

SPORTS

Sheffields win sports personalities of year award

BY BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

Aartje and Steven Sheffield have gone from the fringe to the front line.

The husband and wife team, which operates the Sheffield Judo Club in Stouffville, has been named Whitchurch-Stouffville Sports Personality of the Year for 1999.

"We were quite surprised," admitted Aartje after the award was announced.

"Judo has never been a mainstream sport in Stouffville. This is great for the sport."

While the Sheffields reside in Cedar Valley on the outskirts of Whitchurch-Stouffville, they have been slowly working their way to the centre of the town's sports scene since opening their club in 1992.

In seven years, the provincial level coaches have succeeded in turning the operation into a haven for aspiring national level competitors, as their top students have gone from competing in regional competitions to winning gold medals in national events.

Last winter season saw the club reach a pinnacle with members winning three golds at the Canadian Junior and Juvenile Championships, along with two golds and two silvers at the Canada Winter Games.

"We're just so happy with how our students have done," said Aartje.

"It's given judo such a presence in Stouffville."

Eleven Sheffield club members, including the Sheffield's six-year-old daughter Lea, were honoured at the recent Whitchurch-Stouffville Recognition of Provincial Athletic Achievement for their provincial and national level victories in judo.

Aartje, a fourth degree black belt, and Steven, a fifth degree black belt, took up judo as children of six and seven years old respectively.

They have both experienced provincial and national level

successes in their own competitive judo careers. Watching their students achieve at a high level has been a source of great pride.

"It's taken a while, but this little club in Stouffville has become one of the top clubs in the province," Aartje said.

She said the continuing success of their students is helping put the club, and Stouffville, on the map.

"Every time the kids go to a tournament they write the name of the club and the town (on their registration sheets)."

While delighted with the award she and her husband have been given by the town, she said it's more about the students they teach than it is about them.

"We have some talented, strong athletes to work with. Our winning this award is just another success for our students. It's nice for them to see this."

She said the award would help give judo a higher profile in Stouffville. "Anything that brings judo to people's attention, that helps them realize that judo is an Olympic sport, is good."

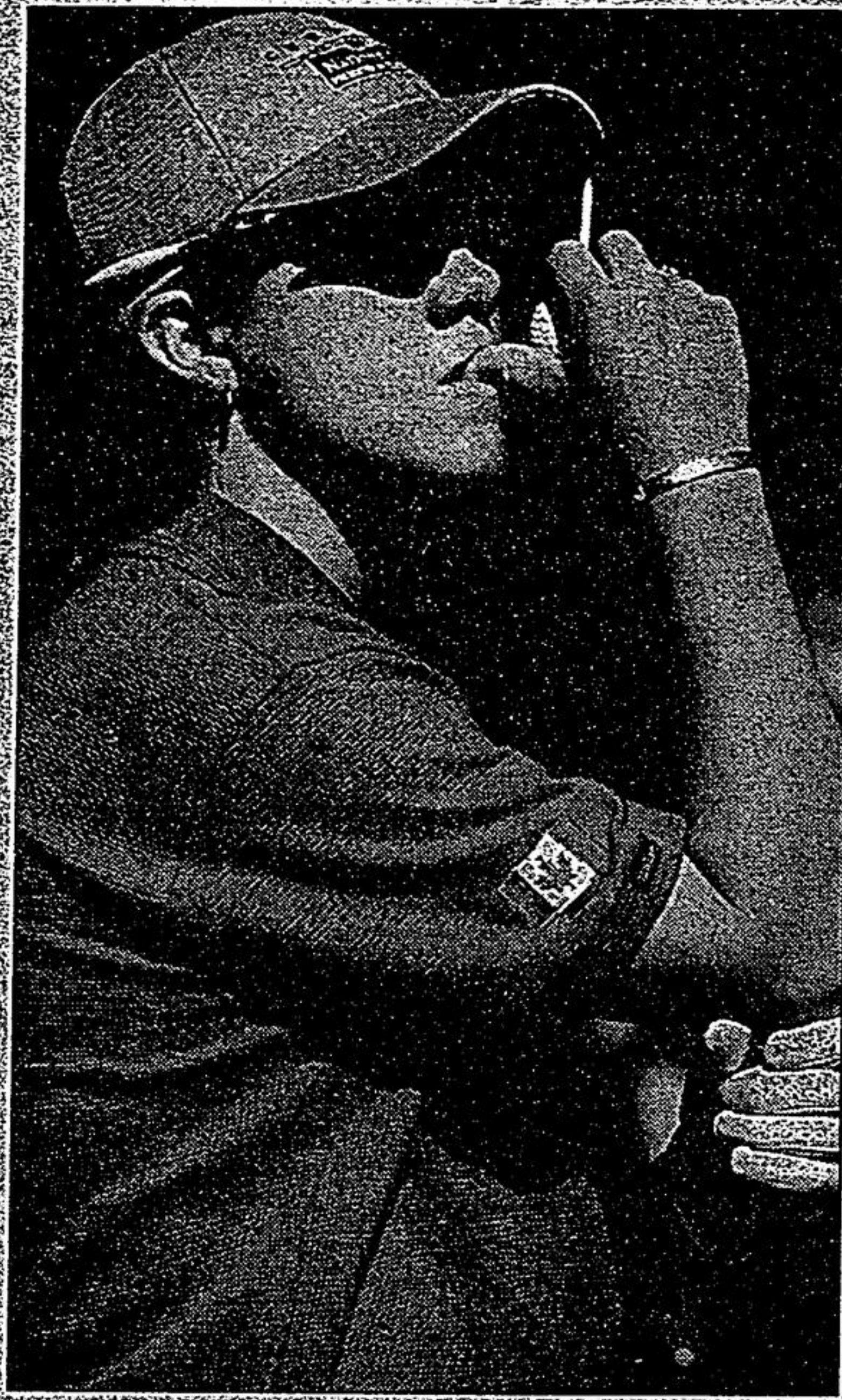
She hopes the award will help dispel the myth some hold of judo as a violent activity.

