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# Midget Clippers fall in OMHA finals

The Print Service midget Clippers went into their Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) championship final with Guelph with one hand tied behind their back.

And despite an effort which coach Dave Boyd described as nothing short of exemplary, the Stouffville squad was swept three games to none in a series that was much closer than the end result would indicate.

The Guelph crew clinched the provincial title with a 5-4 overtime victory Wednesday night in Guelph. "The guys played their hearts out," praised Boyd. "These kids have got a lot of guts."

The Clippers, who were forced to play the series minus four regular players, dropped two games in overtime, and held their own throughout most of the other contest.

Guelph took the series opener 4-3 in overtime last Friday night at the Rec Centre, then took a two games to none stranglehold with a 5-1 win Sunday in Guelph in a game that found the visitors trailing 4-0 just 10 minutes into the game.

"If I had all my players, we win two of those three games," insisted a disappointed Boyd. "We didn't have a weak link on the team."

Ironically, it was suspensions incurred by the usually penalty-free Clippers in the final game of their three game sweep of Fort Erie in the OMHA semi-finals that put them behind the eight ball in the finals. Brad Johnston, Ian McDougall and Brett Jennings were all lost to the team in a brawl that broke out with

just two minutes remaining in the semi-final clincher.

Boyd, who suggested game officials were overzealous in banishing two of the three, said he has preached discipline and a no-fight policy all season long. "We only had 67 penalty minutes in 29 games this season. They always turned the other cheek."

Boyd insisted his players were goaded into the fight by a Fort Erie team that had nothing to lose.

With Mark Meyers out with a shoulder separation, the Clippers were forced to call up replacements from the bantam Clippers. "They helped, but it's tough when you don't know the system."

Tyler Markle had all three Clippers goals in last Friday's opener. Mike Wood had the lone Stouffville marker in game two, with Markle, Chris Howland, Brett Boyd and Brad Clubine finding the range in Wednesday's third contest.

Boyd said Guelph proved every bit as formidable an opponent as he had expected them to be. "We knew Guelph would be tough."

But he felt his team could have handled them had they been able to play at full strength. "We were rolling right along. We just didn't have all our horses."

He cited the series opener as an example. "We were up 3-1 midway through the third period. But we had no bantams that night, and we only had two lines. We just ran out of gas."

Boyd said his players refused to give up, especially in Wednesday's

game when they were down by two games. The Clippers came back to tie the game on three occasions, forcing overtime with a late third period score. But Guelph clinched it with a goal seven minutes into the extra period.

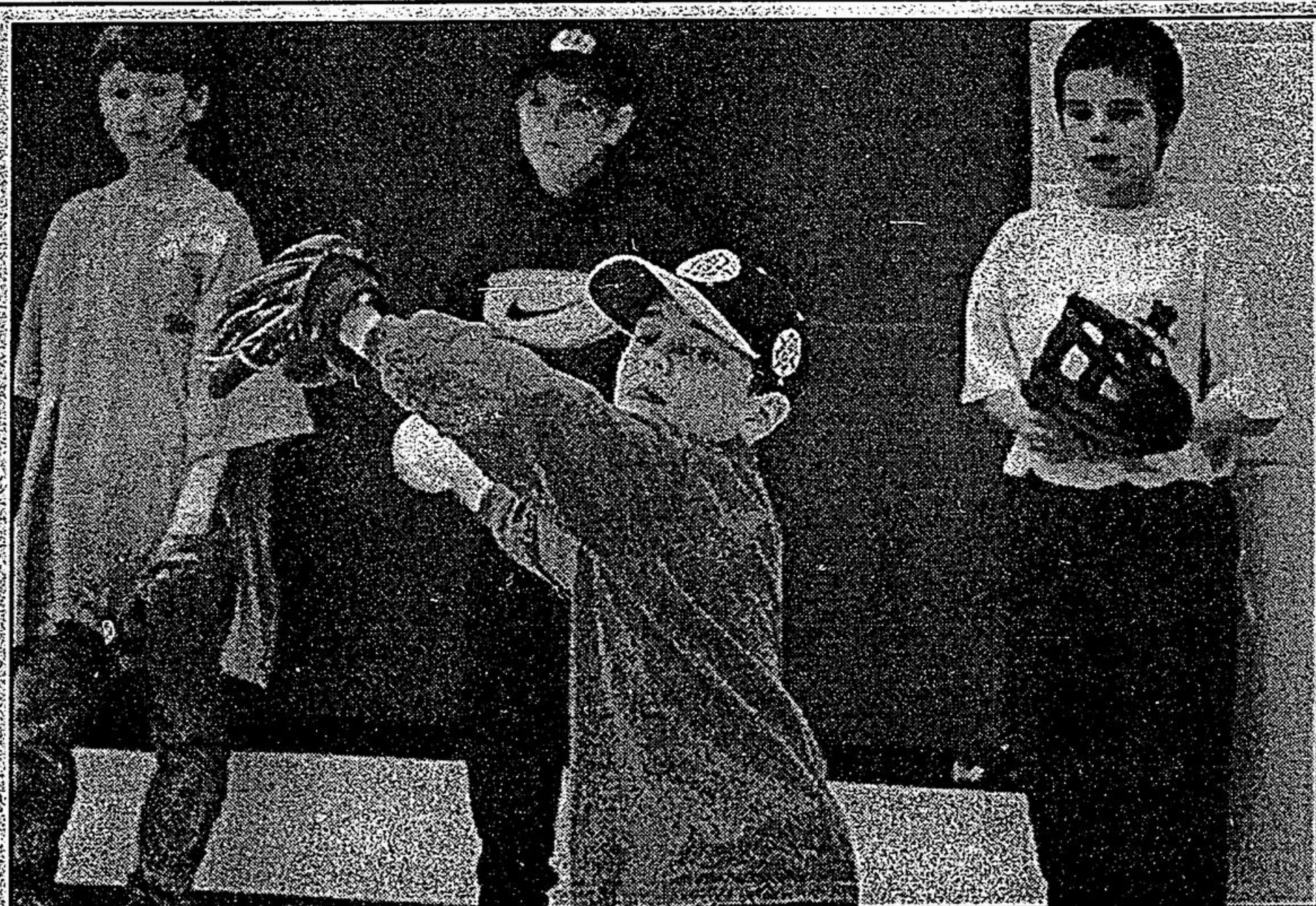
Boyd said the finale was a classic with few penalties. "It was just two teams going at it who wanted to play hockey."

