

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

SPORTS

Spirit starts season on positive note

Muskoka Otters face Stouffville in season opener tonight

As trophies go, the Stouffville Spirit would prefer one of the post-season variety. Still, the team will keep this goblet.

Stouffville captured the ninth annual Ontario Hockey Association pre-season tournament in Vaughan last weekend, winning all five of its games including a 4-1 decision over New York City Apple Core in the final.

Sixteen junior A and B teams from Ontario and the United States took part.

It's the first trophy ever won by the Spirit, which opens its 10th season in the Provincial Jr. A league tonight at the Stouffville Arena.

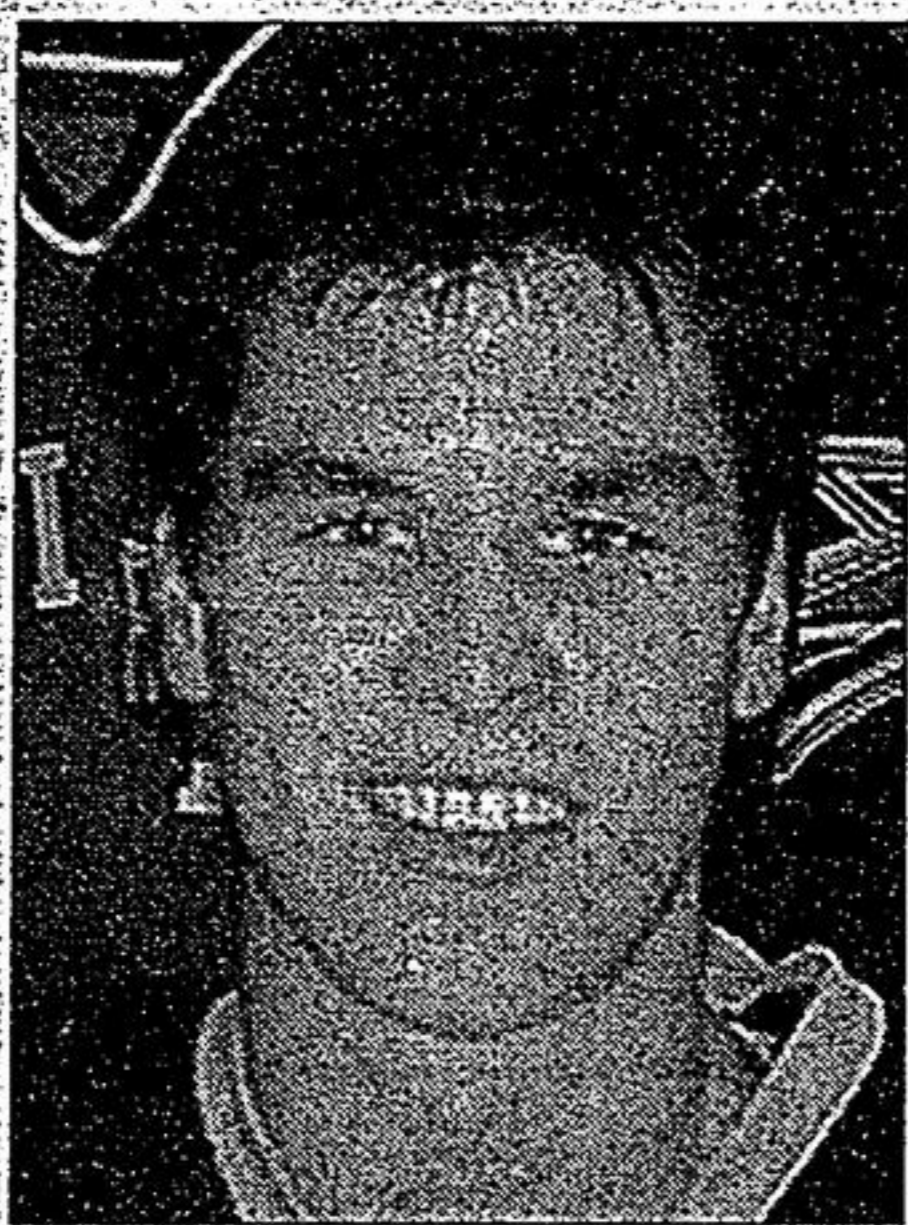
A revived and improved Huntsville franchise, the Muskoka Otters (formerly the Wildcats), provides the opposition at 7:30.

The five tournament wins in less than 48 hours did more than fill room in the Spirit trophy cabinet.

"We're more of a unit after that," said third-year defenceman and tournament MVP Ian Brunt. "I feel like I know the new players now. The previous year, it took longer to get to know everyone."

Brunt netted the winner in triple overtime and was named game MVP in the Spirit's 3-2 semifinal win over the Brampton Capitals Sunday morning.

