whose time has come at last.



Three's company

Stouffville District Secondary School's Mark Burkholder (middle) attempts to drive past three visiting Father Michael McGivney Catholic High School defenders to score a basket during Monday's YRAA midget boys' basketball game. The host Spartans lost the game 73-59. B.J. James was high scorer for the Spartans with 19 points. Photo/SJOERD WITTEVEN

Clippers' outing has silver lining

It was silver medals in Silver Stick Tournament play for a trio of Stouffville rep hockey teams.

The town's major novice, major bantam and midget Clippers squads all went to the finals in their respective Silver Stick competitions in Brampton over the holidays, with all three coming home with second-place banners.

The State Farm Insurance/Ken and Neil Patrick major novice Clippers outscored the opposition 20-3 in winning their three preliminary games leading up to the championship match. They prevailed by scores of 10-1, 7-1 and 3-1 over Barrie, host Chinguacousy and London respectively. David DelZotto, Mark Sullivan and Mathew Cartwright were Clippers MVP's in the three matches. The Stouffville crew was finally downed 5-3 by Caledon.

Earning points in the four games were: Sullivan (14), DelZotto (11), Brook Stachel (10), Brendan Laing, Alex Bruno, Trevor Greenham and Shayne Paterson (four each), Cash Nicastro, Phillip Briggs, Kurtis Paisley and Mark D'Andrea (two each), and Devon McDougall. Cartwright and Ryan Allen were outstanding in net. Landon Wideman and Nathaniel Martin were solid on defence.

(Please see page 17)

Spirit winning streak ended

By BRUCE STAPLEY
 Correspondent

The Spirit of Stouffville set a team record by extending their winning streak to four games earlier this week, then fell victim to Thursday's snowstorm.

The Spirit staged a come-from-behind 5-4 road win over the Cobourg Cougars on Monday. But the Stouffville squad arrived in Orillia late and unprepared Thursday evening, with a resulting 7-6 loss.

The Spirit rallied to erase a 4-2 second-period deficit Monday, with Darcy King netting a pair to lead the way.

Rob Frost, Andrew Patriarch and Geoff Smith also scored, with Smith getting credit for the winner when his centering pass was errantly shot into the net by a Cougars defenceman. Ryan Spiteri continued his outstanding play in goal. The game marked the debut in the Spirit lineup for former Stouffville Clipper Jeff Hassard.

Thursday's snowstorm caused havoc for the Spirit as they tried to get to Orillia in time for the game.

Many players, along with head coach Dan Larmer, were forced to find their way by car when they were unable to catch the team bus. The bus did not arrive until just minutes before the opening faceoff.

Larmer, who finally arrived at the end of the first period with the team trailing 3-0, attributed the lack of a pregame warmup to a rash of injuries suffered by his players.

"Our guys just weren't ready," he said. "Geoff Smith got their late, then went out and bruised his shoulder. We only had one goalie at the start, Steve Tiker, and he cracked a rib. Don Gillies pulled a groin. We should have cancelled the game."

It marked Smith's last game in a Spirit uniform. The hard-playing winger and Stouffville resident was sold to the Newmarket 87's at the Jan. 10 trading deadline.

King had a goal and four assists. Other goals went to Smith, Patriarch, John Lowrie, Mike Battaglia and recently acquired ex-Terrier Jason Ellis.

The Spirit host the 87's tonight, with the Collingwood Blues in town on Sunday. Both games start at 7:30 p.m.

