



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

WHERE'S THE PUCK?

Members of the Tim Hortons mite green and white teams searched high and low for the puck when they took to the Stouffville Arena ice last Saturday for their first taste of live house league game action.

Senior Spartans hold court

The Stouffville District Secondary School senior boys' basketball team is off to a perfect start in York Region action

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Sports Editor

Jim Fletcher says there's a little unfinished business his Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans senior boys' basketball team has to finish up this season.

And that's to win the York Region Athletic Association tier two title.

So far, it appears the Spartans are making good on that vow.

Through their first six league outings this season, the Spartans sport a perfect 6-0 mark on the hardwood floor in their seven-game schedule, which concludes Jan. 10 with a contest against Father Michael McGivney Academy.

Fletcher isn't surprised by what his charges have accomplished thus far.

"We're in great shape and I think we'll have a great season," he predicted.

In explaining his club's success in their eight-team tier two circuit, Fletcher says it stems from the time when the core of his club was in Grade 9.

That was the year in which Fletcher began coaching the kids and installed a system which car-

ried them to the YRAA semi-finals as juniors two seasons ago. With last season interrupted due to labour issues involving the teachers and provincial government, the Spartans do not appear to have missed a beat.

"They're good students," said Fletcher of his charges, which included seven who played on this season's senior boys' volleyball team that went to the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Association AA championships in Sudbury and were recipients of the sportsmanship award. "They're dedicated and they listen well and they don't miss practice. They give 110 per cent all the time and they have some skills. We work at it."

Coaching this year's team with Steve Shantz, Fletcher notes the team's added maturity has also been a key factor in their strong start.

"We have some intelligent leaders in Shane Timms and Ben Bellissimo," he cited.

Also making big contributions this season have been: Tim Lowrie, Tyler McMaster, Derek Konga and Cassidy Franks.

On a separate note, the Spartans travelled to Ajax last weekend to compete in the Denis O'Connor Tournament and came away with a split.

The Spartans won their opening game over Sinclair Secondary School 68-63.

Lowrie, Franks and Timms each scored 16 points.

Missing Konga and Lowrie in their second outing against Father Leo Austin due to personal commitments, the Spartans had a 14-point lead before suffering a 56-50 loss.

Sports gave Buckland the incentive to succeed

As a student, Laurie Buckland will be remembered as one of Stouffville District Secondary School's finest athletes.

He excelled in track and field, volleyball, basketball and quarterbacked the football team.

But it was while attending S.S. No. 12, Whitchurch Township, (Bethesda Public School), that he first tried the pole vault, then a little known sport at the secondary level.

Later, at SDSS, he would establish a mark of 10 feet, four inches, using a now archaic metal pole.

The record stood for years.

Buckland also established pole vault records at the regionals and placed fourth in Ontario.

While brilliant in track and field, it was his competitive team spirit that made Stouffville a school to be feared.

He helped lead the volleyball entry to a provincial championship and a fourth-place finish in the Eastern Canadians at Montreal.

"It was a timing thing," recalls Buckland, "the right people at the right time."

Each athlete, he remembers, possessed unequalled qualities - height, quickness and speed.

"For a small school, the results were amazing," he says.

Buckland describes his time at SDSS as "the best years of my life."

He recalls, with a smile how he and several fellow athletes returned to SDSS after Grade 13 "just to compete in sports."

Buckland readily admits nothing would have resulted athletically for him had it not been for physical education instructor Jim Rehill.

"He was and still is a pretty special guy," he says, "he taught us values in life we'll never forget."

Players he remembers include - Jim Hill, Herb Otto, Paul Grose, Ron Castle and Ian Montgomery.

Following graduation, Buckland worked for a time at two Stouffville golf



Jim Thomas

courses, Sleepy Hollow and The Willows, "for something to do."

"I always knew I'd have a career in sports," he says, "either teaching or broadcasting."

Little did he know then he'd one day serve as head pro and sports director at Aurora Highlands and now the head professional at Wooden Sticks, a prestigious 18-hole course in Uxbridge.

Between times, he co-owned Bradford Highlands and later, with Sandra Post, headed up golf school instruction at Deerhurst Lodge and Horseshoe Valley.

Buckland describes Wooden Sticks as "spectacular" with replica holes like those of Troon and St. Andrew's, Scotland; Augusta, Georgia; Island Green, Florida; Oakmont, Pennsylvania and Pine Valley, New Jersey.

"It's world class," he says, "there's nothing like it anywhere."

Although the course is a popular corporate choice, many from Stouffville find it enjoyable as well.

"For me, it's like old home week," he notes, "many visitors are close friends."

For someone who, 30 years ago, wasn't sure what course his life would take, Buckland considers himself "very fortunate."

"I'm doing what I enjoy doing most," he says.

He credits his father, the late Len Buckland and Rehill, with pointing his career in the right direction.

"I loved sports with a passion back then and I still do."

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