

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

SPORTS

*Thompson proves you're never too old to start*Ballantrae resident, 67,
began marathon
running last yearBY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

When Helen Thompson went searching for walking shoes in May 2004 at the Running Room store in Markham, she ended up buying more than expected.

The 67-year-old Whitchurch-Stouffville and former long-time Markham resident also made a long-term investment in her physical and mental well being.

She signed up for a learn-to-run clinic offered by the store.

To this day, she has no regrets in making that decision.

Not only has she been able to maintain a healthy lifestyle since retiring as a nurse with York Region health services seniors programs in Newmarket in 2002.

Thompson also found time to take to the streets in some running events.

Making her racing debut in 2004, in which she ran in three events, Thompson increased her participation to six this year.

Among those, was her first-ever full marathon, the Scotiabank Waterfront Marathon in late September in Toronto.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Ballantrae resident Helen Thompson, 67, took up long distance running just last year as a means of maintaining a high degree of physical well being. This past year, she took part in her first marathon in Toronto.

While happy to complete the 26.2-mile course in 5 1/2 hours, Thompson was even more satisfied to have raised close to \$1,000 in pledges for a worthy charitable cause, the Rose of Sharon Services for Young Mothers in York Region.

"What got me through doing that marathon were the people who made pledges for me," she recalled. "That was the real motivator."

Thompson also entered the Arigus Glen Half Marathon in November and finished fourth

overall in the 60 years of age and older division after completing the course in a personal best time of 2:14.

"Running for me is an investment in health, for a fantastic well-being," she said. "It's changed my lifestyle in which I'm healthier. My weight has dropped and my blood pressure and cholesterol levels have improved. And I also love the challenge. I'm always trying to better my previous time."

In crediting the success she's attained in a relatively short time-frame, Thompson said there isn't one particular individual who has been influential.

But rather many including her family which includes husband Alan, who describes himself as his wife's waterboy. As well, her three sons, Kevin, Jason and Ian, who has ran along side her in a couple of events, have offered plenty of moral support.

Thompson also has another family that she has high praise for, in the group she runs with from the Running Room under coach Ray Lim.

"Everyone is supportive right from the staff and runners. And the camaraderie is fantastic," she said.

Thompson said the end of each class places some expectations. For beginners it's to run a 5K event. After that, she progressed up the chain to run a 10K, half marathon

and eventually, a full marathon.

"The level of progression gets more intense because your goals are higher," she cited.

When Thompson isn't running, she finds the time to encourage others to convert to a healthier lifestyle. She's done so by being a motivational speaker at the Running Room's clinics.

'Running for me is an investment in health, for a fantastic well-being'

Helen Thompson
marathon runner

Marcia Guthenberg, a Markham resident who teaches the beginners' clinic, says Thompson serves as a positive role model to others who are near her age.

"She's quite inspirational," Guthenberg. "There's a variety of runners in my class, some women who are in their 40s or 50s who are learning to run. Helen's idea to promote that women her age that can still do things like running and not having to be a great athlete and to do it for 20 to 30 minutes is great."

Looking ahead to 2006, Thompson has no intentions of slowing down. One of her biggest goals is to run the Ottawa Marathon in May.

"I just want to keep on running," she said.

Spirit extends streak to nine

LAST WEEK: Saturday – won 7-1 at Oshawa.

COMING UP: Friday, Dec. 23 at Collingwood 8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 5 vs. Huntsville Muskoka Otters, 7:30 p.m. at Stouffville Arena.

GAME NOTES: The Spirit continued its torrid play of late by extending its unbeaten streak to nine games Saturday with a 7-1 road victory over the Oshawa Legionaires. Rick Schrank deposited two goals and Rob Groom added a goal and two assists to pace the Spirit offence. Donovan Munro, Will Acton, James McIntosh and Ryan Oliver also contributed single tallies. Simon Gysbers assisted on three goals. Goalkeeper Mark Kubicz earned the win, but was ejected following a third-period fight. Dan McWhinney replaced him for the final 15:57. The victory by the Spirit moved them into second place in the North Conference of the Provincial Junior A Hockey League. They trail the first-place Aurora Tigers by nine points, but have three games in hand.

