

SPORTS

Spirit placed in must-win situation

LAST WEEK: Saturday (Game Two) — lost 2-1 vs. Newmarket Hurricanes. Spirit trail second-round, best-of-seven North Conference semifinal series 2-0.

COMING UP: Today (Game Three) at Newmarket, 7:35 p.m.; Saturday, March 4 (Game Four) vs. Newmarket at Stouffville Arena, 7:30 p.m.; *Sunday, March 5 (Game Five) at Newmarket, 2:30 p.m.; *Tuesday, March 7 (Game Six) vs. Newmarket, 8:30 p.m.; *Wednesday, March 8 (Game Seven) at Newmarket, 7:35 p.m.

*if necessary

GAME NOTES: It's not officially do or die tonight for the Stouffville Spirit. But a loss in Newmarket would be hockey suicide. The Newmarket Hurricanes lead the Provincial Jr. A Hockey League North Conference best-of-seven semifinal series 2-0. A 3-0 deficit would be close to insurmountable. The Spirit couldn't hold onto a 1-0 third-period lead Saturday at the Stouffville Arena, falling 2-1 to Newmarket. Newmarket leads the best-of-seven Provincial Jr. A Hockey League North Conference semifinal 2-0. Jake Van Allen scored for the Spirit. All three goals were scored on the power play. Newmarket assistant coach Kent Hutton was tossed from the game for his lengthy verbal tirade on referee Rob Palm 8:27 into the third, but it was



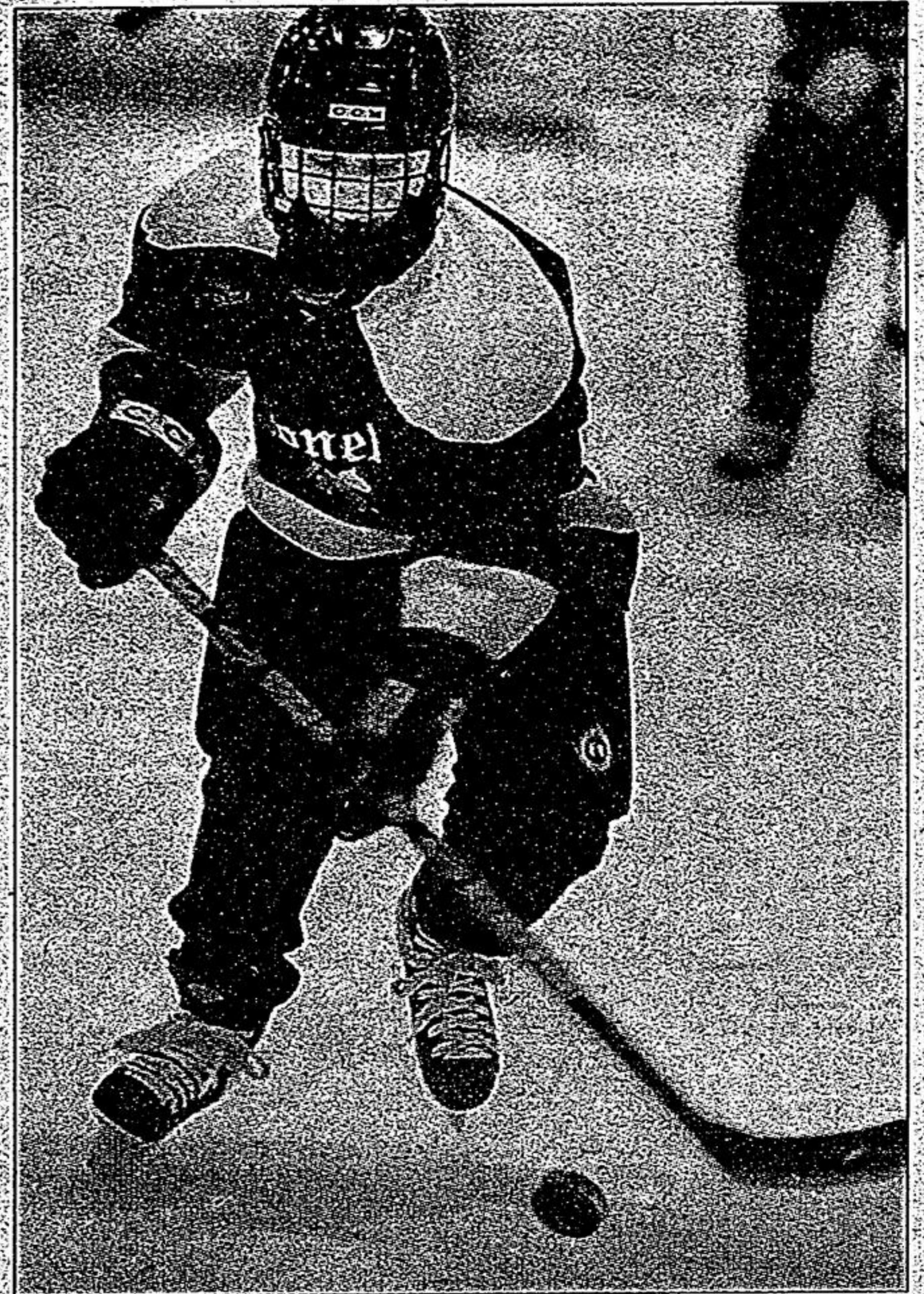
the Spirit that played the last two periods with the benefit of only one power play. The Spirit was called for 16 penalties to Newmarket's 12. A post-game argument in the arena corridor between the Spirit coaching staff and Palm eventually involved the Newmarket staff, too. Newmarket was outshot 42-29. Stouffville goalie Dan McWhinney was injured during a third-period collision but completed the game. Spirit general manager Ken Burrows spent a few minutes Tuesday scolding the Hurricanes for targeting McWhinney. Specifically, Burrows singled out Hurricane forwards Joey Wilson and Ben Plater for running over the netminder without penalty from Palm.

