

# Spirit used to coming back

Game 5 of semifinal Sunday in Stouffville

BY JOHN CUDMORE  
Staff Writer

Been there, done that. Not that Dan West is eager to see his Stouffville Spirit go to the comeback well too many times, but it is reassuring to know your team can perform under pressure.

The Spirit took the first step toward another possible series comeback Thursday night, scoring a 5-2 victory over the visiting Oakville Blades in the third game of the Provincial Jr. A Hockey League semifinal series.

Despite the win, Stouffville trailed the best-of-seven series 2-1 in games, entering Game 4 last night at Oakville. The fifth game of the series is slated for Sunday at 3:30 p.m. at Stouffville Arena.

"There's no panic," said West, whose teams has rallied from deficits in two of three series during these playoffs, including an 0-2 hole against the Newmarket Hurricanes in the North Conference semifinals before rallying to win four straight games. "You don't want to get in that situation, but it's good to know you know you can handle it."

"We're in the fourth round and have played (21) games. By this time, you know where you can test yourself and how to handle certain situations."

"We felt we hadn't been involved enough in the series and wanted to prove to ourselves it is a battle."

Mind you, the Blades are no



**DAN WEST:** Stouffville Spirit coach says his Jr. A hockey team hasn't panicked during 2006 playoff run.

strangers themselves to comebacks having bounced back from a three-one deficit against the highly favoured Milton IceHawks in second-round West Conference play to pull the biggest upset of this spring's playoffs.

However, with nine straight Oakville wins since their turnaround against Milton, the Spirit needed something to stem the tide.

"This was huge. It puts us back in the series," said Stouffville forward Donovan Munro, who scored twice to lead his side. "I think we all we needed to do was to come out and show we wanted it more. Going down three-nothing would have been rough to come back from. Now we got full momentum and need to play another 60 (minutes) in their barn."

The Blades appeared to be little like a team on a roll in recent weeks.

"I don't like to say it, but probably things started to come easy for Oakville," said West. "Hockey doesn't work that way. It's hard to win 10 in a row in the playoffs. We wanted to work hard and make it tough on them."

Predictably, Blades' head coach Don Edwards was not at all thrilled by the play of his side which fell into a 2-0 hole early in the first period and trailed 2-1 and 4-2 at the intermissions. Stouffville held a 48-42 edge in shots on goal, including 19-8 in the final period.

"It's not what they did, but what we did and that was to not follow our game plan," said the former NHL assistant coach and goaltender, munching quietly on a post-game slice of pizza.

"We knew it was going to be a tough series. No series is easy so we have to get back to our principles. We have to get back to our game plan and keep things simple. Our guys played too much one-on-one. When we play as a team we have success. When we don't, we have trouble."

Jake Van Allen, Joel Sheppard and Rob Groom also scored for Stouffville. Trevor Elliott and Daniel Calitri responded for the Blades.

Oakville forward Daniel Calitri was assessed an intent to injure penalty during a fight with the Mark Sullivan with a minute to go when he flung his helmet past the head of the Stouffville player. Sullivan, who rarely fights, landed the first solid blow to the delight of many of the 825 in attendance.

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