

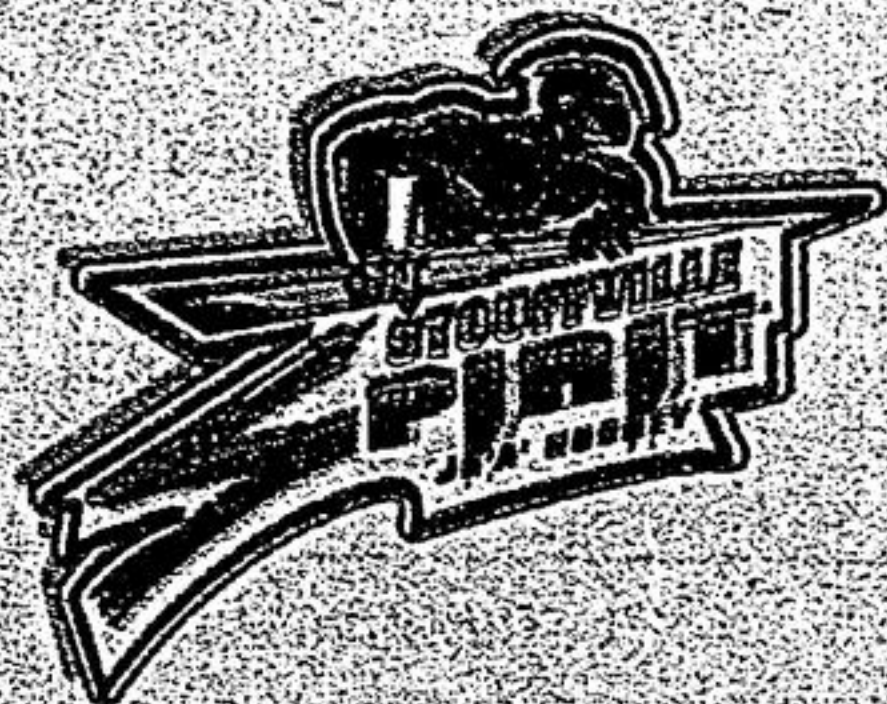
SPORTS

Howard's O.T. heroics lift Spirit in front of big-league scouts

LAST WEEK: Monday - won 4-3 in overtime at Vaughan... Sunday - tied host North York Rangers 2-2.

COMING UP: Today, vs. Seguin 7:30 p.m. at Stouffville Arena... Saturday, vs. Toronto Thunderbirds, 7:30 p.m. at Westwood Arena... Sunday, at Couchiching Terriers at Mnjikaning Arena Sports Complex, 2 p.m. Wednesday vs. Seguin 7:30 p.m. at Stouffville Arena.

GAME NOTES: A small crowd Monday night at the Al Palladini arena in Wood bridge was augmented by several National Hockey League scouts. The bird dogs, including the Toronto Maple Leafs' George Armstrong, came to watch two of the four players in the 36-team Provincial Jr. A Hockey League ranked for the 2006 NHL draft. The Stouffville Spirit's Simon Gysbers is rated 171st and Vaughan Viper Matthew Martello 102nd in mid-term rankings released last week. Gysbers is the highest-rated Jr. A defenceman in Eastern Canada. Dustin Howard's goal 2:27 into overtime lifted the Spirit to a 4-3 win over the Vipers. The Spirit outshot the Vipers 46-27 but still trailed 3-1 late in the second period. Goal tenders Dan McWhinney of the Spirit and Andrew Martin of Vaughan were outstanding. Rob Groom, Rick Schrank and Ryan Oliver had the other Spirit goals. Will Acton and Mark Sullivan



