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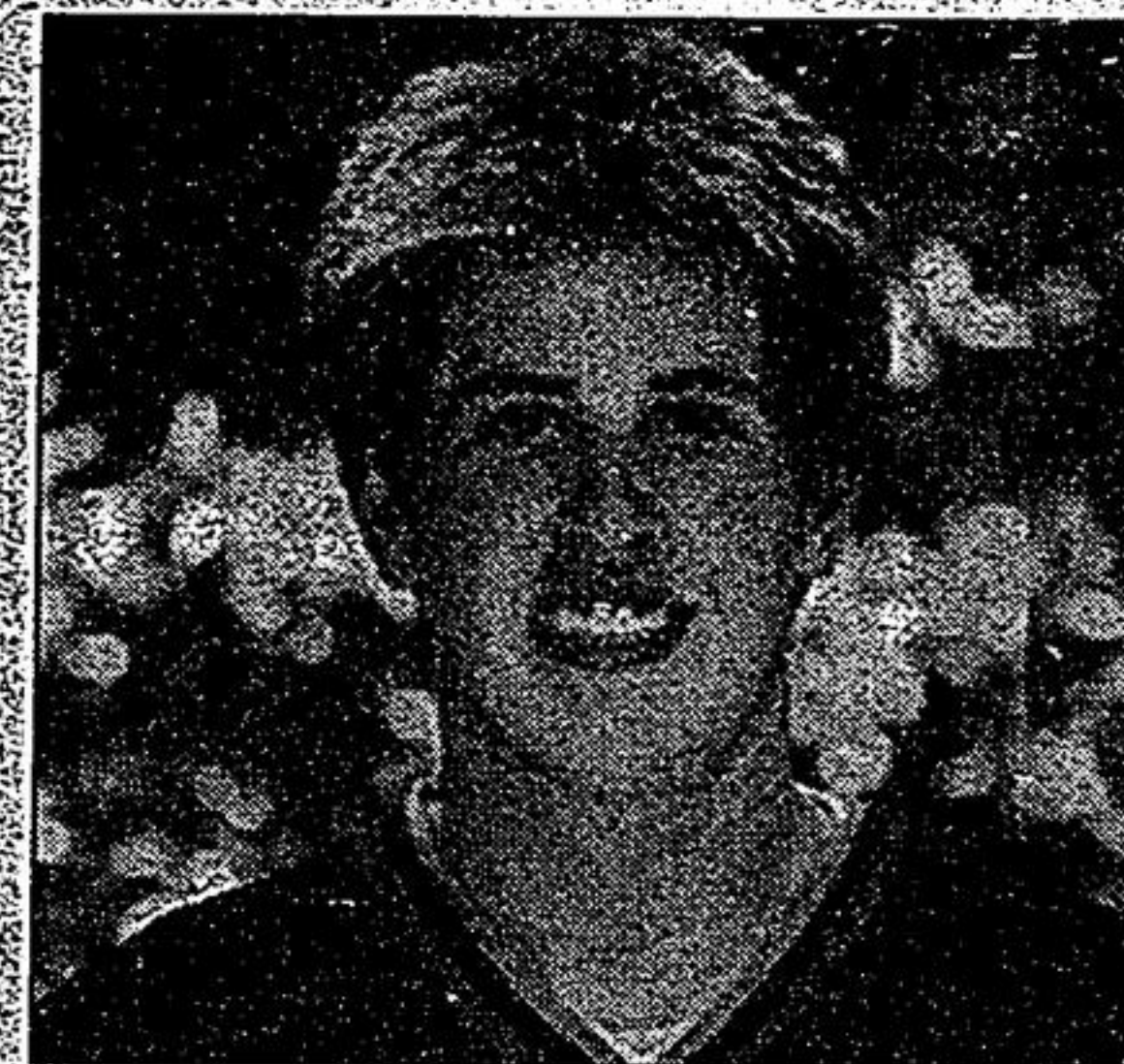
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Kropman stands tall on Spirit pre-season roster

The hulking forward at Stouffville Spirit training camp looks like he might fit in at an National Football League camp just as well.

At 6-foot-6, 235 pounds, Mike Kropman appears to be tight-end material. But he'll suit up at centre for the Spirit junior A hockey team this winter. Spirit camp opened Aug. 12 at the Stouffville Arena, but was interrupted by the blackout that hit southern Ontario. The Provincial Junior A Hockey League team lost 11 hours of practice time while arena staff saved ice on both pads of the arena.



MIKE KROPMAN: Despite being Spirit's final cut two years ago, the 6-foot-6 forward wants to play in Stouffville this season.

SPIRIT HOSTS LINDSAY TONIGHT

The Spirit plays its first exhibition game tonight at the rink. The Lindsay Muskies provide the opposition starting at 7:30. The Spirit hosts the Mississauga Chargers in the only other pre-season game being played in Stouffville Sept. 4 at 7:30 p.m.

The Spirit opens the regular season Sept. 11 against the Newmarket Hurricanes in Stouffville.

Kropman has wanted to play for the Spirit for the last three seasons. Two years ago, the Maple resident was the last player cut by the Spirit. On the advice of the Belleville Bulls, who drafted him in 2000 from the Don Mills Flyers, he went to the United States to play junior B for the Connecticut Clippers.

Last year, the Bulls wanted him in Smiths Falls of the Ottawa-based Central Junior A Hockey League. Kropman agreed but says he really

wanted to be in Stouffville.

"I'm finally here playing for people I know and trust," he said.

The Spirit has to replace its top five scorers from last year's North Conference finalist squad. Kropman won't be filling the net, but he'll try to create space for those who can.

"I love it, that's my game," he said. "I can't wait until the team is picked and we know who are teammates."

Some of the 40 hopefuls still in camp were literally fighting for spots on the weekend. Not that anyone was challenging the giant Kropman.

"You can still drop the mitts in camp and go into the dressing room and be friends, but it will be better when the season starts," he said.



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