

# Hockey players like homework help

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA  
Staff Writer

Simon Wauchop's name won't be listed on the gamesheet when the Markham AAA midget Waxers play an Ontario Minor Hockey Association contest.

But the 60-year-old Aurora resident has been a major contributor to the club's success this season.

Not on the ice, but rather away from it, assisting players with their studies in the classroom.

Mr. Wauchop, the club's unofficial academic adviser, works with two other tutors, Michael Farmer and Susan Bogart, in helping Waxers with their school work.

In some cases, tutors have assisted players hoping to earn a hockey scholarship at a college or university in the United States in preparing them for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), a mandatory admissions requirement.

Mr. Wauchop says the program, believed to be the first for any minor hockey team in Ontario, has been a success.

Half of the team members have signed up for the program. He anticipates more players will sign up once the



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Tutor Simon Wauchop (right) helps Markham AAA Waxer midgets (from left) Justin Hitchen, 16, a Grade 11 student at Stouffville District High School; Mick Ralph, 17, a Grade 12 student at Markham District High School and Daryl Rothon, 17, a Grade 12 student at Huron Heights Secondary School, with schoolwork as coach Joe Cornacchia looks on.

next semester starts later this month.

"It's going fairly well and it's been a great experience," he said.

The program was started last spring by Waxers head coach Joe Cornacchia, after Mr. Wauchop assisted his son.

Mr. Wauchop and his

assistants work with the players once a week at their home in one-on-one or two-on-one sessions.

"I think what students need is to feel they have someone who they can turn to," said Mr. Wauchop, who holds a PhD in atmospheric chemistry and has worked in the chemical engineering

field.

"To see the students' eyes light up when they begin to understand things is really rewarding."

A veteran minor hockey coach in Markham and Stouffville, Mr. Cornacchia said the idea to place an emphasis on education is part of his philosophy in run-

ning an elite hockey program.

Mr. Cornacchia, the president of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association, found corporate sponsorship to help pay tutors.

As a result, the service is provided to the players free of charge.

"One of the things we wanted to do is to give the youngsters a chance to do better in school because the majority of them on our team are in Grade 12.

"Rather than raise money for other things like travel expenses we did it to hire tutors and so far it's been well received. It's helping out the kids," said Mr. Cornacchia, who is in his first year coaching the Waxers midget squad.

Players are also encouraged to play high school hockey.

The tutors specialize in English, mathematics and sciences.

"My marks have gone up quite a bit," said Stouffville's Justin Hitchen, a Waxers forward in Grade 11 at Stouffville District Secondary School.

"When you have someone who knows what they're doing, it's a big help."

Shareef Labreche, a forward with the Waxers, insists the tutorial sessions have provided a sense of discipline with his study habits. As a result, he estimates his grades have improved by at least 15 per cent.

"Normally, I wouldn't have set aside a time to study but (the tutorial sessions) have helped. My marks definitely would have been a lot lower if I didn't have these sessions," said Shareef, a Grade 12 student at Markham District High School.

Forward Mike Raynor notes his grades in English have improved anywhere from 5 to 10 per cent from a year ago.

Mike was skeptical at first, thinking tutors wouldn't be impressed working with hockey players. He found if players show commitment to improve their marks, the tutors reciprocate.

"This program definitely seems to work," he said.

Mr. Wauchop agrees and hopes the program will serve as an example for other teams across the province.

"The whole idea is to get other clubs to follow suit," he said.

"We have to refocus on what we're doing in minor hockey," Mr. Cornacchia said.

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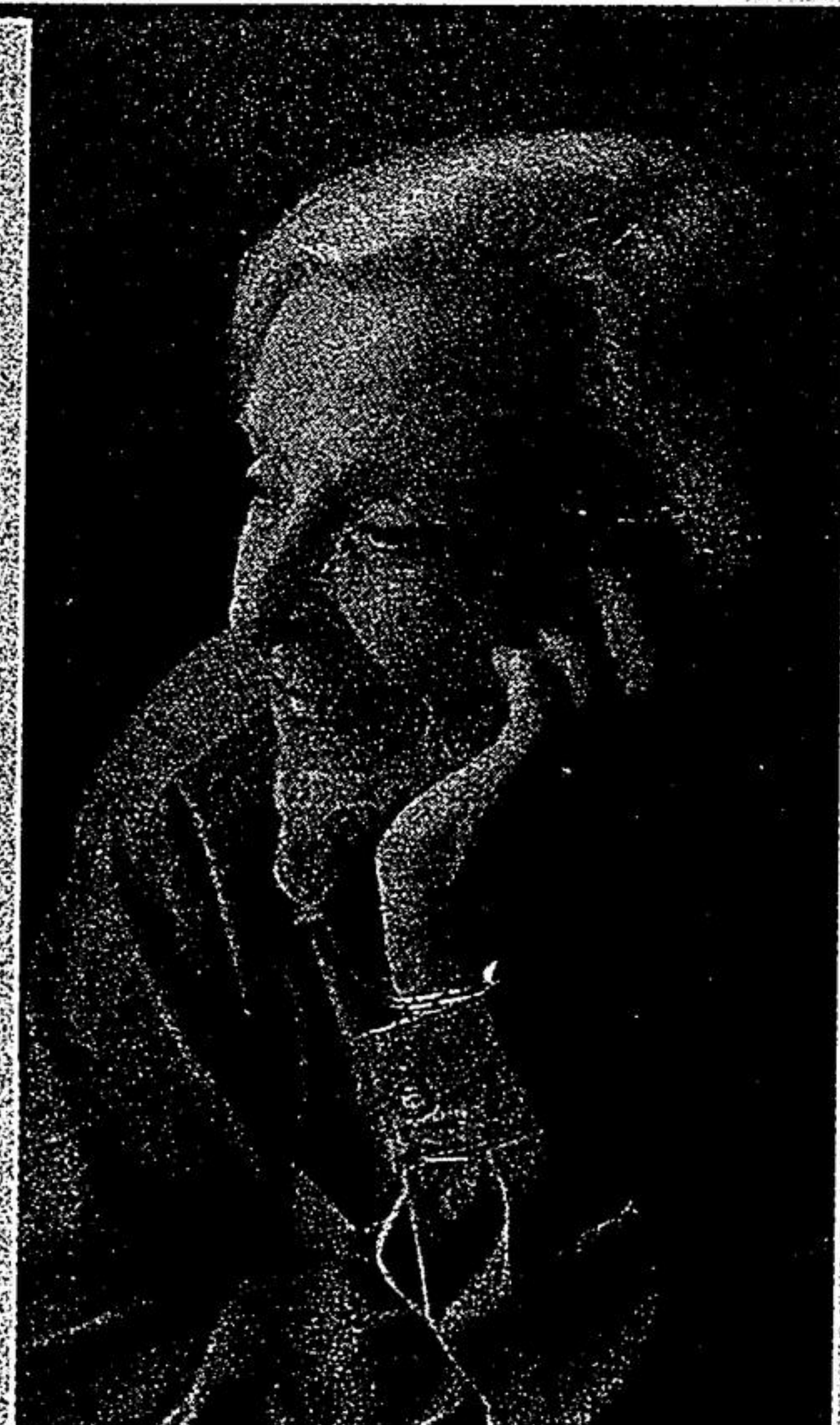
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