

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

## SPORTS

## Senior Spartans ice top spot in YRAA east division

First senior boys' regular season title for hockey team

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA  
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The Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans senior boys' hockey team staked its claim to something that no other team in the York Region Athletic Association eastern division could do this season.

It wrapped up first place.

The Spartans accomplished this feat for the first time in the school's senior boys' hockey history by defeating the five-time defending YRAA champion Brother Andre Catholic High School Cardinals 3-2 Tuesday at Mount Joy Arena.

"It sure feels great," Spartans head coach Jamie Hewitt said.

The Spartans entered the contest after a disappointing time at the prestigious Father Goetz Classic in Mississauga last weekend.

Playing three games in a tournament featuring many potential Ontario Federation of School Athletic Association-bound teams, the Spartans defeated Denis Morris Catholic High School (St. Catharines) 5-0, but suffered a 4-3 overtime loss to St. Peter's Catholic High School (Peterborough) and a 1-0 setback to Catholic Central (London). That record prevented the Spartans from advancing into the playoffs.

#### REALITY SETS IN

Hewitt speculated the tournament performance might have served as a wake-up call for his players.

"We hadn't lost a game since Nov. 14 in our tournament. Maybe our heads were getting a little too big and I could see it," Hewitt said. "Entering the tournament I said to (assistant coach) Rob Edmonson that maybe the



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEN

Stouffville District Secondary School Spartan defenders Matt Mulder, left, and Jordan Artindale put the squeeze on Brother Andre Catholic High School Cardinals' forward Ricky Seymour in Tuesday's York Region Athletic Association senior boys' hockey game at Mount Joy Arena in Markham. The Spartans won 3-2 and clinched first place in the east division. The Spartans can wrap up the best overall record in the region with a win today at the Stouffville Arena in their regular season finale against Unionville High School.

best thing that could happen to us is if we lose a game. As disappointing as it was it was a good thing that we lost. The kids responded well. To go in and beat Brother Andre in their own barn, that's an accomplishment.

In their contest against Brother Andre, the Spartans drew first blood in the opening period on a goal by Justin Hitchen.

But the Cardinals rallied for two unanswered goals in the second period to take a 2-1 advantage.

The Spartans, however, retaliated with two unanswered goals of their own in the final period,

including a game-tying power-play marker by Jordan Artindale with eight minutes left and one from Nick Hawkins with three minutes left to win the game.

#### KEY SAVE BY GIBSON

Helping to preserve the win was some solid netminding from Shawn Gibson, who made a big save with his blocker in the final period when the score was knotted at 2-2.

Hewitt wasn't totally surprised with the title.

"I felt that our team had a shot to win it at the start of the year," he said. "This is definitely the best

team that I've had here. Our team has all of the elements to do well. I'm very pleased, but not shocked."

With first place wrapped up in the east, the Spartans, now 7-0-1, still have a chance at posting the best overall record in the YRAA if they can win their final league game today when they host the Unionville High School Wolves at 2:30 p.m. at the Stouffville Arena.

A victory there would assure the Spartans of home ice throughout the playoffs.

With their first-place finish, the Spartans will have a first-round bye and won't play until

the quarter-finals start Feb. 16 or 17.

#### Girls shut out in Newmarket

In girls' hockey action, the Spartans ventured to Newmarket Tuesday to face the first-place Huron Heights Secondary School Warriors and came out on the short end of a 2-0 decision.

The Spartans, now 4-6-1, will conclude their regular season today in Newmarket against Dr. J.F. Dennison Secondary School.

The Spartans are assured of a berth in the playoffs.

#### Spartans to hoop it up

The Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans senior boys' basketball team will host an eight-team tournament Saturday starting at 8 a.m.

Other teams taking part include Brother Andre Catholic High School, Unionville High School, Sutton District Secondary School, Aurora High School, Port Perry High School and Kenner Collegiate of Peterborough.

The final is slated to tip off at 6 p.m.

Last weekend, the Spartans put in a little overtime at the Mentor College senior boys' basketball tournament in Mississauga before emerging with a 52-48 win over the host team to win the friendship final.

Gavin Howe led the Spartans with 15 points while Kevin Haddaway and Curtis Reesor each added eight.

The Spartans lost two close games to Cawthra 45-41 and to Sir Winston Churchill (St. Catharines) 52-46.

Reesor was the club's high scorer in the tournament with 32 points in three contests. Mike Devries was club's most valuable player for the tournament.

## Spirit hopes to revert to winning ways against Thornhill

Best-of-seven playoff series starts tonight in Stouffville

The Stouffville Spirit hopes to open the playoffs tonight in the opposite way it ended the regular season.

The Spirit lost five of its last six games and its final four at home to end the Provincial Junior A Hockey League season at 27-21-1-0. The Spirit finished in third place in the North Conference, a spot it had been locked into for several weeks.

The Spirit meets the Thornhill Major Islanders (18-26-4-1) in a best-of-seven playoff series starting tonight at the Stouffville Arena. Game 2 goes Saturday at

the Thornhill Community Centre and Game 3 will be played Sunday at the Stouffville Arena. All are 7:30 p.m. starts.