Boyd said his heart went out to his players after playing with such commitment and discipline all season only to end up in the situation they found themselves in against Guelph in the championship round.

"They were heart broken. These kids worked so hard all season, then to get suspended for something so stupid. There were tears in their eyes that they couldn't play."

But the bottom line, said Boyd, was that his players proved themselves to be talented, mature young men with what they accomplished this season.

"They have nothing to be ashamed of. I asked them for a commitment at the start of the season, and they gave it. I respect these kids so much. I was so proud of them. They are winners."



FIRST PITCH: Mitchell Raithby gives it his all at the first ball practice for Stouffville Mite rep team at Orchard Park Public School gym on Wednesday night. Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE

## Sheffield Judo Club's success builds respect for sport

Steven Sheffield hopes the results achieved by his top proteges at the recent Juvenile Canadian Judo Championships in Abbotsford B.C. will go a long way towards dispelling the notion held by some that the sport is merely wrestling in pajamas.

Sheffield and his wife Aartje have been running Stouffville's Sheffield Judo Club for the past five and a half years. He was thrilled with the two silver medals and three fifth place showings earned by the six club members who fought under the Team Ontario banner in Abbotsford. In the case of 13 year old Kyle Chee-a-tow, a silver medal might just as easily have been a gold had his timing been a little better. "Kyle actually beat the first place winner the week before the nationals at the



Sports Notes

Bruce Stapley

Ontario Winter Games in Peterborough," said Sheffield. "It was disappointing. He just beat the guy on the wrong week."

He suggested that on a different day, a few more of his kids would have finished in the medals at the national finals, which included 350 competitors from across Canada. As it was, Kyle and Katie Jones, 15, brought home silver medals, while Kyle's twin brother Dustin, along with 15 year old brother

Trevor, and Seiji Ishiguro, 14, each had fifth place finishes.

A veteran national level competitor himself, it was the first time any of Sheffield's charges had advanced to a national final since the club first opened with a smattering of 25 members back in 1992.

With five of the six who made it to B.C. having been with the club from the start, the event marked a culmination of sorts for Sheffield. "When we first started the club we had a bunch of young kids around 10 years old. It's just taken them this long to get to this level. Hopefully, we'll have some of our members competing nationally every year from now on."

He said it was also gratifying to receive compliments regarding his club

member's performances in Abbotsford from people he once competed against at the national level.

The Sheffield club has watched its enrollment increase threefold in five and half years. Steven and Aartje, both of whom fought on the Canadian national judo team for over a decade in the 1980s and early '90s, feel the club represents a chance for members to experience the thrill of high level competition.

"Some of the six members of our club who fought in Abbotsford could be selected to compete in tournaments with the Ontario team in Miami and Hawaii," said Steven, who traveled to such destinations as Europe, South America and Japan when he was with the Canadian national team.

He stressed, however, that the club isn't the exclusive domain of young people determined to achieve at the national level.

"They can come to our club and just work out and enjoy it, or it can be an elite thing if they choose."

Sheffield said it's always a struggle attracting newcomers to the sport in a town and country where hockey and baseball are so popular. But his club's success at the recent nationals is sure to increase an already growing profile, he said.

"We're pretty well known in the judo circle by now. This isn't just a house league thing. They can actually go on and travel if they get good enough. Our club is really doing well. It's a lot more than wrestling in pajamas."

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