"It's such a huge thing for judo to be recognized as a sport and not just a fighting thing. That's so important to us. Judo was originally designed to be a gentle, non-aggressive martial art."

The Sheffields are currently preparing their students for the Canada Cup Youth International Judo Tournament, to be held July 31 in Oshawa.

The event is a qualifier for next year's Canadian Judo Championships.

"For Aartje and Steven Sheffield, their ultimate goal as coaches is to see one of their students make it as far as the Olympics. So few get to go that far," Aartje said.



STAFF PHOTOS/STEVE SOMERVILLE

TOP GOLFERS IN STOUFFVILLE

Canada's A.J. Eathorne, at left, contemplates her next shot on the 10th tee in best-ball action during play at the Nation's Cup Monday at Emerald Hills in Stouffville. One of the EPGA's top rookies, Eathorne was on the Canadian team taking on America's best. Above, Canada's Dawn Coe-Jones, a veteran of the EPGA tour, blasts out of a 9th hole bunker in best-ball action. The Nation's Cup competition wraps up today at the Warden Avenue course.

BUTTERMAKERS TOURNAMENT

Old Boys of Stouffville reunite to take title

Forty-one teams compete in four divisions

BY MATT ROSS
Correspondent

An 8-3 win by the Kerry's Old Boys of Stouffville showed it was good old fun as the team captured its second straight title in the Men's Recreation division beating the Stouffville Sliders at the 21st annual Williamson Leasing Buttermakers Slo-Pitch tournament.

The Old Boys, who went undefeated in five games at the tourney and beat the Stouffville Sliders in the title contest, played in Stouffville during the 1970s and '80s. The team reunited to participate in the Buttermakers tourney.

Outfielder Jack Watson said this tournament gives him and his friends the chance to swap stories from years past. "It's like a reunion for us. We've got players into their 50s and I'm one of the younger guys at 42."

Watson counts the average age of the team members to be well into the 40s.

"Among the changes at this year's Buttermakers tourney was the huge tent between the diamonds."

Live bands and liquid refreshments under the big canvas added to the tournament's success and provided a sports aspect during Stouffville's Strawberry Festival.

Tournament co-ordinator Claude Maillet said 1999 was different than other tournaments as he and the slo-pitch crew worked with the festival's committee.

As a result, Maillet added, the tournament benefited. "The festival brought the tent and the bands and in return we've brought in the ball players. It was a real community effort."

A total of 41 teams played in the four divisions, an increase from last year's 38.

Along with the tournament itself, the Buttermakers have undertaken a number of fund-raisers for local causes.

Between entry fees and concession sales, the tournament money is used for kids softball teams, the recent fireworks display on Canada Day and towards charities during the winter.

Maillet said he couldn't have been happier with the weekend's events.

"It's been a great tournament. The tent was a good idea and the weather was fantastic."

In the Open Division, Team Ringer topped the Oshawa Cardinals in the championship game.

The Stouffville Raiders captured the Men's D Division with a win over the Stouffville Runnin' Rebels.

Scarborough's Weekend Pass won the Mixed Division after beating I.O.U. from Keswick in the title game.

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