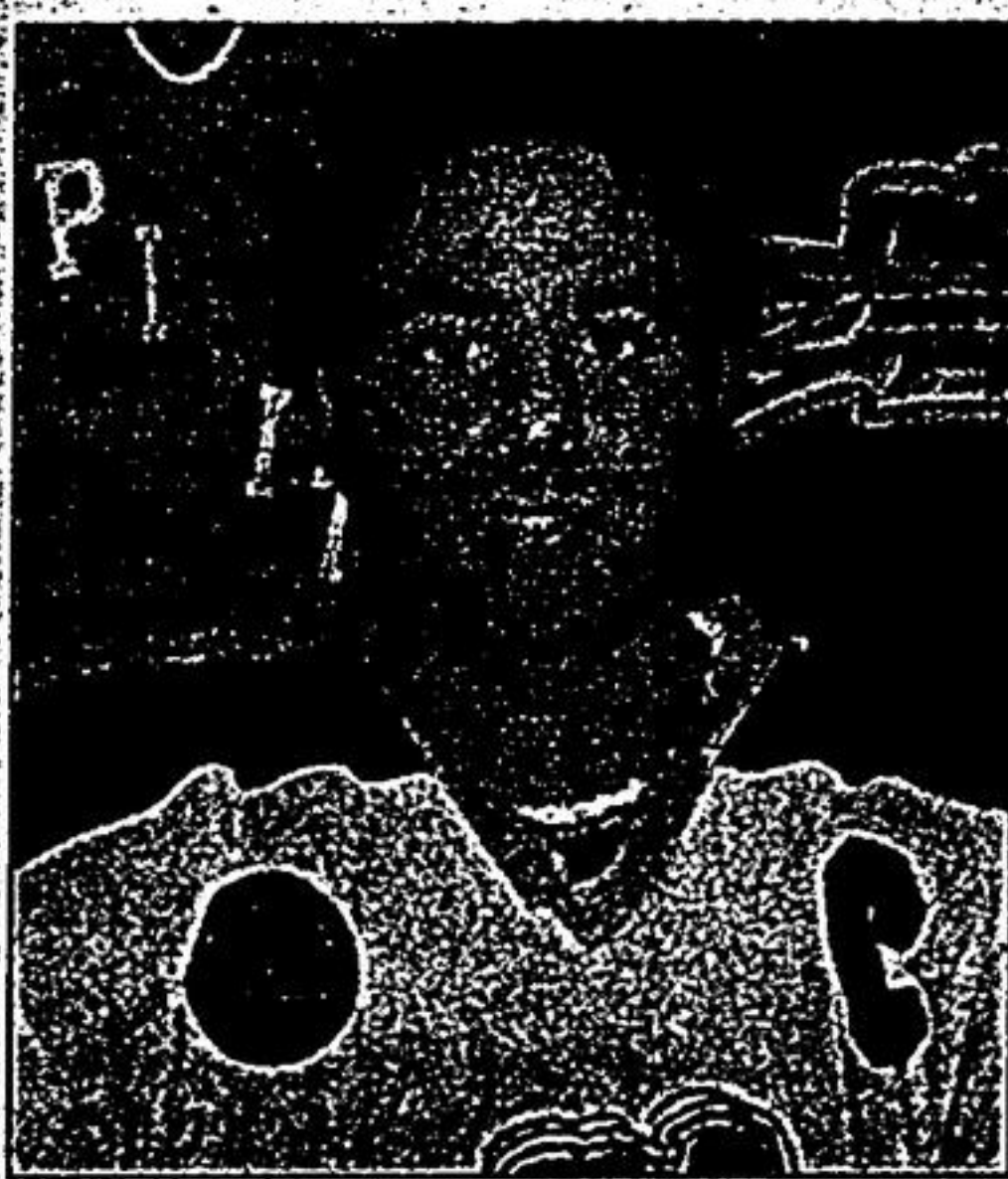
#### IT'S TIME TO GET SERIOUS

"We've got to get it together and in a hurry," Spirit captain Michael Lombardo said at practice Tuesday. "But we've got the team here that can do it."

The Spirit lost 6-3 in Newmarket Sunday and 5-2 in Collingwood Friday.

"We knew the last few games of the season were pointless," Lombardo said following a team meeting. "And the guys should know the playoffs are a whole new season. And by the look of things tonight, they know."

Thornhill and Stouffville split their two-game regular season series, winning in each other's rink



MICHAEL LOMBARDO: Spirit captain acknowledged the team wasn't performing up to par in recent weeks.

Under the complicated playoff format, Thornhill, the sixth-place team in the South Conference

crosses over to the North. Other North quarter-finals have Pickering against Newmarket, Collingwood meeting Oshawa and Aurora playing the winner of last night's Lindsay at Port Hope tiebreaker.

#### THREE FORMER SPIRIT PLAYERS

Thornhill features three ex-Spirit players, goaltenders Kyle Zoon and Steve Carota and forward Mitch Dillon. Carota and future considerations were sent to Thornhill at last month's trade deadline for brothers John and Michael Duco, Thornhill's leading scorers.

**SPIRITED NOTES:** As of press time, Game 4 had not been scheduled by the Islanders. Spirit officials were upset their players were not granted the normal warmup period after a three-

hour drive through snow got them to Collingwood late Friday. The Spirit was outshot 17-0 in the first period but dominated the second and third. The Thornhill Community Centre is located at John Street and Bayview Avenue. Thornhill's loss to North York Sunday set up the playoff series with Stouffville. A Thornhill win and the Spirit would have been playing the Couchiching Terriers for the second straight year. The Spirit swept the Terriers last year and went three rounds deep into the playoffs. The Terriers play the Markham Waxers in a series starting tomorrow in Markham.

For more information on the Spirit, check the team's website at [www.stouffvillespirit.com](http://www.stouffvillespirit.com)