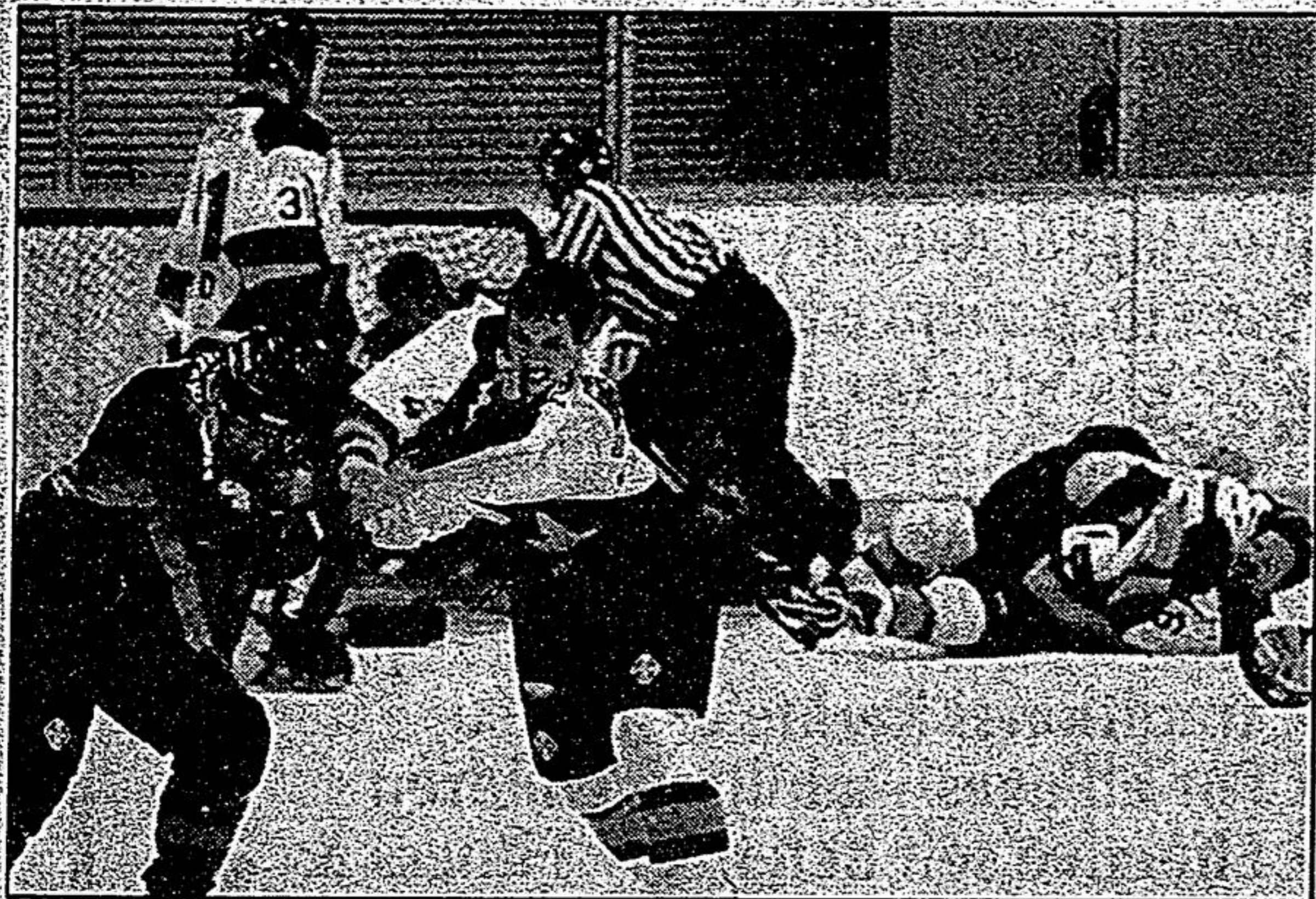


Sports & Leisure

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LET'S GET PHYSICAL: Tensions were high during the early moments of Thursday's Provincial Junior A game between the Spirit of Stouffville and Lindsay Muskies at the Rec Centre as evidenced by several brawls that erupted. One of those saw Muskies' Cory Brown (left), and Spirit of Stouffville's Jason Ellis exchange blows. The Muskies won the game 10-7. *Photo by SJOERD WITTEVEEN*

Muskies devour Spirit

BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

The Spirit of Stouffville finally found their way out of the trap the Lindsay Muskies had been laying for them all season.

However, the Stouffville squad couldn't keep the Muskies from breaking through their net as the visitors prevailed 10-7 Thursday at the Rec Centre in a Provincial Junior A Hockey League game that was more like broomball with an attitude.

It was the first time in six tries the Spirit had managed to score more than three goals in one game against the usually defensively minded Muskies, who use a forechecking system known as the trap.

But the Stouffville squad was non-existent from the blue line back, allowing the visitors to score in bunches at times on their way to their fifth win of the year against the Spirit.

"The bad blood that's been brewing all season between the two teams didn't take long to spill as a brawl broke out during the game's second shift.

