

SPORTS: Miscues haunt Spirit in Thursday loss to Collingwood

Spirit on verge of elimination

BY BRUCE STAPLEY
CORRESPONDENT

Three strikes and you're out.

That was the story as a trio of untimely Spirit of Stouffville miscues led to a 3-1 victory for the visiting Collingwood Blues Thursday at the rec centre.

The defeat left the Spirit holding on by a thread as they travelled to Collingwood for the third game of its best-of-five opening round Ontario Provincial Junior A Hockey League playoff series trailing two games to none.

"We made three mistakes and we paid for them," Spirit assistant coach Ken Burrows lamented.

Burrows was referring to an unnecessary penalty, a power-play breakdown and a third-period lapse that led to the three Blues goals.

He said the Blues' second goal, scored during a Spirit power play in the second period, was the killer.

"We had just scored a goal to make it 1-1 and we were on the power play when they got the shorthanded goal. That was the turning point right there. We were really coming on, but that took the wind out of our sails."

The Spirit simply couldn't solve the puzzle that was the Blues defence as they were held to a mere 19 shots. The Blues aimed 35 shots at Rob Zago, who was outstanding in net.

On the few occasions the Spirit were able to break through, Blues goalkeeper Jonathan Forest was there to close the



KEN BURROWS
Spirit assistant coach said team hurt by miscues

door.

"He wasn't busy but he made the key saves," Blues' coach Tim Dickey said.

Dickey suggested Forest, who was named Central Conference MVP after posting a goals against average of just 2.25 on the season, was off form in Tuesday's 6-5 Blues win in the series opener. He speculated Forest and the rest of the first-place finishing Blues were haunted in Tuesday's game by the memory of being ousted in the first round in last year's playoffs after finishing first in the regular season.

After Gilles Boudreau scored to stake the Blues to a 1-0 first-period lead, Mike Tucciarone tied it with a goal from a scramble approaching the half way point of the second.

But a shorthanded goal by Mike Brito and an even strength tally by Lee Cousineau enabled the Blues to regain a 3-1 advantage through 40 minutes.

The Spirit offence showed signs of coming to life in the third. But any chance for a comeback seemed to evaporate when they failed to produce a shot on goal during a power play that left them with a two-man advantage for 28 seconds well into the period.

Burrows felt the veteran Blues were simply better able to take advantage of their chances.

"It's got a lot to do with experience. They're (Collingwood) a good team."

A fourth game, if necessary, would be played at the rec centre tomorrow at 5:30 p.m.

Spiritually Speaking: The Spirit were without three regular defencemen Thursday. Missing were Justin Thickins (swollen ankle), J.D. Smithson (sore back) and Beau Llewelyn, who left the game after the first period with a suspected concussion.

Stingrays spike fourth

The Stouffville Stingrays were on top of their game as they spiked their way to a fourth-place finish at the Bantam Girls Tier I Open in Barrie on Feb. 20.

The Stingrays took four of a possible six points, to place first in their pool, then were downed 13-15, 15-10, 12-15 by the Scarborough Sun Rays in its semi-final contest.

The Stouffville crew then fell 6-15, 7-15 to the Hamilton Seekers in the game to decide the bronze medal.

Stingrays' coach Don Forbes praised the efforts of his players.

"Each of the 11-member squad were outstanding when called upon," he said. "The girls were truly outstanding during pool play action and were full value for their first-place finish."

The first-place pool showing resulted in a bye to the semi-finals.

However, Forbes suggested the three-hour wait for their match with Scarborough worked against his team.

The Stingrays will wrap up the Ontario Volleyball Association season when they contest the Tier I Provincial Championships March 6 in Midland.

They are scheduled to play in tournaments in Rochester, N.Y. on March 27-28, and in Scarborough on April 23-24.

Forbes said the Stingrays program continues to build.

Students earn gold and silver

Undefeated in Corner Brook.

That was the status of two members of Stouffville's Sheffield Judo Club as the pair helped their respective Ontario teams to medals in the team judo competition earlier this week at the 1999 Canada Winter Games in Newfoundland.

Kerry Lynne Hulshof won all six of her matches as the Ontario team took the gold Thursday in Women's Team Judo after finishing first in their pool.

Kyle Chee-a-tow was also a perfect six for six as the Ontario unit took the silver in Men's Team

Judo the same day.

The women's team defeated New Brunswick 8-0 in the semi-finals before besting Quebec 6-2 in the gold medal bout.

The men's team doubled up British Columbia 6-3 in the semis, then fell 7-2 to Quebec in the final.

Hulshof, 13, was competing in the Juvenile Girls' Under 39-kilogram category.

Chee-a-tow, 14, was in the Juvenile Boys' Under 50-kg class.

Both qualified for yesterday's individual judo championships.

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DON VALLEY NORTH LEXUS - TOYOTA ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

RASHI PALA
Rashih Pala's play between the pipes on the soccer pitch paid dividends recently at the Markham District High School OAC student will be tending his trade south of the border when he enrolls in the University this fall. The 18-year-old Markham native earned a soccer scholarship at Northern Illinois University. The 6-foot-1 goaltender currently plays with North York Azzum and spent last season with the Woodbridge soccer club where he helped his team win the League Cup title and a Robbie under-10 International title. Pala also had national experience playing with the under-17 team in 1996 that finished fourth in the CONCACAF tournament.

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