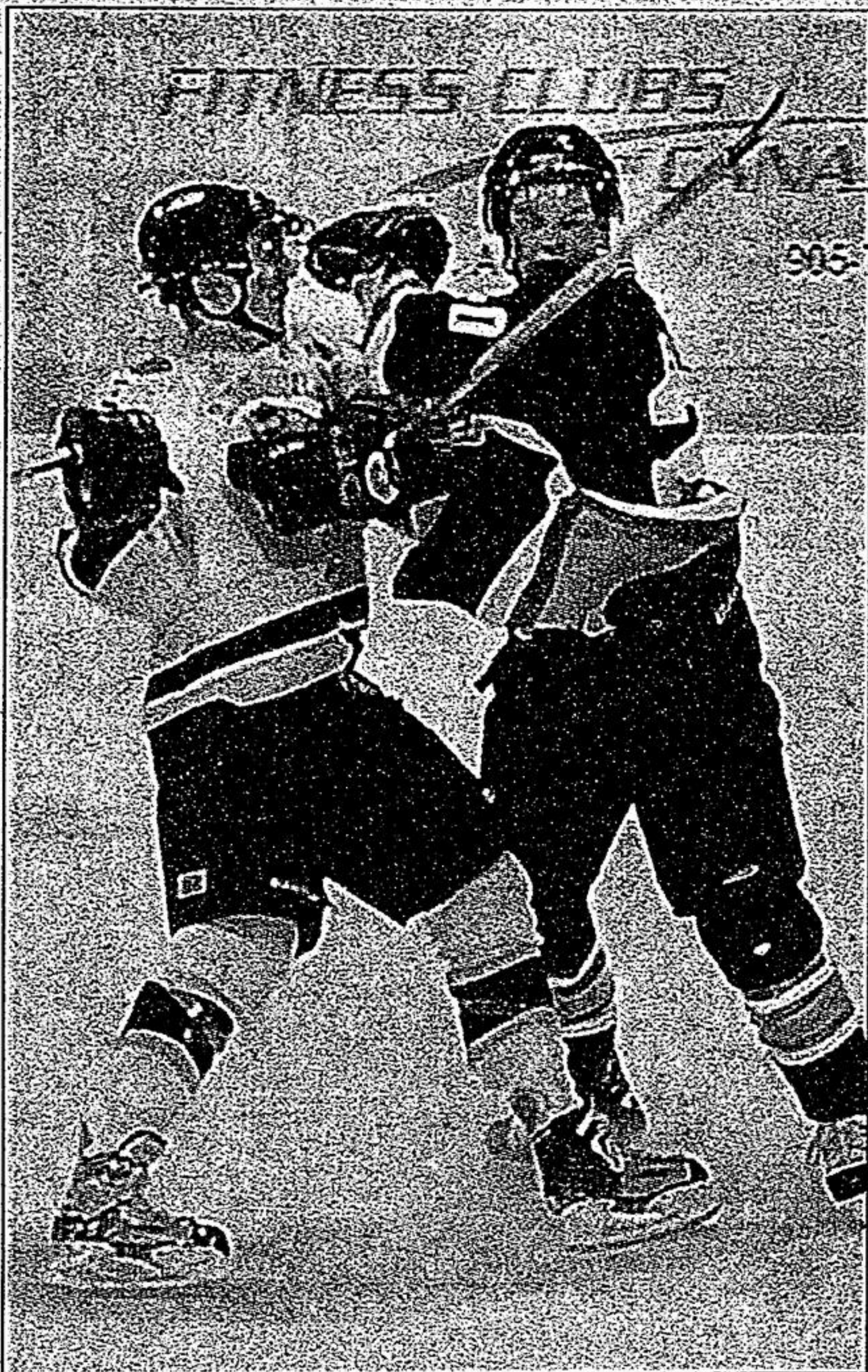


SPORTS

Spirit take upper hand after taming Tigers 4-3 in OT



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

TIGER TAKES A PAW

Aurora Tigers' forward Daniel Michalsky (left), gets roughed up, courtesy of Stouffville Spirit defenceman Ian Brunt during Tuesday's Provincial Junior A Hockey League North Conference final game at the Aurora Community Centre. The Spirit won the game 4-3 in overtime to take a two games to one lead in the best-of-seven series. The series resumes tonight in Stouffville at 7:30 p.m.

Minor atom Clippers face Oakville in final

The Stouffville minor atom Clippers will face the Oakville Rangers in a best-of-five series to determine the Ontario Minor Hockey Association A champion.

