

# Mother Nature plays havoc with Smith duo

Stouffville's car rallying Smith brothers got a taste of winter racing on a recent cold weekend in Quebec City.

With Simon, 28, at the wheel, and Andrew, 17, in the navigator's seat, the duo braved frigid temperatures and icy roads to contest the Subaru/Yokohama Canadian Rallye De Quebec held Jan. 28-29. It marked the second national rally for the Smiths, who first took to the rally circuit last summer.

And as with their first-ever Canadian Rally Championship event last November in Bancroft, it was close but no cigar as the boys came within a sudden mishap of finishing second in their class.

This time they were done in by one too many treacherous snowbanks just as they were looking to overtake the second place car in the finishing stages of the two-day, 500-kilometre race.

"We had been gaining on him steadily and we were within 27 seconds of him when I got stuck," says Simon. "We had to wait 18 minutes until we could be towed out. By that time it was way too late to catch up again."

The Smiths had to settle for a third in their class, and a 25th overall out of 55 entries.

Up until their encounter with the crucial snowbank, Simon had been able to steer his way clear of every obstacle along the icy course that



Bruce Stapley

wound past the Plains of Abraham on its way through the Old City and its environs.

"I'd never driven in an ice rally before," acknowledged Simon, who chalked the whole thing up to experience. "The roads were all ice. They just put a little dirt on them."

It wasn't just the ice with which the Smith boys were forced to match wits. But with temperatures plunging well below the freezing point, the cab of their 1992 Suzuki Swift couldn't offer the same creature comforts as most passenger cars. With all the floor insulation removed as part of the modification they performed on the car to make it rally ready last year, they had to endure extremely cold feet most of the way through the race, which went from Friday afternoon until midnight, then resumed the next morning at 6 a.m.

The event concluded near midnight Saturday when the cars went seven laps in each direction in front of 5,000 spectators at Quebec City's Hippodrome.

The Smiths were accompanied to the rally by the Stouffville trio of Tim and Dave Irwin and Shane McAuley, who looked after servicing the Suzuki. Bruce Gilbert, who operates Bruce's Auto in Stouffville, also pitched in, fitting the car with Arctic ice tires.

Apart from the race, the Quebec experience allowed Andrew to use the French he learned while taking French immersion at Dickson Hill Public School a few years back.

