

SPORTS

There was no quit in individuals and teams in 2002

Sports stars and town squads overcame obstacles for memorable 2002

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

Refuse to lose. That old sports adage has been applied to many individuals and teams that had their backs to the wall only to overcome the odds and achieved success.

In Stouffville, that rallying cry appeared to be a prevalent theme throughout 2002. And more often than not, it paid off in rewarding dividends and created some memorable moments in the local sports scene.

Here is a sampling of what transpired:

In early April, the Stouffville juvenile Clippers had their backs to the wall in their Ontario Minor Hockey Association A championship series against the South Point Capitals.

Trailing the best-of-five series two games to one, the Clippers forced a return trip to Leamington after eking out a 1-0 overtime victory in the fourth game at Stouffville Arena.

In the rubber match, Dylan Harrison scored his second of the game with 5:01 remaining in the third overtime session to propel the Clippers to the coveted OMHA A title.

'DIDN'T QUIT'

"These guys are just great. They just didn't quit," said Clippers team captain Tyler Armstrong, who was also the 2002 recipient of the Dan McNeil Memorial Award that is handed out by the Whitechurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association.

Later that month, the Stouffville peewee Clippers also gained the distinction of being provincial champions after they defeated the Belle River Rink Rats 3-2 in the Ontario Hockey Federation A title in front of almost 500 onlookers at the Stouffville Arena.

The win atoned for an earlier loss the Clippers experienced at the hands of the Rink Rats in preliminary round action.

For the Clippers, their achievement marked the culmination of four hard and long years, said Clippers head coach Rick Sooley, who was also named Stouffville's 2002 Sports Personality of the Year.

