

# SPORTS

## Leonard hopes to score gold at world amputee championships

BY JIM THOMAS  
Correspondent

A 35-year-old Stouffville resident is playing for Canada at the world amputee hockey championships in Finland this week.

Shawn Leonard, accompanied by wife Tara, left Toronto Friday to participate in a tournament that started Saturday and concludes this weekend.

Mr. Leonard was named to the national team following tryouts in November at York University.

The selection helps erase the disappointment of not being able to take part in the 2002 Winter Olympics at Salt Lake City, Utah. At that time, he was sidelined due to knee surgery.

Mr. Leonard, a graduate of Stouffville District Secondary School, possesses a prosthetic left hand. He has been without a hand since birth.

Because the disability is disguised by a glove and due to his deftness in handling a stick, most spectators and opposing players are unaware any problem exists.

"I never had it (a left hand)," said the 200-pound centre, "so I don't miss it."

He claims throughout his hockey career, that includes a 1982 Ontario Bantam-B championship with the Stouffville Clippers, he's never been treated differently than anyone else.

For 17 years, he played in the Stouffville Amateur Hockey League and still skates every Thursday with the Uxbridge Black Hawks oldtimers.

*"How many opportunities in a lifetime does one have to represent his country?"*

Mr. Leonard says he wears a hockey glove more for the protection of others than himself.

"Fighting's never been a part of my game," he said. The team in Helsinki includes many of the same players who performed in Salt Lake City, Mr. Leonard said.

The roster includes 12 forwards, six defencemen, and two goaltenders, with representation from coast to coast.

Their initial opponents was their arch-rivals from the United States.

The Canadian entry takes a perfect record into the competition.

"Because we're the champs, other teams will be anxious to knock us off," he noted.

Also, because his hook hand is hidden by a glove, the credibility of his participation may be suspect.

"Rival coaches may want to check me out," he laughed.

Mr. Leonard said he's in awe watching others perform, some with artificial legs. "They're amazing," he said.

Because the team receives no government aid, players must pay their own way, about \$2,000 each.

"I think it would be nice if the government chipped in a



Proudly donning his Team Canada hockey uniform, Stouffville resident Shawn Leonard, 35, will take to the ice in Helsinki, Finland at the World amputee hockey championships. Possessing a prosthetic left hand, Mr. Leonard also plays in the Stouffville Amateur Hockey League and with the Uxbridge Black Hawks oldtimers.

little," he said. "It might provide younger boys and girls greater incentive to play the game."

Mr. Leonard considers it "a great honour" to represent Canada at this level of hockey competition.

"How many opportunities in a lifetime does one have to represent his country?" he asked.

"My wife's excited too," he said, "and our kids think it's pretty cool."

## SDSS rugby boys face top teams in Stratford

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA  
Staff Writer

It might seem a little strange the Stouffville District Secondary School senior boys' rugby team is playing pre-season games.

Spartans' head coach Jamie Hewitt explained there's a good reason for his decision — his team will play just three league games.

The Spartans open league play Monday, when they face Sutton District High School at Bayview Secondary School.

"With so few league games, that's why we play a lot of exhibition games," he said.

In running up to the regular season, the Spartans have won two and tied one of their first three pre-season tilts.

The Spartans expect to get a good idea of how good they are when they go to Stratford tomorrow to take part in the Miller Cup.

Mr. Hewitt noted the one-day event will feature teams that were highly ranked at last year's provincial AA championships, the same event in which the Spartans competed.

"Stratford Northwestern were silver medallists last year and Lambton Centennial were fourth. Playing these teams will enable us to size up our competition a little more," Mr. Hewitt said.

His own team will be keyed by the leadership of team captain Kevin Hayward, who also plays



KEVIN HAYWARD: Captain of Stouffville Secondary School's senior boys' rugby team.

for the Stouffville Spirit junior A hockey team, and outside centre Tyler McMaster.

Mr. Hewitt believes it will be a highly competitive bunch despite missing seven players from last season through graduation.

*"I think we're solid technically and I think we can play quite well. I'm excited about this team."*

"We're playing well in spurts," Mr. Hewitt said. "The guys are working hard and our fitness level is outstanding right now. I think we're solid technically and I think we can play quite well. I'm excited about this team."

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