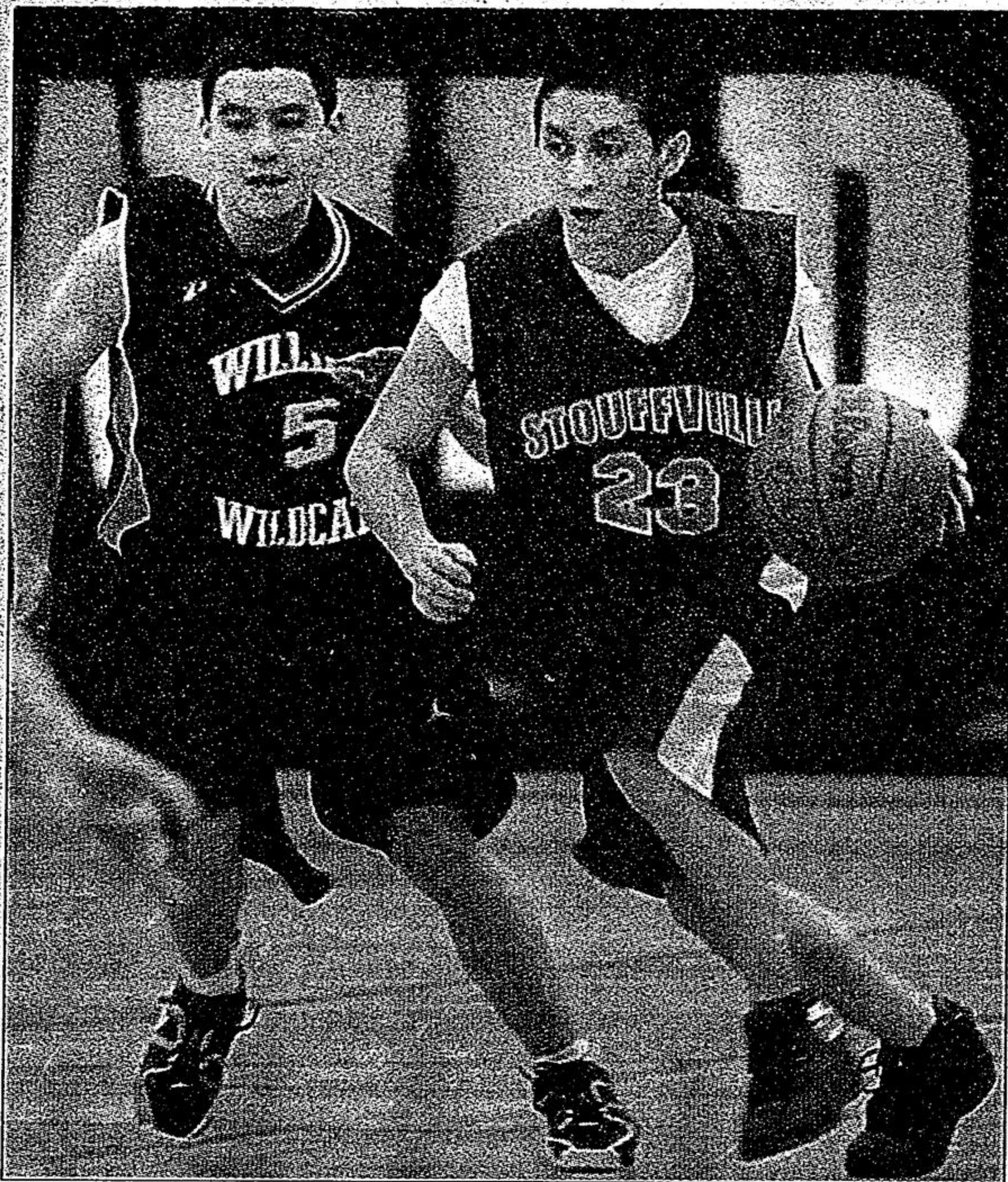
had two assists each. The Spirit welcomed back leading scorer Randy Johnston but were without injured veterans Ian Brunt and Joel Sheppard. Meanwhile, Vaughan was short eight players due to injury and could only call up three fill-ins from their minor hockey affiliates. The Spirit (21-8-8-3) trails second-place Newmarket by one point in the North Conference. See standings on page 27. McWhinney made the play of the game late in the third period, poke-checking Martello after the pair raced for a loose puck near the blueline. In Sunday's game against the North York Rangers at the Herb Carnegie Arena, goals by Steve Kopolnas and Shawn Frank helped the Spirit earn a 2-2 tie. The Spirit felt they scored a game-winning goal only to have it taken away due to a premature whistle. The Spirit outshot the Rangers 44-40.

INSIDER: The Spirit hosts Seguin tonight on Summitview Public School night. Spirit players were scheduled to visit the Main Street school today. The two teams meet again in Stouffville Wednesday to replay a game started Nov. 17. A malfunctioning ice cleaner damaged the ice at the Stouffville Arena between the second and third periods, with the Spirit up 3-1, making it unplayable... Gysbers is the lone Spirit representative on the North-West team that will play in the league's all-star game Wednesday in Mississauga, the same night as the re-scheduled Seguin contest. Seguin has no one on the all-star squad.