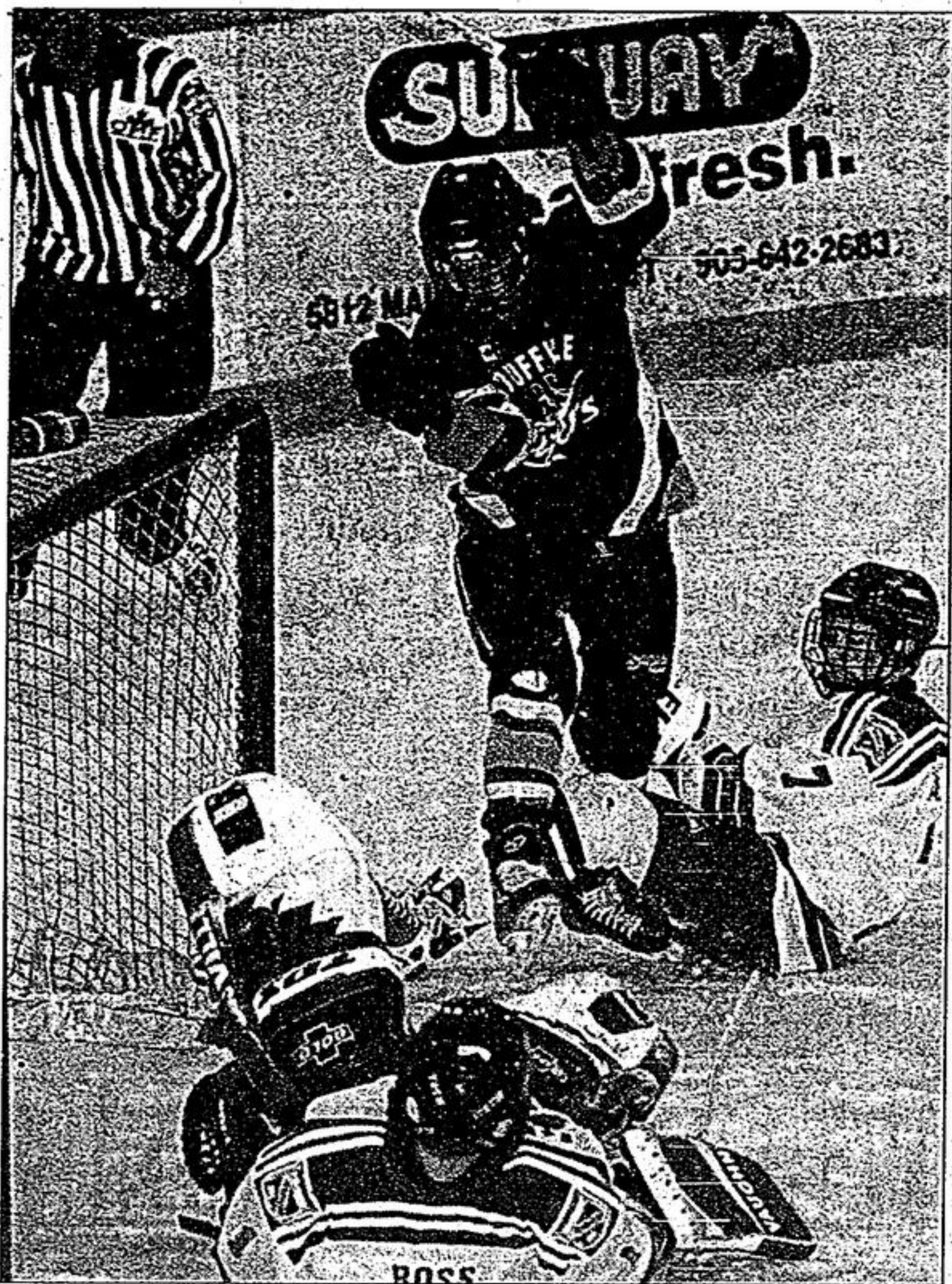


RICK SOOLEY: Stouffville peewee A Clippers coach was also named Stouffville's 2002 Sports Personality of the Year.

Although Stouffville did not field a peewee AAA hockey team, Cory Tanaka, a 13-year-old Stouffville resident and Grade 8 student at Glad Park Public School was a member of the Richmond Hill Stars and delivered the game-winning goal in overtime to propel his team to a 1-0 win over the Boston Eagles in their division final of the 43rd annual Quebec peewee tournament.

In women's hockey, the Markham-Stouffville novice C Stars brought home the gold medal from the Ontario Women's Hockey Association provincial playdowns with a 3-0 win over Stratford in their championship final.

Several members of the Stouffville Spirit concluded their season by garnering individual awards. Anthony Minitucci was the north conference MVP and earned the same honours for the Spirit when they handed out their individual awards. J.D. Smithson was named the club's playoff MVP. Other awards went to first-year players: Garrett McCrea, best defenceman; Michael Comisso, most sportsmanlike; Kevin Jarman, rookie of the year; Kyle Zoon, most improved player and Mike Forgie,



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Although Stouffville peewee Clippers forward Ben Sampson (dark uniform) was denied a goal on this save by a Kitchener Rangers' goalie during action in this year's Ontario Hockey Federation peewee A championships at the Stouffville Arena, his club had the last laugh as they captured the provincial title with a 3-2 win over Belle River in the title tilt in April. In the final game, Sampson was also named the Clippers' player of the game.

coaches' award. Gary Tobin and Dave Dennis were named co-winners of the team's volunteer of the year award.

SPIRIT SCHOLARSHIPS

To start the 2002-03 season, Jarman's continued improved play was noticed by the University of Massachusetts Minuteman hockey team, who signed the second-year Spirit forward to a scholarship for the following season. Forward Mike Forgie also fulfilled a dream by earning a full ride to Wayne State University in Detroit.

Heroics weren't only confined in the hockey rinks.

In curling, Stouffville resident Fran Allan skipped her first-year Unionville Curling Club entry of Lynne Wasyluk, Janet Stover and Kathy Cassin to the master women's provincial title and qualified for the national master's women's championships in Medicine Hat, Alta.

On the ball diamond, the Stouffville Jones Pools midgets overcame an opening-game loss in the provincial midget boys' double elimination softball tour-

namment to win their next seven games and reach the final against Scarborough. Although the clock struck 12 on the Jones Pools gang in the deciding game, they earned a berth in the Canadian championships that were held in Napanee in August.

At the nationals, the Jones Pools entry were seventh in the round-robin segment before rallying to win three emotional playoff games to finish third overall.

The season also proved to be rewarding for Jones Pools catcher Jon Ferguson, who was one of four players from across the province that the Ontario Amateur Softball Association recognized and rewarded with a \$1,000 OASA scholarship that was to be applied to further their education.

Paul Koert, who played softball this past summer for a team in Amsterdam, New York, earned a berth on Team Canada and took to the rubber at the Pan American qualifiers in Guatemala in November.

The 23-year-old lefthanded hurler did his part for Canada, which settled

for the silver medal, by pitching the club to three victories.

In finishing second, Canada qualified for the 2003 fastball Pan American Games in Rio Isabel, Santa Domingo.

In lacrosse, Stouffville residents Jim Veltman and Glenn Clark helped propel the Toronto Rock to their third National Lacrosse League title in the last four years with a 13-12 fourth quarter, come-from-behind win over the Albany Attack in the championship final in Albany.

LACROSSE STARS

Veltman, who was captain of the Rock, gained the distinction of being named captain of Canada's entry in the 2003 world indoor lacrosse championships.

In the National Lacrosse League's annual draft, Stouffville Spirit defenceman/forward J.D. Smithson, 20, was drafted by the Calgary Roughnecks with their second pick and 26th overall. Smithson would eventually see his rights dealt to New Jersey.

The resolve exhibited by local athletes and teams could also be found at Stouffville Team Canada qualify for 2003 Pan-District Secondary American Games.

