

Sports & Leisure

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School sports are left up in the air

Physical education teachers and coaches were packing up for the summer at Stouffville District Secondary School (SDSS) earlier this week with no idea of what lies ahead for the school's fall athletic program.

With a strike threatened by York Region's secondary school teachers and the York Region Athletic Association (YRAA) putting a hold on sports programs, teachers at the Stouffville school are in limbo.

Nothing has been done in the way of planning for the 1998-99 athletic year at SDSS.

"Usually by this time of year we have our schedules all made up for our school teams," said SDSS girls physical education head and veteran coach Sheila Coleman.

In a letter sent to York Board officials, principals and trustees June 23, York Region Athletic Association (YRAA) president Greg Reid said all YRAA programs have been postponed until enough teachers commit to coaching and convening for the 1998-99 school year.

"Many of our teachers who volunteer their time to coach and convene have informed us that they are unsure of their ability to commit at this time," the letter said.

FALL AND WINTER SPORTS AGENDA ON HOLD FOR NOW

"Therefore, the YRAA will postpone fall and winter sport declarations and the acquiring of convenors until our members level of commitment is such that there can be a resumption of competition. The potential negative impact of this situation is disturbing to say the least."

Coleman noted this is the second spring in a row that plans for the fall athletic program have been left unconfirmed at SDSS. She said teachers at the school are unable to make a commitment to coach until they know their classroom responsibilities for the coming school year.

"Nothing has been settled. No one is able to say what they can take on in extra-curricular activities until they know what

their workload is."

She said a situation could exist where there are no teachers available to cover classes for teacher/coaches taking teams to play at other schools. Funding for extra-curricular activities is yet to be determined as well, she added.

"Mr. (Ontario Premier Mike) Harris has said he's going to put more money into the classrooms," said Coleman. "I'm afraid that might mean taking it away from phys ed and extra-curricular activities."

Teachers at the Stouffville school shut down the school's athletic program for two weeks last September to protest the board's decision to make physical education department heads teach extra classes in time slots formerly used for planning athletic programs.

With teachers' classroom time a key issue in the current labour dispute, Coleman suggested all York Region schools might pull the plug on their athletic programs in September, depending on the eventual settlement.

"It would likely be a board-wide thing this fall."

Coleman said she is hopeful things can be ironed out. "We all hope the tradition of sports programs at SDSS can continue."

Veteran SDSS volleyball and basketball coach and phys ed teacher Jim Fletcher said the Ontario Federation of Schools Athletic Association (OFSAA) is in a similar situation as YRAA.

He said OFSAA officials concluded at a meeting held earlier this month that everything will be put on hold for the 1998-99 school year if it can't get a 50-per-cent commitment response from site convenors for championship events.

"Everything is up in the air," said Fletcher. "It's kind of a wait and hold and see what's going to happen thing."

SDSS athletes are anxiously waiting to see what happens this fall.

