

It takes time to build a competitive hockey team

Chatting with newly installed Durham Huskies head coach Mike Murrell after last Thursday's loss to the host Stouffville Spirit at the Rec Complex, I couldn't help think of the old saying about being good to people you meet on the way up, because they're the same ones you'll encounter on the way back down.



Bruce Stapley

Just like the Spirit of the early futile years, the Huskies have been mired in the cellar of the Provincial Junior A Hockey League's North Conference for several seasons.

Also like the Spirit of those first four losing seasons, hope springs eternal as Murrell looks for the faintest ray of light.

"We beat North York (last place in the South Conference with just one win all season) last Saturday, and we only lost 5-3 to both Wexford and Stouffville (first in their respective divisions) this week," said Murrell. "We're kind of excited about that."

Of course it wouldn't occur to Mike, just as it didn't dawn on former Spirit head coach Dan Larmer, that top teams often tend to snooze through games with last-place teams, playing just well enough to win.

Murrell brings to the Huskies the rookie enthusiasm that goes with having coached East Gwillimbury to an Ontario midget championship in 1995 and the Bradford Bulls to their Junior C league title in 1998.

He would like to see his last-place Huskies erase the three-point deficit that stands between them and the seventh-place Huntsville Wildcats.

"We've got three games coming up with Huntsville," Murrell pointed out.

Murrell is hopeful he and his newly chosen assistant coaches, along with a few new additions to the Durham lineup, can give the team the boost it needs.

He suggests the schedule gives his club an edge over the final few months of the season.

"We've got 24 games left, and 14 of those are against teams under the .500 mark."

The conversation took me back to my post-

game interviews with the likeable Larmer, who, like Murrell, brought enthusiasm along with him when he was installed as Spirit head coach part way through the 1996-97 season.

Stouffville spent its first three seasons futilely chasing after the Lindsay Muskies and Couchiching (formerly Orillia) Terriers for the fourth and final playoff spot in the old Phillips Division.

But with points totals of 30, 19 and 35 respectively for their first three seasons, including season-ending losing streaks of eight, 13 and eight games, the dream died painfully each time.

I pulled out some back issues of *The Tribune* to help me better appreciate the lofty heights to which the Spirit has finally climbed: The January 17, 1998 edition reported how the Spirit had bounced the second place Aurora Tigers 8-2 behind Darcy King's two goals and three assists. The win brought Stouffville to within four points of Lindsay and six of Couchiching in its quest to exit the basement and make the playoffs for the first time.

"It was our best game of the season," Larmer had said, anticipating more to come over the remaining 10 games of the campaign.