During the senior boys' volleyball campaign, the Spartans overcame the absence of captain Kevin McGrath, who incurred a broken arm during the regular season, to earn a berth in the OFSAA AA playdowns by defeating Dr. F.J. Donevan Collegiate Devils in the Durham-York championship game.

The Spartans senior boys' basketball came a long way after going winless five years ago to capturing the YRAA tier two title in February with a 51-40 win over Father Michael McGivney Academy.

HIGH SCHOOL HEROES

The Spartans senior boys' rugby team earned a berth at the OFSAA AA playdowns and tackled the Teacup championship with a 14-0 win over Napanee District High School.

Lindsay Hermanson, a Grade 12 student, finished seventh overall in the girls' field at the OFSAA golf festival at Hawk Ridge Golf Club in Orillia. Hermanson's exploits on the fairways would pay off in a full athletic scholarship to Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, North Carolina.

Cassie Sparks carried the banner for SDSS at the OFSAA cross-country championships in Port Hope after finishing second in the YRAA midget girls' division. For the Grade 10 student, her appearance marked the second straight year she qualified for OFSAA.

Dana Wood, a 15-year-old Grade 10 student led a Spartans' track and field contingent at the YRAA championships by winning three gold medals and establishing school marks in the junior girls' 400m, 100m and 200m.

Wood was also part of a 4 x 100m relay team that included Jasmine Geense, Tiziana Cotechini and Jacqui Harris that won gold.

At the OFSAA championships, Wood claimed a bronze in the 400m.

In the boys' field, Kevin McGrath set a school record in the senior boys' javelin and earned a silver medal at OFSAA.

In concluding the school year, SDSS honoured Hannah Flemming as its senior girls' MVP while Shane Timms and Travis McMaster shared the senior boys' MVP honours.

IN THE FAST LANE

In auto racing, Gormley resident Ashley Taws, 18, became the first woman to stand on the podium at a Canadian Formula Ford Championship race after driving her Be Anything With Barbie at Wal-Mart vehicle to a third-place finish in her first pro race at Motorsport International Raceway in May.



PAUL KOERT: Lefthanded hurler helped Stouffville Team Canada qualify for 2003 Pan-District Secondary American Games.

Competing in her inaugural season, which saw her car temporarily stolen while racing in Quebec, Taws concluded it by finishing in a tie for third place in the overall series standings.

In other auto racing news, Jonathan Macri motored his way to a second-place effort in CART Toyota Atlantic events in Portland, Oregon and Toronto. He also had a third-place effort in a race at Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Completing his sophomore season in the CART Toyota Atlantic series, Macri finished seventh overall.

A second-place finish in the CASCAR Super Series season finale at Delaware Speedway in London in late September enabled Stouffville driver Peter Gibbons to earn a fourth-place overall finish in the final series standings.

Go-kart racer Kyle Herder won Canadian Senior series division title in the Sunoco Ron Fellows Karting series in early August. Herder was the first competitor to win a division title, of which four were up for grabs, by winning it with two rounds remaining in the series.

In equestrian, Stouffville resident Belinda Trussell was part of a four-member Canadian team that competed at the World Equestrian Games in Spain in September. The 30-year-old owner/operator of Oakcrest Farms and her mount, Royan, a brown Oldenburg gelding, earned a berth on the four-member Canadian team after helping the Canadian team win the Gold Cup of Grand Prix title in Blainville, Quebec.

After incurring a broken collarbone while riding, 17-year-old Teaghan James got back up on her mount and earned a berth on a Young Riders equestrian team that represented Canada in the Gold Cup in Germany in October. James finished fifth at the Canada Cup finals that was held in Blainville, Quebec.

MARTIAL ARTS

In martial arts, three members of the Sheffield Judo club gained berths on the provincial junior team after posting top-three results at the provincial championships: Kerry Lynne Hulshof, 16, won the 53-kilogram IJF junior girls division while Seiji Ishiguro, 18, won the 81-kg IJF junior boys' division. Kyle Chee-a-tow, 17, finished third in the 60-kg IJF junior boys' division. All three members competed at the nationals in Edmonton.

On the slopes, downhill skier Katelyn Button moved a step closer to fulfilling a dream of representing the national team when she was named to a six-member provincial team that would compete in events in Ontario, Quebec and Alberta.

In masters sports, veteran long-distance runner Fred Robbins headed the field in his 45-49 age group category at the Invitational Master's Mile in New York City. The 47-year-old Stouffville resident won his age group class after being clocked in four minutes, 38.9 seconds.



Members of the Stouffville juvenile Clippers were honoured for winning the Ontario Minor Hockey Association A level title with a parade through Stouffville in early April.

4 DAYS ONLY! BOXING WEEK BLOWOUT

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