

# SPORTS



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

## Trying to get handle on the situation

In an effort to prevent the puck from eluding him, Jake Rodgers used a little fancy footwork to deflect it towards his stick when the Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association conducted its weekly mite house league contests Saturday at the Stouffville Arena. Rodgers' team won 5-1.

## Knox has passion for guarding twine

*Female goalie has backstopped two teams to provincial titles*

BY JIM THOMAS  
Correspondent

Over the years, Stouffville has produced many excellent hockey goaltenders.

Names like Jack Harper, Norm Stunden, Blake Eatough, Dusty Rhodes, Glenn Jackson and George Eliopoulos will long be remembered for their backstopping skills.

Each was embraced by the teams for which they played as well as spectators who came to watch.

While Liz Knox has a long way to go to reach this level, the 15-year-old Stouffville District Secondary School student is fast becoming the centre of attention.

Coaches and fans, both home and away, praise her skills.

She's a member of the SDSS Spartans girls' team and Markham-Stouffville intermediate AA Stars.

### HOUSE LEAGUE BEGINNINGS

It was during her early house league years that Knox decided to give goaltending a try. It eventually reached the point where she has remained a steady fixture in net.

Knox has already performed with two all-Ontario champions, including a peewee AA girls' team in 1999 that ousted Kitchener and the other, a major peewee A boys' club that defeated Belle River in 2002 in Stouffville.

She is ecstatic girls' hockey has made a comeback at Stouffville District Secondary School after an absence of several years.

She's loud in praise of coaches Brian Shankman and Daniel McConnachie.

"They've been very patient," she says, "placing no undue pressure on their players."

They're also positive in their approach to the game, win or lose, she adds.

Although early morning practices at 7:30 means getting up at 6, Knox doesn't see this as a problem.

However, leaving afternoon classes early to make games in other towns, doesn't go over well with some teachers, she notes.

"I always find out what I've missed," she says, "so far, I've been able to keep my grades up."



LIZ KNOX: Tends goal for the Stouffville Secondary Spartans and Markham-Stouffville intermediate AA Stars.

Often playing up to six times a week, Knox concentrates on improving all aspects of her game.

Idolizing New Jersey Devils goalkeeper Martin Brodeur, Knox says being busy between the pipes keeps her sharp.

She notes in some contests, she might handle as many as 50 shots.

With the Markham-Stouffville Stars, she alternates with Danielle Beattie, a system she believes is working well.

### PARENTS BIG HELP

She admits, however, she's more nervous sitting on the bench than standing in the net.

Knox attributes her success largely to her parents Doug and Gwen, who attend most of her games.

Last summer, they made it possible for her to attend a hockey camp in Brampton.

Knox also found the time last summer to assist at a Sudbury hockey camp operated by her grandfather.

They both know how much I love it," said Knox, who also enjoys playing soccer, volleyball and basketball.

Hockey, however, remains her passion.

Following graduation from Stouffville Secondary, Knox wants to continue her hockey career and earn a scholarship at a U.S. university.

## Spirit keeps playing playoff waiting game

*Third-place Stouffville to face Couchiching or Thornhill in first round of post-season play*

The busiest member of the Stouffville Spirit this week will never step onto the ice.

Ron Archibald, the junior A hockey team's assistant general manager, is attempting to plan the Provincial Junior A Hockey League team's playoff schedule.

The regular season concludes Sunday, but the three contests the Spirit has remaining are inconsequential. They're locked into third place in the North Conference.

That means they will play a best-of-seven first round series against either the Couchiching Terriers or Thornhill Major Islanders.

The series is likely to commence next Thursday

at the Stouffville Arena.

The Spirit would play home games Thursday and Sunday nights in the first round.

In a bizarre playoff setup, the top four teams in each of the North and South earn home ice advantage.

The Spirit will meet the fifth-best team from the rest of the North and South.

Couchiching and Thornhill are currently tied for that spot.

But the Terriers have the easier weekend, including an automatic two points over dormant Huntsville.

"We could know by Friday night," Archibald said, going through the scenarios one more time.

The Spirit, idle since getting hammered 9-3 last Thursday by Couchiching, hosts the Collingwood Blues tonight at 7:30 and visits the Blues Friday at 8 p.m.

The final game on the Spirit schedule is Sunday in Newmarket at 7:30 p.m.

For more information on the Spirit, see Sportsboard on page 23 or log on to [www.stouffvillespirit.com](http://www.stouffvillespirit.com)



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