After yesterday's first game in Stouffville, the series resumes in Oakville Saturday at the Oakville Arena at 3 p.m. The third game is slated for Sunday at the Stouffville Arena at 6:10 p.m. Should a fourth game be necessary, it would be played in Oakville March 21 at 7 p.m. A fifth game would be played March 26 at the Stouffville Arena at 6:40 p.m.

All home games will be played on pad A. The Clippers are coming off a three-game sweep of Belleville in their recent best-of-five semifinal series. Oakville, meanwhile, defeated the Southpoint Capitals in its semifinal playdown.

LAST WEEK: Friday (Game One) - won 3-1 vs. Aurora Tigers; Sunday (Game Two) - lost 2-1 to Aurora Tigers; Tuesday (Game Three) - won 4-3 in overtime. Spirit lead best-of-seven North Conference final series 2-1.

COMING UP: Today (Game Four) at Stouffville Arena, 7:35 p.m.; Friday (Game Five) at Aurora Community Centre, 7:30 p.m.; *Sunday (Game Six) at Stouffville Arena, 3:30 p.m.; *Tuesday, March 21 at Aurora Community Centre, 7:30 p.m. *if necessary

GAME NOTES: Call them the comeback kids. The Stouffville Spirit overcame a 3-1 deficit just past the midway point of the third period to score twice and force sudden death overtime. From there, Randy Johnson delivered the game-winning goal at the 4:09 mark of the first extra session to give the Spirit a two games to one lead in the best-of-seven North Conference final series. Joel Sheppard accounted for the other three goals for the Spirit, who trailed 2-1 after one period and 3-1 through two periods. Two of Sheppard's markers came on the power play. Both clubs directed 35 shots on goal. Leading up to Tuesday's game, the Tigers rode a pair of



second-period goals and a stellar 32-save net-minding performance by Jeremie Dupont to a 2-1 victory Sunday at Stouffville Arena to even the series at one game apiece. For the Spirit, the loss broke a five-game postseason winning streak. Colin Williams scored on a power play in the fifth minute of the second period. Austin Corredato received credit for a deflection on a point shot that caromed a couple of times before getting past Spirit goaltender Dan McWhinney a little more than two minutes later to account for the Aurora scoring. Spirit defenceman Steve Kopolnas spoiled Dupont's shutout

bid when he snapped a rising wrist shot through a screen at 11:39 of the third period. The Spirit outshot the Tigers 33-32. In the series opener last Friday at Aurora, the Spirit drew first blood in the series with a 3-1 victory. Mark Sullivan, Shawn Frank and Donovan Munro, on a power-play effort, gave the Spirit a 3-0 lead early in the second period. Corredato scored to cut the Tigers' deficit to 3-1. But that was all that the Tigers' offence could generate. McWhinney was solid in net for the Spirit, which was outshot 26-23.

INSIDER: The Spirit has won three times in five games already this season on Aurora ice. For live scoring and updates, go to pointstreak.com

GENERALLY SPEAKING: "We can't get too high after this game," said Johnston, who slipped through the Aurora defence to take a pass and rip a low 20-footer past Tigers' netminder Jeremie Dupont at 4:09 of sudden death overtime. "We have a good record here, but we have to beat them at home at least once."

For more on the Spirit, log on to: www.stouffville-spirit.com

Balik basketball whiz kid for Stouffville high Spartans

BY JIM THOMAS
Correspondent

At the secondary school level, student nicknames are common place.

Some are complimentary, some derogatory.

For 14-year-old Johnny Balik, whiz kid readily applies, particularly in the area of basketball.

