

SPORTS

HOCKEY: Spirit is high as Stouffville juniors prepare for a new Provincial Junior A Hockey League season

Youth hopes to serve Spirit well this year

BY BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

The Sprit of Stouffville are counting on youth to carry the day both on the ice and in the stands as they set for their 1999-2000 Provincial Junior A Hockey League season opener against the Newmarket Hurricanes Sept. 16 at the rec centre.



BRIAN PERRIN
Expects slow, but steady progress with young team

With as few as six returnees from last year's club, depending on Ontario Hockey League cuts, the load will be squarely on the shoulders of the rookies. While not promising a quick break from the gate, Spirit officials are confident the team will be able to hold its own in the newly created North Conference.

"We're a young team," acknowledges Spirit head coach Brian Perrin. "We're not looking for huge success at the beginning. But by Christmas, we should be fairly competitive."

With all eight teams in the conference, guaranteed a playoff position, Perrin said the Spirit could spend the entire season gearing up for postseason play.

"That's why we went with youth," he explained. The coach wouldn't predict how high his team might finish in the standings.

"Every team starts the year wanting to win the whole thing. But we want to have home ice advantage in the playoffs."

The only sure returnees from the 1998-99 Spirit are forwards Andrew Francone, Jesse Johnston, Will Chang and Mike Tucciarone, and defencemen

Justin Graham and Jeff Cochrane. Rearguards J.D. Smithson, Dan Oshell and Beau Llewellyn will likely return, if they fail to catch on in the OHL.

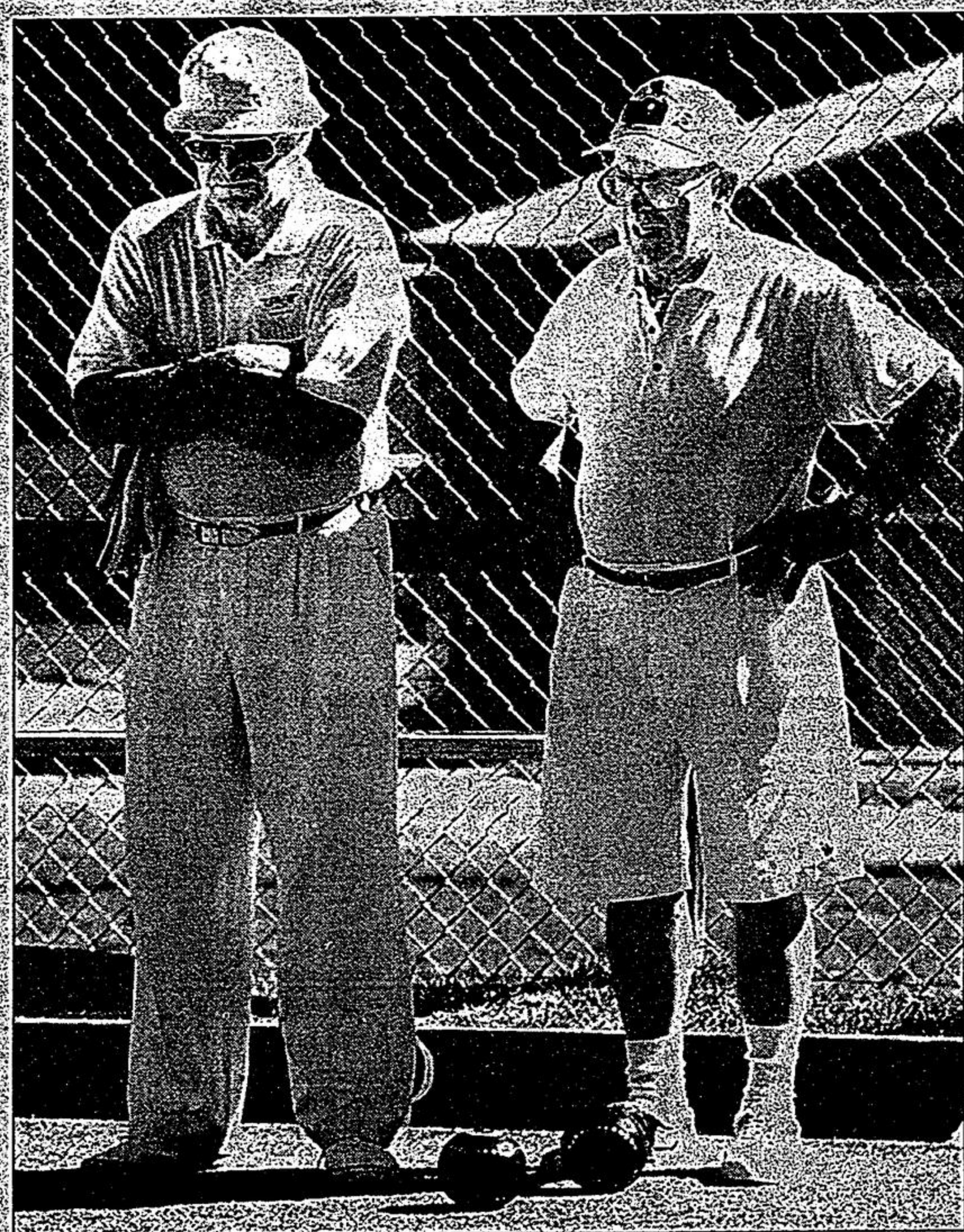
The newcomers include Stouffville area resident Grant Buckley, the 15-year-old OHL bantam-aged draftee who entertained several offers before finally agreeing to play for the Spirit. Centre Sean Scully, 16, and winger Jamie Minchella, who turns 16 next month, were teammates along with Buckley, with the 1998-99 OMHA championship Richmond Hill AAA Stars. Fourteen-year-old forward Daniel Speer scored both goals in Thunder Bay's 2-1 win over the Stars in last spring's Kobi Cup bantam final. His brother Sean, a 17-year-old defenceman, is also onboard. Daniel is the most promising player in the stable of player agent and former NHL super star Bobby Orr.