Stouffville defeated the Hamilton Red Wings 4-3, Bay State (Mass.) Bombers 4-2 and Mississauga Chargers 9-3 in round-robin play.



IAN BRUNT: Veteran Spirit defenceman named MVP of pre-season tournament.

Ty Raine led the attack with five goals and a five-point game against Mississauga. Mark Boyce had four goals and the third member of the line, Rob Groom, added two goals and five assists.

Sean Gray and Carson Devine, re-acquired from the Vaughan Vipers, scored two goals apiece.

NEW GOALTENDING TANDEM

Troy Ciernia and newly acquired Dan McWhinney shared goaltending duties Sunday and will form the Spirit's tandem in net. Ciernia, from Minnesota, played in Flin Flon and Miramichi last year.

McWhinney, a late cut of his hometown Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds, played junior B in Schreiber, Ont., last year.

Brunt left the Spirit in mid-season last year, but returned with a new vigour.

"After I straightened out my personal life, I really wanted to come back," said the Unionville resident. "I love playing here. Playing in Stouffville motivates me."

The Spirit returns 11 players who were on the roster last season, plus Will Acton and Sean Gray who saw limited action up from the Uxbridge Bruins, the Spirit's Jr. C affiliate.

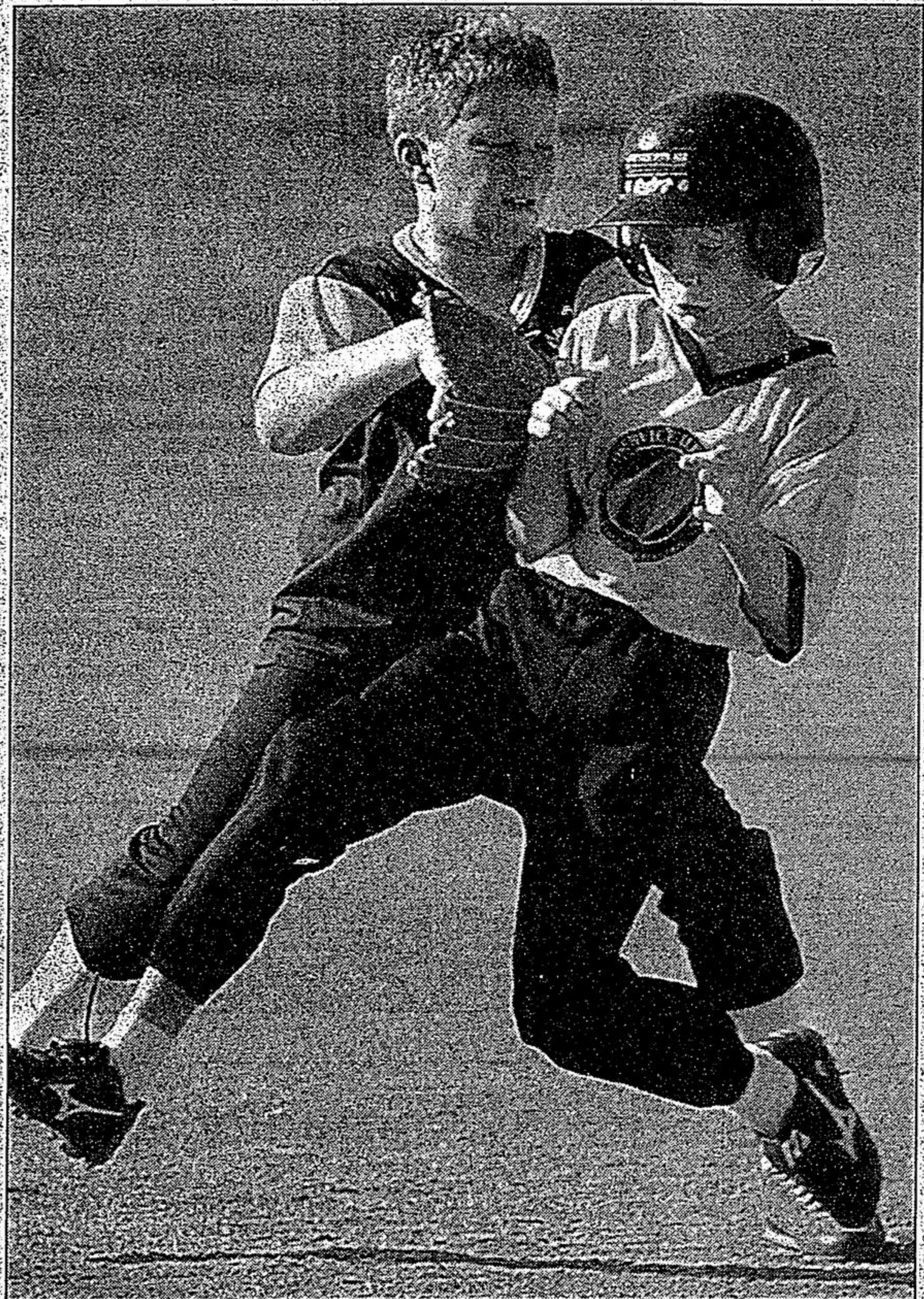
The Spirit's rookie class of 1988-born players graduating from minor midget includes Stouffville's Brandon Walker (Richmond Hill Stars), Scott Brown (Wexford Raiders), Daniel Spivak (Markham Islanders), Michael Aiello (Wexford), Brett Waters (Central Ontario Wolves) and Patrick Lee (York-Simcoe Express).