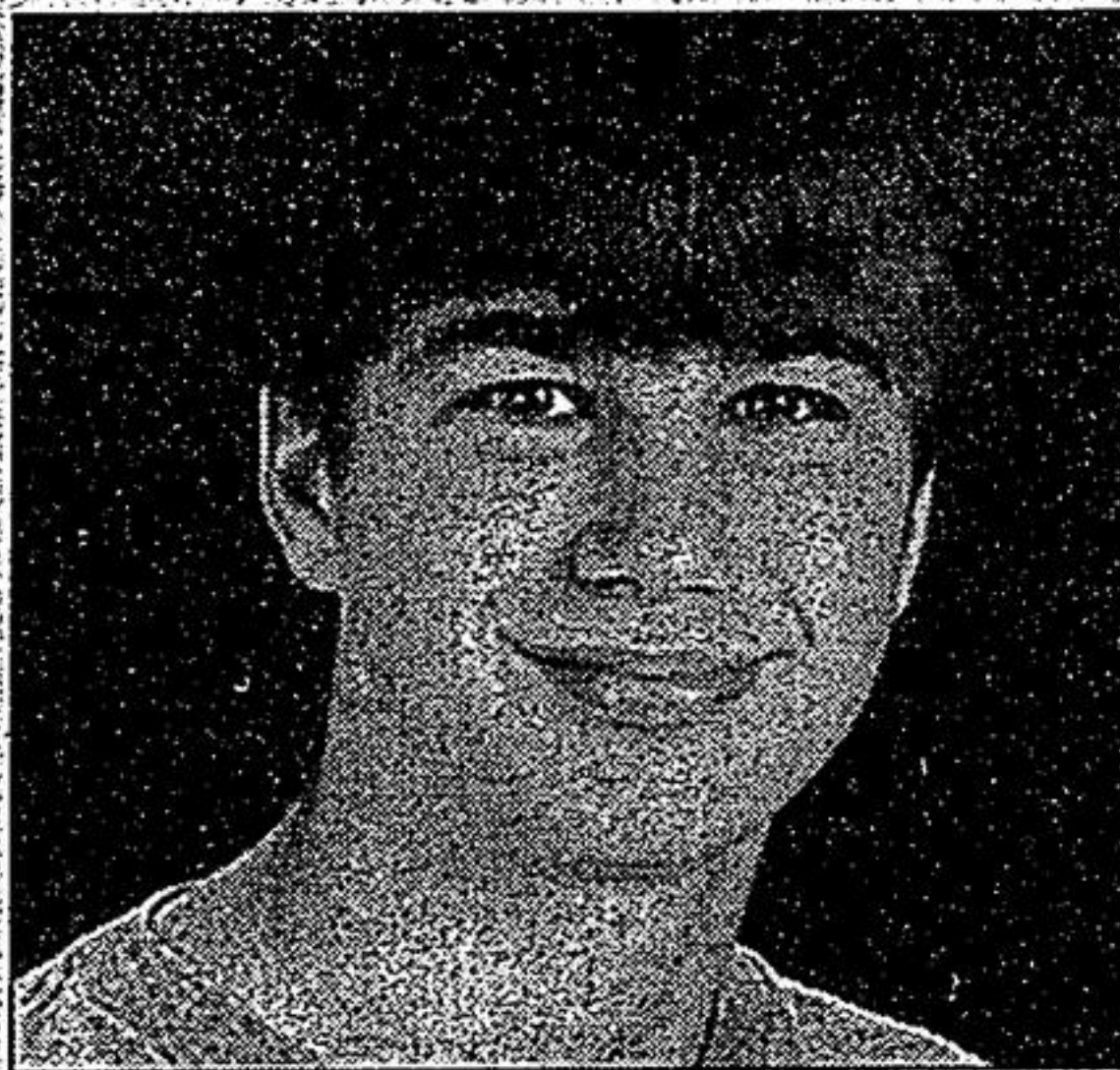
Some say his equal has never been matched, even compared to athletes much older than himself.

This season he played point guard with the Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans junior team, running up as many as 43 points per game.

Brother Justin, 16, also outstanding, gave the team a one-two punch during regular season competition, which saw the Spartans finish in first place before they were eliminated in the semifinal.

A native of Burlington, Balik received much of his elementary education at Decatur Heritage Christian Academy in Alabama where his father served as headmaster.

Mr. Balik's move to the office of vice-



JOHNNY BALIK: Grade 9 student learned much of his basketball skills while growing up in the United States.

president at Tyndale University, brought the family to Stouffville where Johnny enrolled at Summitview Public School.

There, he received the school's 2005 basketball player award, leading his team through the regular schedule without a loss, only to be beaten by

Whitchurch Highlands in the finals.

Balik's stardom as a Spartan may be short-lived, however.

"His father has been named headmaster at Statesville Christian School near Charlotte, N.C."

Johnny is seriously considering attending there this fall.

"Basketball is the country's sport of choice," Mr. Balik said of the United States, "it'll be an opportunity for Johnny to boost his game to another level."

His son has his heart set on a basketball scholarship and hopes some day of playing in the National Basketball Association, Mr. Balik states.

Mr. Balik recalls how Johnny was first introduced to basketball while attending Decatur Academy in Alabama. His love of the game is as keen now as then, he notes.

Standing six-feet tall and weighing 152 pounds, Johnny has been dominant at his point guard position, recently nominated as the school's athlete of the week.

He's basketball's whiz kid at S.D.S.S.

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