GENERALLY SPEAKING: "The poke check is one of my favourite things to do," said McWhinney, after Monday's performance against the Vipers which improved as the game went on. "When the game gets more intense, I feel better. And I know I can help hold the boys in the game." The 20-year-old from Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., is entertaining offers from three U.S. colleges for next season.

RECORD: 21-8-8-3

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



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans' Kyle Law dribbles his way past Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School Wildcats' Bryan Manner, during last week's YRAA senior boys' basketball contest at Williams in Aurora. Williams won 68-37.

Raguseo's feats draw notice

Stouffville youth excels in hockey, rugby and soccer

BY JIM THOMAS
Correspondent

A photograph of Matthew Raguseo is prominent on the sports bulletin board at Stouffville District Secondary School.

And there's a good reason for it.

The five-foot, 10-inch, 160-pound Grade 10 student plays a leadership role both on and off the volleyball court and on and off the rugby field.

He's also a member of the Spartan junior boys' hockey team.

When he's not attending school, Raguseo captains the Stouffville minor midget Clippers, and plays soccer during the summer for East Gwillimbury.



MATT RAGUSEO: SDSS Grade 10 student was recently named the school's athlete of the week.

Last year, Raguseo won the Spartans' rugby award and recently was named the school's Athlete of the Week.

While a student in Grade 8 year at St. Brigid Catholic

School, he led the volleyball team to an area championship. He was also selected St. Brigid's Athlete of the Year.

"He possesses excellent leadership qualities," says SDSS physical education instructor Jamie Hewitt. "He's also a solid role model."

"I try my best to play my best," Raguseo says.

He's strongly supportive of the school's athletic program, voicing passionate praise of Hewitt's merits as a physical education instructor and coach.

"He's very encouraging," he states.

Raguseo admits his involvement in so many sports taxes his time. But he's able to keep pace academically by working noon hours and immediately after school.

Following graduation, he hopes to go on to a college or university, possibly on an athletic scholarship.

Clippers get short end of Silver Stick tourney

The Stouffville minor bantam Clippers had a short stay in last weekend's International Silver Stick tournament in New-

market after winning just one of three round-robin contests.

After opening the tournament with a 3-0 win over the

Bradford Bulldogs, the Clippers dropped games to the Capital Crusaders 4-2 and the Woodstock Navy Vets 4-0.

Spartan junior hoops team still courting win streak

The Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans' junior boys' basketball team ran its undefeated streak to seven games and remain atop the York Region Athletic Association tier two standings after posting two road victories last week.

Playing at Markville Secondary School, the Spartans received a 19-point effort from Johnny Balik and 15 from his brother Justin in a 59-50 win.

Last Friday, the Spartans travelled to Newmarket for a game with Sir William Mulock Secondary School and emerged with a 53-35 victory.

Johnny Balik led all scorers with 33 points.

The Spartans also took to the hardwood court at a tournament at St. Robert Catholic High School in Thornhill and won two of three games.

The Spartans defeated St. Robert #1 57-50 before falling 68-37 to Westmount Collegiate (Thornhill). The Spartans concluded the tournament with a 72-68 win over St. Robert #2.

Justin Balik was high scorer for the Spartans in its first game victory with 17 points. Trevor Robert led the Spartans against Westmount with nine points. Johnny Balik led the way for the Spartans against St. Robert #2 with 24 points.

Hockey boys drop two

The Spartans senior boys' hockey

team failed to capitalize on an opportunity to grab first place in the York Region Athletic Association standings after dropping a pair of games.

Playing the defending YRAA champion Brother Andre Catholic High School Cardinals Tuesday, the Spartans fell 4-1.

Kyle Miller scored the lone goal for the Spartans.

Last week, the Spartans played host to the first-place Markham District High School Marauders and dropped a 4-1 verdict.

Miller scored the lone goal for the Spartans.

The two losses dropped the Spartans to 4-3-1 and into fourth place in the East Division.

Cardinals ground hockey girls

The Spartans girls' hockey team were dealt a big setback in its quest to take first place in the YRAA standings as they were upended 3-2 by the Brother Andre Catholic High School Cardinals Monday at Stouffville Arena.

Cassie Britton and Ashley McLellan each scored once for the Spartans, who suffered their first loss of the season and fell to 5-1-3 on the season.

The Spartans hope to make amends today when they face first-place and undefeated Sacred Heart Catholic High School at the Ray Twinney Complex in Newmarket at 3 p.m.