

## SPORTS

**HOCKEY:** Defence wins games, but does it gain the approval of those who watch it?

## Lack of creativity is offensive

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CORRESPONDENT

Has Canadian hockey come to emphasize total defence at the expense of offensive creativity?

Several Stouffville minor hockey officials and coaches would suggest the answer is a resounding yes.

Sports commentator Bruce Dowbiggin, in his new book *Of Ice and Men: Steve Yzerman, Chris Chelios, Glen Sather, Dominik Hasek and the Craft of Hockey*, suggests the current fixation with neutral zone traps and left wing locks is turning today's Canadian players into defensive-minded automata.

Using statistics and the testimony of experts, he sets out to prove that offensive minded defencemen in the tradition of Bobby Orr and Paul Coffey are being forced to stay home in their own end, simply batting the puck out when it comes to them. Dowbiggin cites three glaring examples to prove his point that puck handling skills aren't being learned by Canadian players.

1) A drop of a goal a game in the NHL in recent years. 2) A study showing that the average centreman in the Canadian game handles the puck a mere 47 seconds a game (defencemen and right wingers 5-10 seconds). 3) The fact that only five of the 15 top scoring defencemen in the NHL in recent years are Canadian born. The European players have taken over the offence in the NHL, Dowbiggin says.

A pair of prominent Stouffville hockey coaches feel the time has come to right the ship.

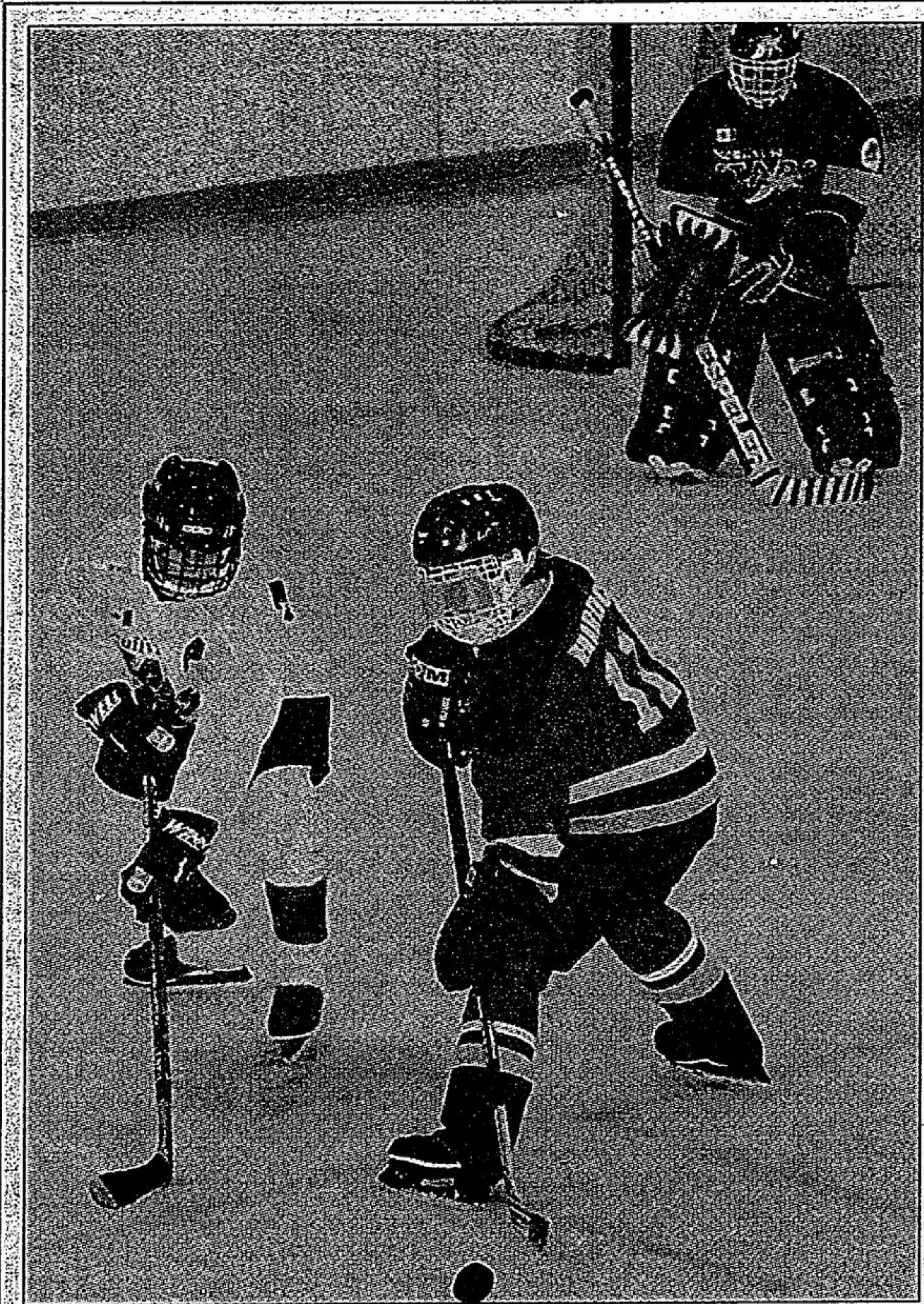
"Coaches today are trying to save their jobs," suggests Dan Larmer, a former Stouffville Clipper, American university player, and Spirit of Stouffville Junior A head coach.