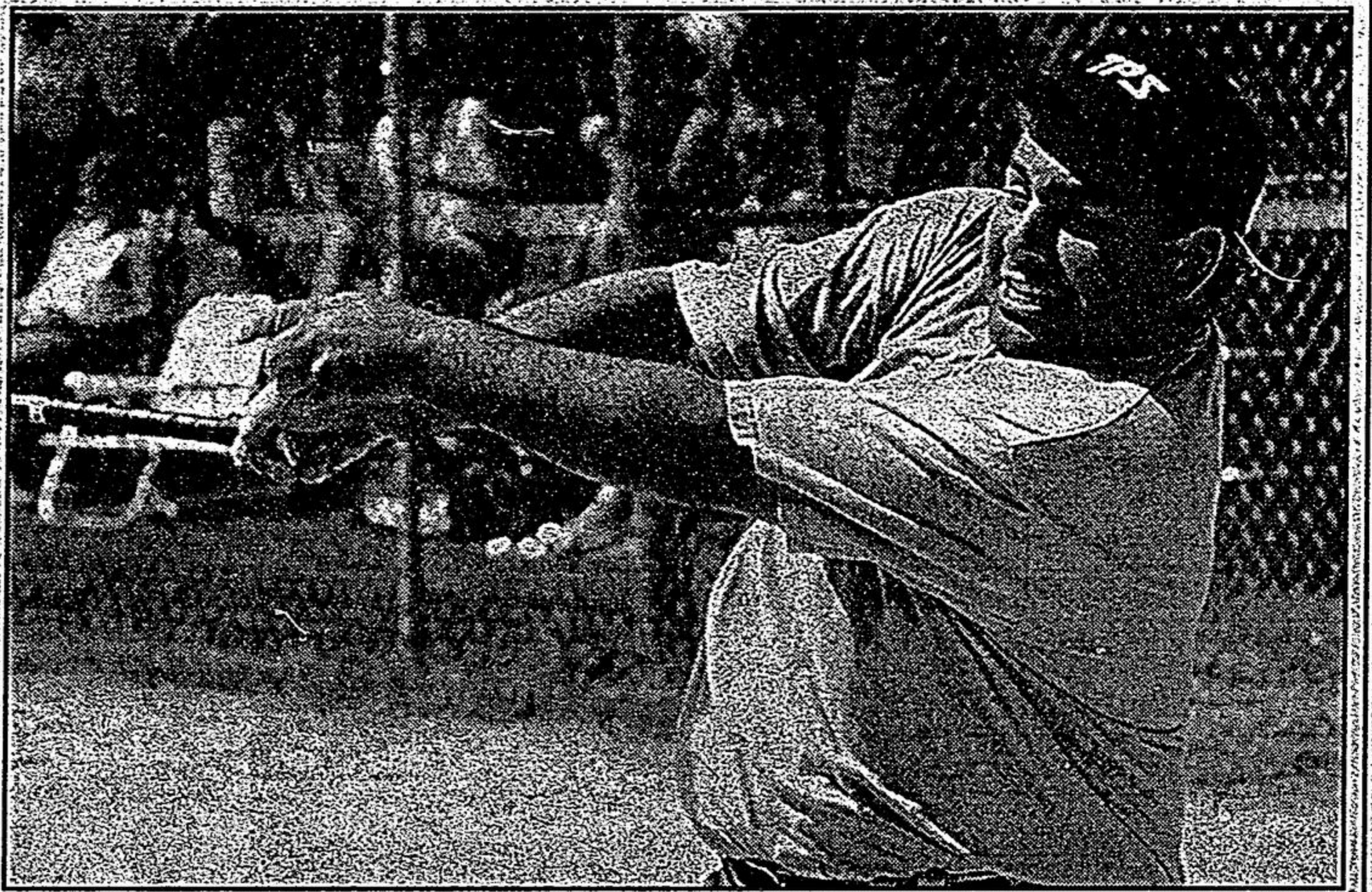
STUDENTS CONCERNED

Amanda Crowder said the effects of a complete shut down of athletics across the region would be devastating.

"For some of us athletics are a very important aspect of school."

Crowder, who was on the SDSS senior girls volleyball and slow pitch teams this past year, said students at the school have learned to live with talks of their athletic program being severely cut back or scrapped altogether.

"Every year there seems to be this threat. The teachers want to coach, but it's a matter of how much time they have for it."



A BIG SWINGER: Necked Octopus batter Pat Della Rocca puts all of his body into this swing as he makes contact with this offering against the Pound team during action in Saturday's annual Williamson Buttermakers Slow Pitch Tournament at the Memorial Park ball diamonds.

Photo by SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Rebels win, Mennos lose in close encounters

The Stouffville Mennos and Claremont Rebels ended up on opposite ends of tight games in Oshawa City and District Softball League contests played in their respective home parks Wednesday night.

Jim Cross' towering home run triggered a two-run fourth-inning rally as the Rebels overcame a 2-1 deficit to claim a 3-2 victory over the Oshawa Juniors.

But the Mennos fell short as they were nipped 2-1 by Bradford in a pitcher's duel featuring Mennos ace Byron Baranieski and Bradford hurler Rich Jackson.

The Rebels also received strong pitching from Stouffville's Paul Koert, who struck out 10 Oshawa batters while retiring 11 of the final 13 hitters he faced.

Koert also played a key part in the Rebels game-winning rally.

His single advanced John Pollard, who scampered home with the go-ahead run on a Texas League single off the bat of Greg Horne.

The Rebels opened the scoring in the first inning when Evan Boyd's sacrifice fly cashed Dave Jones, who led off with a walk. Oshawa scored both their runs in the third frame on a two-run home run by Stouffville native Kevin Hackert. The blast drove home Rino Damrosio, another local product.

Brent Bonner had two hits for the Rebels. Home also had a pair of safeties.

The Claremont win helped erase the memory of the memory of the Rebels' 5-1 loss to Port

Perry in a game played in Claremont the previous Wednesday.

MENNOS LONE RUN VIA ERRORS

The Mennos lone run Wednesday came in the fourth inning on a three-base error after Rich Reesor drove a single to left field.

The Stouffville squad loaded the bases with one out in the sixth but couldn't take advantage. Bradford pushed across the winning run in the top of the seventh.

The Mennos started off the week with a 10-6 victory over Markham Monday in a road game that saw the visitors win it with a four-run outburst in the top of the eighth inning.

With Baranieski not available, the Mennos pressed little-used pitcher Ryan Burkholder into service for the first three innings.

Jeff Steiner hurled the next three frames, with Rob Reesor, another occasional pitcher, coming on to retire the Markham side after they had tied it up in the home half of the seventh.

Baranieski, along with his Mennos teammate Chris Burkholder, helped the Coburn Rutherford senior men's team to the championship at a recent tournament in Baltimore, near Cobourg, Ont.

The Coburn crew edged the Pickering Heat 1-0 in the title tilt. The competition included some of the top men's teams from across the province.

The Mennos are in Aurora tonight before hosting Port Perry Thursday at 8:30 p.m. at Memorial Park. The Rebels were to play in Markham on Monday.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

JESSIE HARRIS

This 10-year-old Summitview Public School athlete sprinted off with two first-place ribbons at the York Region Elementary Track and Field Meet June 17. She was first in the 100 metre and 200 m tyke girls' races. Jessie also had a first-place finish at the regional elementary school cross-country championships in May.

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Mite selects consoled in Unionville tourney

Jeff Bassett and Len Wood provided the pitching and the key hits as the Simply Caring Birth Class mite selects copped the consolation championship at a tournament in Unionville over the June 20 weekend.

Bassett and Wood shared the hurling duties as the Stouffville squad came back from an opening 10-3 loss to Malvern A to win three in a row

on their way to the consolation title. They each slammed a grand slam home run as well, with Wood's bases loaded blast coming during his team's 16-4 triumph over the host outfit in the consolation final.

The selects started their run with a convincing 11-3 victory over Woodbridge in their second game. They made it two in a row as they dumped

the Malvern B unit 15-5 in their third outing as Bassett chipped in at the plate with his grand slam. The win earned the Stouffville team a ticket to the B championship contest.

Catcher Kit McDowell was outstanding throughout the tourney.

The selects take to the field for their next tournament action July 5 in Newmarket.