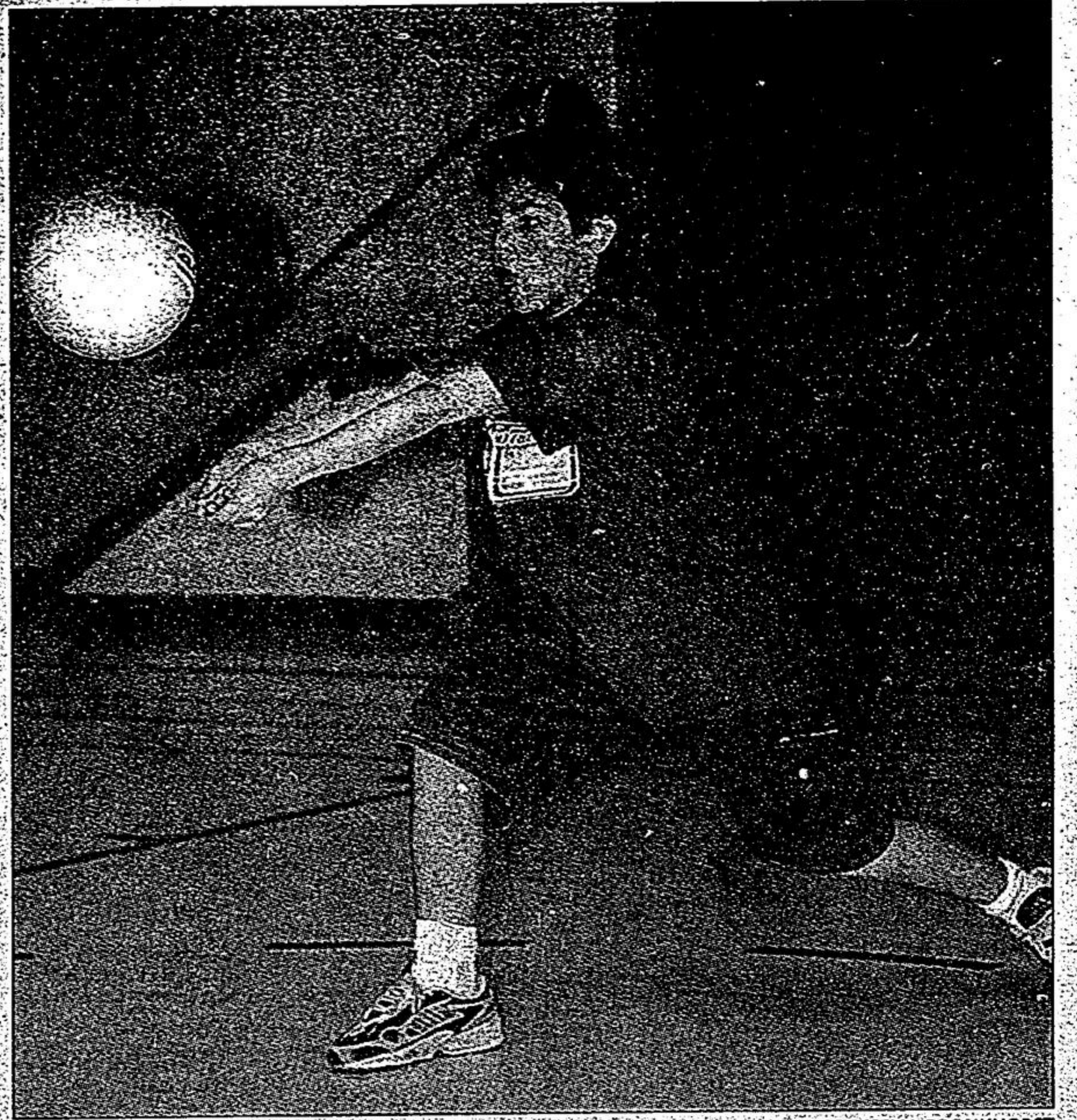
But alas, it turned out to be the team's last hurrah. The Spirit would win one more game the next week before being shut out the rest of the way.

Ironically, the Muskies and Terriers, and more recently the Spirit, have all gone on to experience great success since those days.

Talking with Murrell reminded me of the cycle that sports teams at all levels go through. The Spirit are finally sharing space on the top floor after six years of building and plodding.

Hopefully the team's fans will enjoy the ride while it lasts by flocking to the Rec Complex to cheer the club on.

And as for Murrell, the Huskies and their fans, I can only hope they eventually get to experience the gratification that comes with finally getting to stand fully illuminated by the light at the end of the tunnel.



PHOTO/CELIA BRONKHORST

CAN YOU DIG IT?

Eleven-year-old Colin Dickie returns a volley Monday during the final pre-Christmas Four Aces volleyball player development program session at Stouffville's Glad Park School. The program resumes Jan. 8 and runs through March 19. Call the town's leisure services department for more information.

Tyke Clippers crown Knights

The Stouffville Lion Restaurant tyke select Clippers won their sixth straight league game and remain atop the eastern division standings with an 11-0 win over the Nobleking Knights on Saturday. David Beloff recorded the hat trick while Mike Robinson added two goals for the Clippers. Connor Cadaret, Michael Mingay, Lindsay Burrows, Carson Trempe, Shawn Hulshof and Steven Tait added singles. Jeff Leuschner, Chanelle Hassard, Michael Mingay and Tait all earned assists.

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HOCKEY

Whitchurch-Stouffville

House League

BANTAM-MIDGET-JUVENILE

NOV. 29

Houston Ford 5, Giles Chev Olds 4. Houston Karl Bossi 2 goals, Mike Pennanen, James Wood, Brandon Miller 1 goal, Chris Tipson, Josh Archer, Russell Patterson 1 assist, Giles: Ryan Penny 2 goals, Chris McVicar, Darren McMullen 1 goal, 1 assist, Jordan Vanesterick 2 assists, Lee Akey, Chris Neuman 1 assist.

