

SPORTS

Spartan girls skate off with school's first York hockey championship

Goaltending key ingredient to SDSS' success in York final

The Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans girls' hockey team established a first Friday.

The Spartans became the first girls' hockey team at the school to skate off with a York Region Athletic Association championship.

This became official after they swept Aurora High School in a first to three-point series that was capped off with a 4-1 road win.

Hayley Hughes potted two goals. Cassie Sparks and Ashley McLelland each added one for the Spartans, who led 1-0 after one period and 3-0 after two.

Although the Spartans captured the title, co-coach Dan McConnachie knew the task wouldn't be easy.

"Aurora is a very good team, we are very even and the only difference really was in goal and in getting timely scoring," he said.

Indeed, those factors surfaced in both games.

In last Thursday's series opener at the Stouffville Arena, the Spartans received a stellar netminding effort from Liz Knox and a timely third-period goal from Hughes to emerge with a 1-0 win.

Bywinning the York title, the Spartans will take to the ice at the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations A/AA tournament in Orillia from March 22 to 24.

The Spartans were given a sixth seed in the 20-team tournament.

McConnachie thinks the Spartans will go as far as Knox can carry them.

"In five play-off games she had three shutouts and only allowed two goals. Aurora especially was a tough series with lots of shots in both games and yet they only got one goal in the final. If I am going to win AA OFSAA it is Liz who will decide how far we go. Given the type of competitor she is it will be pretty far," he said.

Despite losing in the final, Aurora will go to the provincial AAA/AAAA championships for larger schools, also in Orillia next week.

Spartan boys' hockey team seeded ninth at OFSAA

The Spartans senior boys' hockey team earned a ninth



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans forward Hayley Hughes gets control of the puck and moves up ice during last Friday's York Region Athletic Association girls' hockey final against the Aurora High School Golden Eagles in Aurora. The Spartans won the York girls' title, their first in school history, with a 4-1 victory. The Spartans will play in the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations A/AA playdowns in Orillia March 22 to 24.

seed at the OFSAA A/AA championships in Windsor March 30 to April 2.

'I'm okay with a ninth seed. It's better than having the bullseye on the front of your shirt.'

The Spartans, who were last year's York champions, were placed in a pool with top-seeded Belle River Secondary School, eighth seed Bishop Macdonnell Secondary School (Guelph), 16th seed Osgoode Township Secondary School and 17th seed Burlington Central Secondary School.

Spartans head coach Jamie Hewitt had no complaints with the seed his club was given.

"I'm OK with a ninth seed. It's better than having the bullseye on the front of your shirt," he said in reference to the high seed

his club was awarded in last year's provincial tourney before they were eliminated in the quarter-finals. "I'd rather be the underdog. There's less pressure."

In looking ahead to the provincials, Hewitt said he did not know too much about the 20-team field since many of the participants are making their tournament debut this year.

"There's only five teams in the tournament that returned from last year," he cited. "There's definitely a lot of unknowns this year. There's been a few surprises. We'll just have to show up."

Although the players are off for March break, Hewitt has held practice sessions at the Stouffville Arena during the week.

As well, the Spartans will play an exhibition game next Thursday at the Stouffville Arena at 2:30 p.m. against the Brother Andre Catholic High School Cardinals.

Like the Spartans, the

Cardinals will be going to the provincials where they are competing in the AAAA playdowns also being held in Windsor during the same timeframe.

If the Spartans hope to make inroads at this year's championships, Hewitt said they must play good defence and get some timely contributions on offence.

"Our defence has been good. We just need to put the puck in the net. That's what can win championships," he said.

Stouffville boys help Brother Andre win title

Two Stouffville-area residents were members of the Brother Andre Catholic High School Cardinals senior boys' hockey team that won the York title last week.

Mikhail Metauro, a Grade 11 right winger, and Nick Singh, a Grade 12 centre-left winger and assistant captain, played key roles in helping the Cardinals win their third York title in the four years after they defeated the Cardinal Carter Catholic High School Celtics (Aurora) 4-2 in the third and deciding game last Thursday at Markham's Mount Joy Arena.

Singh scored twice for the Cardinals in their first-game 6-3 loss at Mount Joy Arena.

Metauro had a goal in the Cardinals' 3-1 road win in game two that forced the deciding game.

With the victory, the Cardinals advance to the provincial AAAA playdowns in Windsor from March 29 to April 2.

Spartans spiked at OFSAA

The Spartans senior girls' volleyball team placed fourth in its five-team pool when they took to the hardwood court earlier this week at the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations AA playdowns in Clinton.

Entering the tournament as the 13th seed, the Spartans lost their first two pool matches to fourth-seeded Belle River 2-0 (25-12, 25-19) and fifth-seed Hillcrest High School (Thunder Bay) 2-0 (25-13, 25-11). Facing Donald A. Wilson Secondary School (Whitby) in their third match, the Spartans posted a 2-0 (25-19, 26-24) victory.

The Spartans concluded play with a 2-0 loss (25-18, 25-20) to Renfrew Secondary School.

For further tournament information on the provincial championships, log on to: www.ofsaa.on.ca

Juvenile Clippers reach OMHA final

Best-of-five series opens this weekend in Windsor-area town

When the Stouffville juvenile Clippers hockey team was assembled last fall, high expectations were set.

Anything short of reaching the Ontario Minor Hockey Association A final would be considered a disappointment.

To date, Clippers' head coach Brent Gibson and the rest of his charges have met the challenge and will be vying for the OMHA title when they face Harrow.

The best-of-five series begins in Harrow, near Windsor, Saturday at 8 p.m. and continues Sunday at 3:30 p.m.

The series resumes the following weekend in Stouffville with times to be determined as of press deadline.

"Based on the talent that we had when we started in the fall we felt we had a good shot to be in the final," said Gibson, who is in his first year as the club's head coach.

In facing Harrow, which is the two-time defending OMHA A champions and the BB champions the previous four years, Gibson acknowledged it won't be easy.

But the Clippers might have a psychological advantage after defeating Harrow 3-1 earlier this year at the Silver Stick tournament semifinals in Sarnia before losing in the final.

PREDICTS TOUGH SERIES

"They're beatable. But it'll be a tough series. No one will walk away with it," he predicted.

As in any playoff series, Gibson said a key ingredient for success lies in goaltending. And Gibson feels he has two capable goalies in his son, Shawn, and Jake Balsdon.

As well, Gibson warned his club must play disciplined hockey.

"With these young guys it can be an emotional roller coaster where we can take a wrong turn," he said.

Up front, Gibson feels he has two strong lines to go with that includes a trio of Josh Spang, Nick Ristich and Jamie Guinane or Andy Gibson, ex-Stouffville Spirit Jr. A winger Jordan Mabley and Gabe Barnett.

Gibson said he can also rotate his five remaining forwards of Mike Manson, Chris Flanagan, Dana MacDonald, David Salvagna and Darcy Jackson into a good third line.

Norm Fretz, Jon Wonch, Steven Relf, Jordan Smalley, Todd Nesbitt and midget call-up Trevor Greenham anchor the defence.

The Clippers advanced to the final after sweeping Peterborough in the best-of-five OMHA semifinal series, capped Friday with a 3-2 win at the Stouffville Arena.

Spang scored twice and Wonch added the other marker.