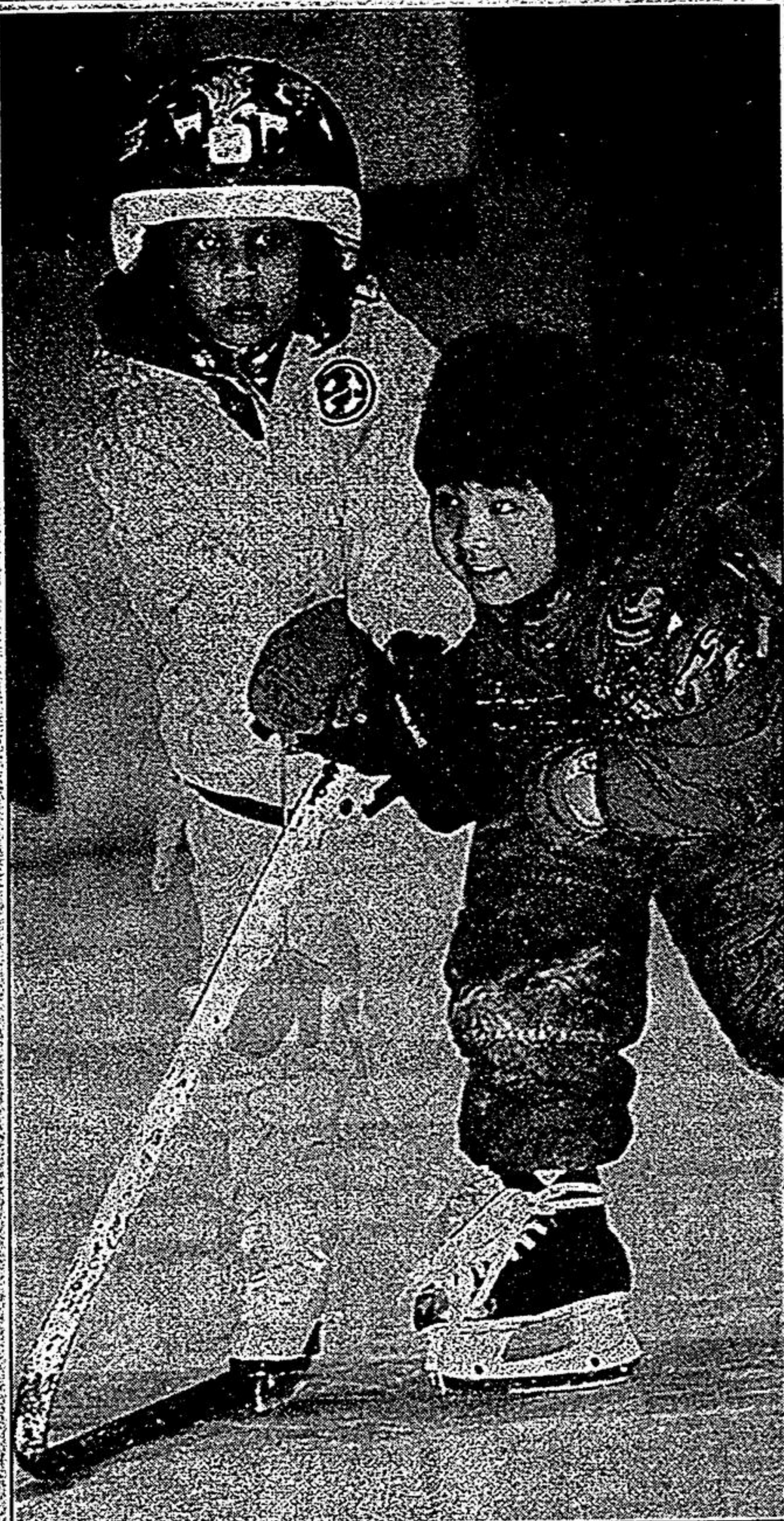
While the boys will try again when they return to La Belle Province for the Perce-Neige Rallye in Maniwaki Feb. 13, Andrew was to represent Stouffville in his first Ontario Ice Racing Series event the weekend of Feb. 5 in Minden.

## Smooth ride for skiers

A quartet of Stouffville female skiers posted impressive results in alpine competitions held across southern Ontario and Quebec in January.

Andrea Newmarch placed 16th and 22nd out of 77 competitors in slalom races held at a Federation International de Ski (FIS) event at Le Relais in Quebec

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STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

## HANGING ON FOR DEAR LIFE

Sherry Ghaly, 4, (far left) and Iesha Wu, 4, hold onto a balancing support as they graced the rec centre ice recently. The two youngsters were part of a group from Dickson Hill Public School that were learning how to skate.

## Spirit end regular season on low note

It's not the way Spirit head coach Brian Perrin wanted to see his charges end the regular season, but the Spirit of Stouffville enter the postseason on a rather suspect note.

The Spirit concluded their Provincial Junior A Hockey League regular season last weekend with road losses to the Markham Waxers 4-2 on Friday and 5-2 to the Newmarket Hurricanes on Sunday.

Anthony Minicucci and Michel Bond scored one goal apiece for the Spirit in the loss to the Waxers.

In Sunday's outing, Minicucci scored both goals for the Spirit, who battled the Hurricanes to a 2-2 tie through 40 minutes before succumbing in the final frame.

While the Spirit ended the stretch run winning just one of its last five games, Perrin tried to accentuate the positive.

For starters, with fifth place wrapped up last week, Perrin elected to try some different things in the final two games.

"We did a lot of different things to see what would work and what wouldn't. The effort was there. That's hockey," he said.

Perrin also pointed out that last season, the Spirit ended their regular season on a strong note only to bow out quickly in their playoff debut.

In finishing the regular season in fifth place, the Spirit will face the Aurora Tigers in a best-of-seven first-round series.

The series is slated to get underway Friday at 7:30 p.m. in Aurora and return to the rec centre Sunday at 1:30 p.m.



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