Larmer said coaches at the junior and pro levels feel they can achieve victories by simply stifling the opposition offence. He said today's coaches are instilling the dump and chase, hack the puck carrier mind set into their players at the expense of their own total development as players as well as that of future players.

"When today's players go on to become coaches they'll ingrain that into their players too."

Larmer said the Canadian game must make changes. "The Europeans have certainly caught up to us in creative talent," said Larmer. "Canadian hockey is not developing the

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PHOTO/LORI EMMERSON

### LUCK OF THE DRAW

Stouffville Stars' Melanie Paterson (left), loses this draw deep in her own territory to an Oshawa player during action in this peewee contest at the Stouffville Stars Girls' Hockey Tournament at Mount Joy Arena on Saturday. Oshawa won this contest 3-0. Tending goal in the background was Daniellé Paterson.

## Spirit tame Huskies for second straight win

Kevin Edgar and Phil Barski each stepped to the head of the class Saturday in Durham.

The Spirit of Stouffville's formidable offensive duo combined for 10 points, five apiece, to lead their team to a 6-3 road victory over the hapless Huskies in the Ontario Provincial Junior A Hockey League contest.

It was the second win in a row for the Stouffville squad, lifting them back to the .500 mark with a record of nine wins, nine defeats and an overtime loss.

The Spirit sit in sixth place in the Central Conference with 19 points, two back of the Aurora Tigers.

The Spirit led 3-0 after the first period, then carried a 5-1 bulge into the final 20 minutes. Edgar netted his second hat trick of the season, adding a pair of assists. Barski assisted on five Spirit tallies.

Defenceman Jeff Cochrane counted his fifth and sixth goals of the season, both on the power play. Mike Tucciarone added a solo marker.

The outburst by Edgar and Barski lifted the linemates into a three-way tie with the Newmarket Hurricanes Shawn Baltzer for the conference scoring lead with 44 points each. Edgar, who has five

See RANGERS, page 20.

## Atom Stars shine in tournament

The Stouffville Stars atom girls' hockey team won the gold medal last weekend in its first tournament of the year, one in which they hosted.

On Saturday, the Stars won its first

game over Oshawa 7-2 before suffering a 2-1 loss to Bluewater. The Stars rebounded to blank Mississauga 6-0.

The Stars' round-robin record enabled them to advance to Sunday's

final against Bluewater.

The final was a nail biter as the Stars prevailed 1-0.

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