

SPORTS



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEN

Stouffville District Secondary School goaltender Adam Davis kicks out the puck in his team's 4-1 win over Monsignor John Percyma of Oshawa Tuesday at the Stouffville Arena. SDSS advanced to the provincials.

SDSS off to OFSAA minus young stars

BY JIM MASON
Staff Writer

Cory Tanaka and Brandon Walker helped lead the Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans to the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations AA championships.

But the Spartans will have to get by without their young stars at the provincial tournament March 24 to 27 in London.

Tanaka and Walker, both Grade 10 students, will be playing for their club team, the Richmond Hill Stars at the 2004 Ontario Hockey League Showcase for the OHL Cup in North York from March 24 to 28.

"They're both tremendous players," said Jamie Hewitt head coach of the Spartans, who defeated Monsignor John Percyma of Oshawa 4-1 Tuesday at the Stouffville Arena for the Durham-York AA championship and a berth

at OFSAA.

Both have drawn OHL scouts, who are assessing 1988-born talent for the league's May draft, to high school games.

Their Richmond Hill team is the top-rated minor midget team in Ontario. The OHL Showcase features the top minor midget teams in Ontario and the U.S.

Tanaka had two goals, including an empty-netter, while Walker and Gabe Barnett had singles in Tuesday's win. Adam Davis made several key saves for the Spartans.

While an OFSAA berth was at stake, the game wasn't as intense as the two-game sweep the Spartans served up to Aurora's Cardinal Carter last week, Hewitt said.

Had the Spartans declared as AAA, the highest ranking at the start of the year, they would have automatically qualified for OFSAA AAA, the same weekend and also in

London. Cardinal Carter gets that spot.

But by going AA for mid-sized schools — SDSS has 800 students — the Spartans needed Tuesday's win to get to London.

"This is the most complete team we've had at Stouffville," said Hewitt of the four-year-old senior program. "From both goaltenders out, it's a solid team."

HOCKEY NEWS: Without Tanaka and Walker, Hewitt expects the Spartans to be seeded around fifth in the OFSAA tourney. Goaltender Jake Balsdon is the other Stouffville resident on the Richmond Hill AAA minor midgets.

For information on the Ontario high school championships, log on to www.ofsaa-hockey2004.ca/. For OHL Cup information, log on to www.ontariohockeyleague.com/ohlcup.

French trip emotional for silver-medallist synchronized skaters

BY JIM THOMAS
Correspondent

Two Stouffville girls were winners on and off the ice.

Alyshia Higgins and Kim Hord, both 17 and members of the Whitby Ice Fyre synchronized skating team, returned from a competition in Rouen, France with memories to last a lifetime.

Their entry, a first-time participant in the prestigious French Cup, scored a silver-plated second-place victory competing against Finland, Sweden, Britain, Russia, Italy, Germany, France and the United States.

Representing Canada, they were edged out by Finland in the long and short programs. Stamford, Ont., near Niagara Falls, placed third.

Previously with Markham's Elite Edge synchro team and current members of the Stouffville Figure Skating Club, Higgins and Hord decided to join the Whitby club after Markham dropped back from junior competitive to open festival ranking.

"It was exciting," Alyshia said, "standing at centre ice and watching the Canadian flag being raised overhead, there's nothing quite like it."

"Exciting for them maybe, but nerve-wracking for us," said Karen Hord, Kim's mother. She, along with Ivy Higgins, Alyshia's mother, made the trip.

"Even the fathers in our group were in tears," she said.

Karen said the Whitby team concentrated on speed, presentation and footwork, a combination that worked to perfection.

'HELD COLLECTIVE BREATH'

"We sat there, holding our collective breaths," she said.

"When the announcement was made, the entire Canadian contingent stood and cheered, then we celebrated," she added.

"Two years ago, I never thought something like this would happen to me," Higgins said. She's been skating since age four; Hord since five. Both are honour students at Stouffville District Secondary School, Higgins in Grade 12



Kim Hord (left) and Alyshia Higgins of Stouffville drape themselves with a Canadian flag after winning silver medals at skate competition in France.

and Hord in Grade 11.

But not all the action was on the ice. Outside the arena, they were cheered everywhere they went, their red and black Canadian jackets setting them apart from others on the street. The girls were also hounded by autograph seekers and readily obliged.

They visited such landmarks as the beaches of Normandy and the Eiffel Tower.

Language differences presented no problems, Hord said.

"Their English was better than our French," she laughed.

Higgins and Hord have their sights set on even higher goals. They hope that, by 2010, synchronized skating will be part of the Olympic program in Vancouver.

If so, they plan on being there.

Bantams in tough with Cobourg

That's some kind of team that dumped the Stouffville Clippers 8-3 in the second game of the Ontario Minor Hockey Association bantam A semifinals Tuesday at the Stouffville Arena.

The victorious Cobourg Cougars are 32-3-1 in regular season and playoff games this season. They also won a tournament in Peterborough and lost in overtime in the final of the international Silver Stick event in Michigan this year.

Many of the players won age-group OMHA championships the last two sea-

sons with Cobourg teams. Brendan Wise, Matt Easter and Ken Czerwinski scored for the bantam Clippers, the only Stouffville team remaining in the OMHA playdowns.

The first game in the best-of-five series ended 4-4.

Game 3 is tonight in Cobourg with the fourth game Saturday at 5 p.m. at the Stouffville Arena.

For more information on the OMHA playoffs log on to www.omha.net.