Also signed are Jeff Summerfield, a rugged 16-year-old defenceman who was with the Toronto Marlboros bantams last season; John Smith, 17, a forward with the 1998-99 Marlboros midgets; Michel Bond, 18, a speedy winger from Hearst, Ont. who was one of the leading scorers in the Northern Ontario Junior B League last season; Chris Large, 18, a forward with the Richmond Hill AAA Stars midgets last year.

The Spirit will go with two rookie goalkeepers as 1998-99 goalkeeping sensation Rob Zago has returned to school in his native Northern Ontario, while back up Kevin Boyle is past junior age. Nick Grainger, an 18-year-old Leaskdale resident and former Uxbridge minor hockey player, comes to the Spirit after two seasons with the Central Ontario Wolves AAA midgets.

George Ellard, an 18-year-old from Thunder

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STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

PLOTTING STRATEGY

Elmer Farthing (left) and Bill Dart of Stouffville contemplate the next bowl as they participate in the Ross Dixon Men's Pairs Tournament last Wednesday at the Stouffville Lawnbowling Club greens. A Willowdale team of Unkey Zangwill and Bob Christie won the event. George Wong and Bill Riddock of Agincourt were runner's up.

Livingston had a gym dandy time in Stouffville

Faithful readers might have recognized one of our former Athletes of the Week on the top level of the medals podium at the recent Pan American Games in Winnipeg.

Emilie Livingston, who called Stouffville home for a little over a year in the mid-1990s, took the gold in the individual all around category in the rhythmic gymnastics competition.

For the diminutive 16-year old, who currently resides in North York, the surprising victory brings her one step closer to achieving her goal of qualifying for the 2000

Olympics in Sydney, Australia. Emilie, who was contacted during a training session at the Ritmika Rhythmic Gymnastics Club in North York, said her next big test comes in Osaka, Japan in mid-September when she contests the World Championships.

"The top 19 go to the Olympics," Livingston said, two days before leaving for Bulgaria Aug. 19 for a training competition to prepare for the Osaka challenge.

Emilie claims to have fond memories of her stay in Stouffville.

"It was a nice place to live. I



Bruce Stapley

enjoyed Stouffville."

While she attended public school in Aurora, Emilie made sev-

eral friends in Stouffville.

"I'm still in touch with Karen Lemoine," she said of one of her closest Stouffville friends.

Emilie recalls that she had just taken up rhythmic gymnastics a year before her arrival in Stouffville.

"I remember we had a trampoline in our back yard," she noted, saying how the device assisted her in her training.

She practiced artistic gymnastics for six years before making the switch to the ribbons and hoops.

She said the Pan Am Games were something she'll remember

for a long time.

"It was a really great experience for me."

She said part of the fun came from watching the Guss Who perform at the Games closing ceremonies.

The Games also marked a triumphant return to the city where Emilie captured her first national title in June 1995 when she won the gold in the novice division at the Canadian Rhythmic Gymnastics

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