Things remained chippy until a second full scale melee occurred late in the second period when Spirit winger Mike Micheff steamrolled into the Lindsay goalkeeper.

With the resulting ejections stripping each team down to 11 players, an uneasy peace was maintained the rest of the way.

The Muskies led 3-2 after the first period, holding a 17-11 advantage in shots on goal. Dave Zelasko with his 19th, and Darcy King with his 36th, clicked for the Spirit. Phil Vito squared things early in

the second, with Phil Barski tying it again after the visitors regained the lead.

The Muskies struck for another pair, but the Spirit survived a succession of penalty calls to draw even once again by the end of the period on goals by Kevin Edgar, his 31st, and Micheff, his ninth.

With the Spirit down to just two regular defencemen, the Muskies broke the game open with three goals in three minutes early in the third.

Ed Kearney added the seventh Spirit goal on a change up that fooled the Lindsay goalie.

But the home squad couldn't convert any more of their numerous opportunities over the game's final 10 minutes.

The Muskies clinched it with an empty net goal with the Spirit pressing on the power-play in the game's dying seconds.

"Usually when you score seven goals you win the game," shrugged Spirit head coach Dan Larmer. "The guys worked hard, it was a pretty even game, although it was sloppy defensively."

The Muskies outshot the Spirit 40-38. King also had three assists, upping his east division leading points total to 101. Edgar also had three helpers, leaving him second in the race with 90 points.

Spirit assistant coach John Peron wasn't around at the end as he was tossed out for questioning one of many Spirit penalty calls.

A Muskies' assistant coach was also given the boot.

Suspensions incurred in the Lindsay game will leave the Spirit short six regulars for their next match Thursday against the division-leading Collingwood Blues.

Can local ball teams repeat success of last season?

Veteran Claremont softball guru Frank Hendy, who coaches that hamlet's Rebels men's fast pitch squad, likes to promote the ties that bind the various fastball interests in his town, Stouffville, Uxbridge and outlying locales.



Sports Notes

Bruce Stapley

He has prepared this synopsis of the 1997 season, and the upcoming '98 campaign. So pull up a chair, pour yourself a coffee, and think spring!

"Can 1998 be a repeat of 1997, one of the most successful years for local softball? Highlights:

Bob Abbot's (Uxbridge area resident and former Stouffville ladies softball coach, currently director of national teams for Softball Canada) bringing the New Zealand Youth team to Stouffville to play the Betz Pools midgets and the Uxbridge Bandits. The Claremont Rebels were the only team to upset the New Zealand at the Port Perry tournament.

Abbot was also coach of Ontario's gold medalist Canada Games fastball team which included Stouffville's Paul Koert and Evan Boyd.

The Rebels also downed the Canada Games champs when they came to Stouffville, and went on to win the Oshawa City and District League season championship.

Koert was also a member of the Canadian team which won the silver medal at the World Youth Championships in Newfoundland.

LAST SEASON HAD A SILVER LINING

But it was at the Intermediate Mens Eliminations in Timmins they did us proud when his team of local players from Uxbridge, Stouffville, Mount Albert and Port Perry took the silver medal at the Eastern Canadian Championships in Nova Scotia.

The Bandits capped off the season with another silver medal at the Oshawa City and District league playoff tournament.

It must have been the year for silver in the Ferguson house as Barry's son Bob helped the Oshawa Double B's take the Canadian Junior Mens Championship.

The Stouffville peewee boys won the OASA championship.

The Stouffville girls rep teams also had a

good year, and with coaches like Bill Johnson and Dave Miller the future looks bright.

Congratulations must also be given to the Whitchurch-Stouffville Softball Association for providing houseleague fastball for Claremont, Goodwood, Ballantrac, Vandorf, Stouffville and Uxbridge players.

Vin Walker of Port Perry, a player and coach in Claremont in years gone by and a past OASA president, was inducted into the Canadian Softball Hall of Fame in 1997.

STOUFFVILLE TO FIELD TEAM IN OSHAWA FASTBALL LEAGUE

The 1998 season will see a Stouffville mens team playing in the Oshawa City and District League with Howard Burkholder as coach. Local rivals will include the Rebels, Bandits and Port Perry, which should make for some outstanding ball for local fans.

It looks like there will be no junior mens team in Stouffville this year, so Paul Koert and Evan Boyd will be in great demand by other teams in Ontario. Scott Evans, Chris Wilson, Rob and Tom Watson, and Bob Ferguson will be going south on weekends to bolster United States senior mens tournament teams.

The OASA is planning to have their midget and junior championships prior to the eliminations this year to make sure teams show up for the various championships. Only teams that show up for the OASA championships will be eligible for the Eliminations, and the right to represent Ontario at the Canadian championships.

A major OASA rule change means that pitchers shall take a position with both feet firmly on the ground and in contact with the pitcher's plate.

In the meantime, anyone looking to improve batting skills should drop over to Duel Sports in Newmarket.

Brian Bates, former Dominion Auto team batting champion, has the latest in softball and baseball pitching machines in an indoor setting. Brian is a former minor league ball player who has worked with the Toronto Blue Jays in the past.

Thanks again for your coverage, Bruce!

Frank Hendy



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