Rick Wannop Developments 6, Houston Ford 5, Rick Matt Sullivan 2 goals, 2 assists, Ryan York 2 goals, 1 assist, Mike Sutton, Heather McMannus 2 assists, Dan Cherkas, Rob Steckley 1 goal, Andrew Wannop 1 assist, Houston: Josh Archer 2 goals, 2 assists, Mike Pennanen 2 goals, Brandon Tardella 1 goal, 2 assists, Greg Smith 1 assist.

Patti-Lynn Interiors 5, Giles Chev Olds 4, Patti-Lynn: Shawn Barton 4 goals, 1 assist, Jeremy Cushing 1 goal, David Cuddle 1 assist, Giles: Darren McMullen 2 goals, Jordan Vanesterick, Chris Newman 1 goal, Luke Penny, Chris McVicar 2 assists, Ryan Penny, Brandon Miller 1 assist.

ATOM

NOV. 25

Cdn. Rail Car 4, Stanton Elec. 1, Cdn. Rail Car: B. Pelosse, F. Mullr, C. Potts, L. Horton, Stanton: D. Stanton, Superior Water 7, Mash 4, Superior Water: A. King 4, M. Whittingstall, S. Garret, A. Powell, MASH: B. Hord, B. Pettifer, S. Laws 2, Legion 459: 3, Lyon Graphics 2, Legion 459: J. Shankland, T. Robert, D. Goad, Lyon Graphics: B. Cowie.

TYKE

NOV. 25

Multi Service Electric 5, EC Flyers 1, Multi: Brandon Zifonko 4 goals, Mathew Dunlop 1 goal, Kyle Sauro 1 assist, EC: Marcel Cenic 1 goal, Emily O'Shaughnessy 1 assist, Ross Dixon 4, MGH Office Repairs 4, Ross:

Mitchell King 2 goals, Conner Caderet 1 goal, 2 assists, Lee Cowie 1 goal, MGH:

Daryl Thomson 3 goals, Jody Emmerson 1 goal, Joseph Hutchison 2 assists.

Fairgate Homes 9, Lionel's Pony Farm 2.

Fairgate: Jay Averill 2 goals, 2 assists, Austin Haw 3 goals, 1 assist, Billy Sutton 1 goal, 2 assists, Brandon Heath 1 goal, Ryan Bauer 1 assist, Lionel's: Taylor Clifford 1 goal, Josh Manson 1 goal.

Stouffville-Markham Girls

House League

NOV. 29

NOVICE

Credit Union 1, Harry Bowes 1, Credit Union: Kaitlin Wiles 1, Harry Bowes: Brittany Kassil 1, Unionville Motors 7, Unionville Hardware Flooring 1, Unionville Motors: Kendall Wield 4, Stephanie Devaston 1, Julia Hodgson, Rachelle Nasello 1, Unionville Hardware Flooring: Jessica Ziegler 1.

ATOM

Tim Hortons 4, Patti-Lynn Interiors 0, Tim Hortons: Dana Milne 2, Katie Belanger 1, Stephanie Seggle 1, Moller Insurance 5, Classic Plumbing 2, Moller Insurance: Stephanie Seggle 3, Linda McCabe 1, Lindsay Leung 1, Classic Plumbing: Marissa Chiesa 1, Vanessa Mound 1.

INTERMEDIATE

Bell Mobility 3, Lockwood Golf Club 2, Bell Mobility: Laura Wadsworth 2, Andrea Moens 1, Lockwood Golf Club: Stacey Lockie 1, Rebecca Staley 1, Maples Restaurant 2, Schickedanz 2, Maples Restaurant: Hanson 2, Schickedanz: scorers unknown.

SENIOR

Shopper's Drug Mart 6, Boyds 1, Shopper's Drug Mart: Michelle Dulude 3, Melanie Macchione 2, Carly Hill 1, Stacey Wolf 1, Boyds: Lauren Gainsbrook 1, Noma Cable Tech 2, Jones Pools 2, Noma Cable Tech: Lauren Gainsbrook 2, Jones Pools: Jennifer Blackman 1, Heather McManus 1.