New on defence are Jody Halas (Alliston Jr. C) and Chris Harris (York-Simcoe midgets).

Michael Lombardo begins his second season as captain. Alternates are Brunt, Raine and Stouffville's Jordan Mabley, who returned to the Spirit after a tryout in Germany.

The Spirit plays in Markham tomorrow and against Cobourg Sunday at 3 p.m. in the league's college weekend showcase at Erin Mills Twin Rinks in Mississauga.

SPIRITED NOTES: Long-time Spirit volunteer Pat Madigan joins head coach Brian Perrin and Jeff Perrin on the coaching staff. Mike Humphreys is the Spirit's assistant general manager, replacing Ron Archibald who returns to the Uxbridge Bruins as GM. scout Dennis Lougheed has been named director of player development. Huntsville opened its season Friday with a 9-0 win over the Oshawa Legionaires. Mayor Sue Sherban takes part in tonight's opening ceremonies. For more information, log on to www.stouffvillespirit.com.



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Tag, you're out

Ram Forest third baseman Cody Fogg (left) tags Claremont baserunner Cody Couperthwaite during action in Saturday's Whitchurch-Stouffville squirt boys' house league baseball playoff contest at Memorial Park.

Mennos make quick exit from fastball championships

Run-differential ruling hurts Stouffville, which had 1-1 record

The Stouffville Mennos' participation in last weekend's Eastern Canadian Intermediate A Fastball Championships in Summerside, P.E.I. was a bittersweet experience.

Backed by a no hitter tossed by Scott Evans, the Mennos began the tournament on a positive note last Friday by defeating the eventual tournament champion Halifax Tribe 5-0.

Evans, who also fanned 16 batters, helped his cause at the plate with a third-inning, three-run double scoring Danny Deeks, Rich Burkholder and Chris Burkholder to help the Mennos jump out to a 3-0 lead.

Stouffville added two more runs in the fifth when Rich Burkholder and

Scott Eyre singled and Chris Burkholder drove them in with a double.

Returning to the diamond Saturday to face the host Summerside Islanders, the Mennos' bats went silent in a 7-0 loss.

The Islanders scored twice in the first and exploded for five runs in the fourth inning.

Chris Burkholder collected two singles and Evans drew a walk that accounted for the Mennos' offence.

Terry Reesor pitched 4 2/3 innings and surrendered four runs and four hits and took the loss.

The Mennos were then supposed to meet Glace Bay.

However, Glace Bay did not show up for the tournament and as a result, the pool placings were determined by run-differential.

In its two contests, the Mennos had a run-differential of minus two and finished third. That eliminated the Mennos from the tournament.

Local talent in new women's league

The Ontario Women's Hockey Association, in conjunction with 15 Ontario Girls' Hockey Associations, will take the next step in the evolution of the sport for women with the launch of the Provincial Women's Hockey League.

As the elite level for women younger than 21, the LEAGUE is intended to give players a chance to advance their careers at the university, provincial, national and international levels.

The LEAGUE has teams

from Markham-Stouffville, Aurora, Bluewater, Burlington, Cambridge, Chatham, Durham, Etobicoke, Hamilton, London, Mississauga, Oakville, Stoney Creek, Toronto and Windsor. Future teams could be based in Sudbury and Ottawa.

As a fundraiser, the Markham-Stouffville Stars face off with celebrities from radio station KX96 Saturday at the Port Perry Arena at 2 p.m.

Admission is \$4 for adults, \$3 for students, \$2 for chil-

dren or \$10 per family.

Among the local players suiting up for the Stars are Cassandra Sparks, Liz Knox and Maddie Wilkinson.

All three launched their hockey careers in Markham-Stouffville Girls' Hockey Association house league program. Wilkinson and Knox were members of the Stars' pee-wee A squad that captured the O.H.F. title in 2002.

For more information on the fundraising game, call Lynda Ashton at 905-985-9434.