INSIDER: Tonight's game will be broadcast on whistleradio.com and Rogers TV (Channel 63). Game 4 goes Saturday in Stouffville. All are 7:30 p.m. starts. For live scoring and updates, go to pointstreak.com

GENERALLY SPEAKING: "We're up against a well-run organization that has a tremendous history of success and we anticipate a long, hard-fought series. We have great faith in the character of our players and their intense desire to prove themselves as a legitimate contender for the North Division title. We overcame some early adversity against a determined Seguin team in the first round and we are confident we will do the same against Newmarket," said Marshall Starkman, Spirit director of hockey operations.

"It's going to come down to pure hard work and discipline. A man to man battle where each player must outwork the guy they're lined up against — each and every shift," said Spirit head coach Dan West, on what it will take to turn the series around.

"He goes right for him (McWhinney) all the time," Burrows said of Wilson, who scored twice in the series opener to run his playoff total to 11. "It's definitely their game plan to run into our goalie."



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Minor atoms win OMHA semifinal opener

The Stouffville minor atom A Clippers got off to a good start in the best-of-five Ontario Minor Hockey Association eastern semifinal series against the Belleville Bulls after winning the first game last Saturday 4-3 at the Stouffville Arena.

Evan Smith paced the Clippers offense with two goals and one assist while Spencer Roberts contributed a goal and three assists and Chris Jarrett one goal. Jack Porter, Jack English, Owen Pearce and Robbie Armstrong each collected one assist for the Clippers, who held the lead throughout the contest.

Jake Murray played a solid game in goal to earn the win.

The series will resume Saturday and Sunday in Belleville.

Should a fourth or fifth game be required, it would be played the following weekend in Stouffville.

The winner of this series will face the west semifinal champions that could include Oakville, last year's OMHA champions, of the Tri-County League or Southpoint of the Bluewater League.

The victory by the Clippers came on the heels of a successful outing in the York-Simcoe regional championships

as they defeated the Innisfil Winterhawks in the best-of-five series in four games that was climaxed last Friday with a 6-5 road decision.

Robbie Armstrong ignited the Clippers' attack with two goals while Mitchell Smith had a goal and two helpers, Chris Cadaret one goal and one assist, Patrick Henri and Jarrett one goal each.

Josh Burkholder and Evan Smith were each credited with two helpers while Matt Avoledo and Roberts had one. Helping to preserve the win was some excellent goaltending by Cameron Nowikow.

CLEAR SAILING AHEAD

Jonathan Menechella of Lionel's Pony Farm takes a pass from a teammate and has some open space as he moves in on a breakaway in last Saturday's Whitchurch Stouffville Minor Hockey Association peewee house league contest against Golden Mile at the Stouffville Arena. Lionel's Pony Farm won the game 3-2. For more house league results, see Sportsboard on page 31.

Spartan girls advance to YRAA hockey final

The Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans varsity girls' hockey team advanced to the York Region Athletic Association final after sweeping its best-of-three semifinal series over the Markham District High School Marauders that was capped off Tuesday with a 1-0 win at the Stouffville Arena.

Hayley Hughes scored the game's lone goal while goalie Liz Knox helped preserve the win with a shutout.

The Spartans took the first game Monday at Markham Village Arena with a 5-4 win over the Marauders.

In that game, Ashley McLellan scored twice while Hughes, Lauren Barber and Jamie Sparks added singles.

The Spartans await the winner of the Sacred Heart-Cardinal Carter Catholic High School series. Sacred Heart holds a one game to nothing lead in the best-of-three series.

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

Junior Stars earn bronze at OWHHA provincials

For the second straight year, the Markham-Stouffville junior Stars were bronzed at the recent Ontario Women's Hockey Association Intermediate AA provincial championships in Brampton.

In a gritty performance in which they suited up just 12 skaters for the final three contests, the Stars accomplished this feat with a 2-1 victory over the Junior Sabres in the consolation final.

A goal by Vicky Wells late in the con-

test and just 50 seconds after the Junior Sabres had tied the score proved to be the difference.

Hayley Hughes earned an assist on Wells' game-winning marker.

The Stars took a 1-0 lead on a goal by Alex Moffat with assists from Vicky Wells and Alex Wells.

Also helping to preserve the win was some strong goaltending by Liz Knox.

The Stars earned their way to the bronze medal game after suffering a 1-0 loss to the Durham Junior Lightning

in a quarter-final contest.

Still advancing to the semifinal, the Stars faced the eventual gold medallist Toronto Junior Aeros but came out on the short end of a 2-0 decision.

In pool play action, the Stars defeated Whitby Wolves 2-0 and Etobicoke Dolphins 3-1, tied the Oakville Ice 1-1 and lost to the Bluewater Hawks 1-0.

The Stars will compete at the Provincial Women's Hockey League Championships March 16-19 in Windsor.

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