SAHL

NOV. 28

OVER 20

TEAM	W	L	T	PTS
All-Weld Co. Ltd.	6	2	1	13
Fullerton's	6	2	1	13
National Sports	6	3	0	12
Dermoddy Insurance	4	3	2	10
Steve and Liz No Frills	4	4	1	9
Schell Lumber	4	5	0	8
Mackenzie Insurance	3	4	2	8
McAsphalt	3	4	2	8
Boyd's Sports	3	5	1	7
Burrows Landscaping	0	7	2	2

OVER 35

TEAM	W	L	T	PTS
Painters Edge	6	2	2	14
Melair Transport	5	2	3	13
Houston Ford	6	4	0	12
Bully Boys Sports	4	4	2	10
Jones Pools	4	4	2	10
Stouffville Co-Op	4	5	1	9
Nicasro Landscaping	3	5	2	8
B. Phillips Steeplejacks	2	8	0	4

SENIOR

TEAM	W	L	T	PTS
Rand Pools	6	1	3	15
Fullerton's	4	3	3	11
Habasit Canada	4	5	1	9
Stevens Large Tree Sales	3	4	3	9
VEC Carriage	2	3	5	9
K. May Real Estate	1	4	5	7

BOWLING

Monday Night Men's

NOV. 27

HIGH SINGLES: John Tait 254, Roger Cote 258, Pete Himes 255, 316, Paul Fillpuck 258, Ken Seymour, 339, Randy Melhuish 260, Bob Bundy 302, Glen Jackson Sr. 275, 350, Clinton Evans 280, Mike Bundy 259, 304, Jerry Snow 268, 250, 258. HIGH TRIPLES: Pete Himes 811, Glen Jackson Sr. 818.

WANTED CARRIERS

TO DELIVER THE ECONOMIST & SUN AND TRIBUNE IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

Markham

Peter Street	Fredericton Road	Whiteoak Court	Major Buttons Dr.
Pringle Avenue	Grandview Blvd	Almira Avenue	Raymerville Dr.
Rougecrest Dr.	Christiane Reesor Park Ave.	Main Street	Riverview Ave.
Paradise Ave.	Squire Bakers Lane	Forty Second St.	Hamilton Hall Dr.
Walkerville Rd.	Long Island Crescent	Cornell Park Ave.	Billy Joel Cres.
Stargell Crescent	Sir Kay Court	Sir Gareth Court	Willowgate Dr.

Unionville

Crispin Court	Leighland Drive	Fred Varley Drive	Carnforth Drive
The Bridle Trail	Normandale Road	Hastings Drive	Village Gate
Main St. Unionville	Longwater Chase	John Button Blvd.	Eyer Drive
McKay Crescent	Oakhaven Drive	Garcia Street	Emmeloord Cres.
Denby Court	Rowland Court	Ray Street	Spicer Circle
Gaudette Road	Calvert Road	Lazenby Court	Pratt Circle
Wembley Avenue	Pomander Road	Tuscay Court	Holmesdale Drive
Ferrah Road	Hollingham Road	Tomlinson Circle	Halstead Road
Conistan Road	Coledale Road	Captain Francis Dr.	Morrison Cres.
Trunpour Court	White Lotus Cir.	Coledale Road	Calderbridge Cres.
Loweswater Ave.	Mary Elizabeth Cres.	Fitzgerald Road	Major Elliott Court
Litchfield Rd.	Fairholme Road	Leighland Drive	Brantwood Court
Sutton Court	Townson Road	Cranleigh Drive	Sciberas Road
Hoodview Court	John Stiver Cres.	Ingleborough Ct.	Heatherwood Cres.
Hans Avenue	Queensgate Court	Greentree Road	Robert Street
Swansea Road	Briarwood Road	Russell Court	Janna Court

Milliken

Elvira Crescent	Black Walnut Dr.	Park Drive
Chatelaine Dr.	Meadow Grass Cres.	Edward Street
Bluebell Dr.	Russell Jarvis Dr.	Albert Street
Highglen Ave.	Roxbury St.	William Street
Eden Avenue	Saddlewood Court	Charles Street
Boxwood Cres	Perdue Court	Second Street
Debden Road	Dunbar Cres.	Main Street East

Stouffville

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