

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

SPORTS

Peewee boys Storm off with Ontario title

Stouffville earns berth in Eastern Canadian softball championships

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

Mike Heffernan knew something opposing teams who took to the Memorial Park ball diamond during last weekend's Ontario Amateur Softball Association peewee boys' elimination tournament didn't.

With the top two teams from this event gaining entry to the upcoming Eastern Canadian championships in Placentia, Nfld., the Stouffville Storm head coach had taken the liberty of making hotel reservations for his club in Placentia two months ago.

Heffernan's decision turned out to be fortuitous as the Storm will be occupying those rooms after capturing the tournament with a thrilling 5-4 win over the Napanee Express in Sunday's deciding game of the double elimination event.

"I knew we were one of the top teams in the province and I had such a good feeling, that we would win the tournament so I booked the hotel rooms on May 1," he said.

"There's only one hotel in Placentia and we booked the whole hotel. We have 50 people going and the hotel only holds 50. The closest hotel where a team has to stay is about 50 miles away. We did our homework and we came prepared."

As the final tally indicated, the contest was close throughout. The Storm was forced to come from behind and did so in the sixth inning after loading the bases and scoring the eventual game-winning run after a Napanee relief pitcher walked in a run.

Napanee had a great opportunity to regain the lead in the seventh inning when they loaded the bases.

But with two out, Storm relief pitcher Bruce Cringan sealed the win after striking out Napanee's top hitter on three straight pitches.

NAPANEE ALSO ADVANCES

Despite the loss, Napanee will also go to the Eastern Canadian championships as the second-seeded entry from Ontario.



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Stouffville Storm pitcher Bruce Cringan prepares to deliver a pitch to a Walkerton Capitals batter during last weekend's Ontario Amateur Softball Association peewee boys' elimination tournament at Memorial Park. The Storm won this game 8-3 and the title with a dramatic 5-4 win over the Napanee Express in last Sunday's final. The Storm and Napanee will represent Ontario at the Eastern Canadian championships in Placentia, Nfld. Aug. 25-28.

The Storm's road to the final began on a positive note last Friday when they were buoyed by a 20-strikeout effort from Cringan and a two-run hit by Tyler

Heffernan to defeat the Waterloo Twins 4-2.

Returning to the field later that day to face the Oshawa Stingers, the Storm had an easier time of



Members of the Stouffville Storm peewee boys' softball team proudly display the championship plaque they won after defeating Napanee 5-4 in the deciding game of Sunday's OASA double elimination tournament at Memorial Park.

things as they cruised to an 18-0 mercy-shortened victory.

Erick Espiritu-Santo set the tone for the Storm by smashing a first-inning home run.

Also making key contributions were Robert Kay, Brandon Hampson and Nolan Benoit, who each belted round trippers. Storm second baseman Mike Finn collected five RBIs.

The Storm then met some resistance from the Walkerton Capitals Saturday as the two clubs were embroiled in a 3-3 tie through 5 1/2 innings.

But the Storm broke the game open in their half of the sixth inning with five runs en route to an 8-3 win.

The Storm received a great defensive effort from catcher Brian Hector to help preserve the victory.

With one of two berths at stake to make the trip to Newfoundland, the Storm were assured of a berth later that day after edging Napanee 7-6 to go undefeated in the round robin segment.

Storm pitcher Travis Connor struck out nine batters to earn the win.

Key hits were delivered by Doug Jones, who drove in four runs, and Heffernan with two RBIs.

Outfielder Brandon McKenzie exhibited grit after breaking his hand during the game. He remained on the field until the coaches were able to replace him.

Already assured of a berth in

the Eastern Canadians, the Storm met Napanee again in the finals Sunday and went down to defeat for the first time in the tournament 13-3.

That set the stage for the tiebreaker later that day.

TEAM HAS CHARACTER

In explaining the club's success, Heffernan felt their character played an essential role.

"We're not as athletic as other teams, but our guys have plenty of heart and they play as a team."

"When one player falls down, the others turn around and pick him up. That's been our success. They support each other," he said.

He also credited the club's commitment that began last November with indoor practices twice a week before going outdoors in April.

Once outside, the Storm played in two leagues including one in their own age group and one above in the bantam division. As well, they've taken part in several weekend tournaments.

"The boys have worked really hard. This is our second year together and to reach the Eastern Canadian championships was an established goal."

Other team members are Chris Paine and Braham VanZeeland.

Assisting Heffernan were Rob Santo, Mickey Finn, Peter VanZeeland and Scott Connor. Joanne Cringan is the manager.

The Eastern Canadian championships will run from Aug. 25 to 28.

Whitchurch-Stouffville softball association earns praise from OASA

BY JIM THOMAS
Correspondent

Whitchurch-Stouffville's softball program was roundly praised during opening ceremonies at a 11-team peewee tournament that commenced last Friday at Memorial Park.

David Clue, president of the

Ontario Amateur Softball Association said the town's reputation for being "a notch higher in terms of sportsmanship" is recognized across the province.

"Now I know the reason why," he added.

Clue praised the dedication and efficiency of league president

June Doner and her willing group of volunteers for which Stouffville is famous.

"Amateur softball is only as strong as the amateurs who make it work," he said, noting that, in recent years, these numbers have declined.

"Give a little of your time,"

Clue urged. "You don't need to donate your life."

Doner said Whitchurch-Stouffville deemed it an honour and a privilege to host the tournament, which sent the hometown Storm and Napanee to the Eastern Canadian fastball championships in Placentia, Nfld. from

Aug. 25-28.

Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Sue Sherban also addressed the players and onlookers.

The first pitch of the tournament was delivered by long-time Whitchurch-Stouffville fastball promoter Mary Myers of Vandorf.