INSIDER: The Skate With the Spirit event, in support of the Whitchurch-



Stouffville Foodbank, goes Jan. 2 at the Stouffville Arena.

GENERALLY SPEAKING: "We don't have the same talent (in Stouffville), but we work a lot harder, we're quick and we have gelled together nicely. Hard work can make up for a lot of things," said Dustin Howard, an 18-year-old Spirit defenceman in comparing his time this year in Stouffville after playing last season with the Georgetown Raiders club that won the Central Canada Junior A hockey title and played in the Royal Bank Cup Canadian championships.

RECORD: 19-5-6-3.

For more on the Spirit, log on to: www.stouffvillespirit.com

Spartan junior cagers hoop it up on the road

*Defending tier two
champs undefeated in
six games this season*

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

Just call the Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans junior boys' basketball team the road warriors.

With their own gymnasium floor undergoing repairs due to flooding Dec. 3, the Spartans have been forced to play all contests on the road until further notice.

To date, they haven't let that adversity stand in their way.

Playing five of their first six York Region Athletic Association tier two games on the road, the Spartans remain undefeated and sit atop the standings.

"The guys enjoy the challenge," said Spartans head coach Jeff Fong. "Our gym is old and the guys like playing in the newer ones," he added half-jokingly.

As much as the team enjoys playing in newer venues while tackling a challenge, Fong noted their success stems primarily from possessing good talent.

While the team isn't blessed with a player taller than six feet, they do have some highly skilled players.

Three of them returned from last year's YRAA tier two championship club, in Justin Balik, Adam Prokop and John Reesor.

But the biggest plus, Fong said, has

been the presence of first-year point guard Johnny Balik.

"He's a phenomenal player," Fong said of the Grade 9 student and younger brother of Justin.

TOP ATHLETE

"I saw him play some MUMBA (Markham Unionville Minor Basketball Association) games last year and I knew he would be a good one. He's one of the best athletes that the school has ever had. I knew that he would fit in perfectly."

The most recent triumph for the Spartans came Monday when they defeated Richmond Green Secondary School (Richmond Hill) 35-33. Justin Balik paced the Spartans with 10 points.

Prior to Monday's win, the Spartans played three road contests last week in as many days and prevailed in each, against Markville Secondary School 54-40, Sutton District High School 56-39 and Huron Heights Secondary School 55-28.

Justin Balik led the way against Markville with 28 points, including six three pointers.

Johnny Balik poured in 17 for the Spartans against Sutton.

Justin had a game-high 20 in the win over Huron Heights.

Hockey girls ice two victories

The Spartans girls' hockey team ran its York Region Athletic Association

unbeaten streak to seven games Monday after blanking host Aurora High School 3-0.

Kate Devine, Ashley McLellan and Karli Zeigler scored for the Spartans, now 4-0-3 on the season and occupants of second place behind Sacred Heart Catholic High School (Newmarket), who are 6-0-1.

SHUTOUTS FOR KNOX

Liz Knox posted the shutout.

Last Thursday the Spartans received a two-goal effort from Hayley Hughes and a solid netminding effort from Knox in a 4-0 road win over the Cardinal Carter Catholic High School Celtics (Aurora).

Lauren Barber and Ashley McLellan each added single tallies.

Van Allen leads hockey boys over Unionville school

The Spartan senior boys' hockey team won its fourth game of the season after defeating the St. Augustine Catholic High School Titans (Unionville) 7-2 Tuesday at Angus Glen Community Centre.

Scott Van Allen scored twice for the Spartans, now 4-1-1.

Landon Wideman, Luke Bartell, Drew Beal, Dennis O'Shaunessy and Jamie Wise added singles.

For more on high school sports, log on to: www.yraa.com