

SPORTS

Acton happy to remain a Maple Leaf

Stouffville native lone assistant coach retained by new coach Paul Maurice

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

Keith Acton says he's ready and raring to get on with a new hockey season.

The sense of renewed enthusiasm exhibited by the 48-year-old Stouffville native was born last Thursday after new Toronto Maple Leafs head coach Paul Maurice officially announced Acton would be a part of his coaching staff along with newcomers Dallas Eakins and Randy Ladouceur for the 2006-07 National Hockey League campaign.

Originally hired by former Maple Leafs head coach Pat Quinn six seasons ago, Acton was the lone assistant coach to be retained by Maurice.

Acton is thrilled with the opportunity presented to work alongside Maurice, who was head coach of the Maple Leafs' American Hockey affiliate Toronto Marlies last season.

"I want to be a part of helping the club move forward. There's definitely challenges that lie ahead and I look to oversee some of those and to be successful and in trying to help the club win the Stanley Cup," Acton said Tuesday from his Stouffville home.

Although Acton wasn't given his official title until last Thursday, he remained employed with the Maple Leafs organization after Quinn and fellow assistant coach Rick Ley were relieved of their duties April 20.

Working without a portfolio, Acton travelled with club officials to Vancouver in late June to assist them at the annual NHL Entry Draft. As well, he was involved in some club meetings.

Despite the changes the club underwent during the offseason, Acton remained patient and knew it would just be a matter of time before his official capacity would be announced.

"I can only speculate but there was some staffing to do and the management team went over a number of scenarios and they had to go over the draft and free agency and it took time (for Acton's specific duties) to unfold. There was no panic to get things done," he said.

One rumour had Acton replacing Maurice as head coach of the Marlies. Acton said if the offer were to have been officially presented to him he would have strongly considered it, providing it would have made the Maple Leafs a stronger organization.

"First and foremost I wanted to stay with the Leafs organization. I would have participated in any role that would have benefitted the organization," he said.

"When there's staffing to do and people that are still employed, you go through an analysis in a number of different ways where people fit best and take the best team to compete at the highest level. I would have participated in any role in what thing that was best for the team."

In working with a new head coach in Maurice, Acton anticipates his responsibilities won't differ dramatically from what he was used to when he worked with Quinn and Ley.



KEITH ACTON: Remained confident he would remain an assistant coach with the Maple Leafs.



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

Stouffville Storm first baseman Kyle Donald (left) lunges for a ball that went past him into right field as Oshawa base runner Brendan Parks returned to first base before advancing to second during action Saturday in the Ontario Amateur Softball Association bantam boys' provincial qualifying contest at Memorial Park. The Storm won 7-4 and finished third in the double knockout event to advance to the provincial A championships in Stratford next month.

Storm bantams field berth in OASA A championships

Stouffville team to make sixth straight appearance in provincial tournament

The Stouffville Storm bantam boys' softball team accomplished something last weekend they've done in each of the last five years.

They earned a berth in the Ontario Amateur Softball Association A provincial championships.

Playing host to this year's provincial qualifiers, the Storm got off to a good start in the tournament after posting victories Saturday over Oshawa 7-4 and Sydenham 5-1.

Taking to the Memorial Park diamond Sunday, the first-year bantam squad saw its inexperience surface

against a more seasoned Napanee squad as they fell 14-0.

Facing Newmarket later in the day, the Storm dropped a 4-2 decision to end their participation in the double knockout event.

But by finishing in the top three when the tournament concluded, the Storm qualified for the A provincial championships along with Napanee, who won the tournament, and runner-up Newmarket.

The Storm pitching tandem of Bruce Cringan and Travis Connor compiled 26 strikeouts between them during the tournament.

Kyle Donald wielded a hot bat as he drove in five runs in two games while Erick Espiritu-Santo added key RBIs to the tally.

Robert Kay handled catching duties while infielders John Reesor, Tyler Hef-

ferman and Ryan Gregory played well defensively. Doug Jones, Brandon Hampson and Mike Finn excelled in the outfield.

Despite finishing the tournament with a 2-2 mark in the 10-team competition, Storm coach Mike Heffernam was extremely proud of the effort his youthful charges put fourth.

Accentuating the positive, he feels the experience gained from this year's event will bode well down the road.

"They played very well in a tough division. Qualifying for the A provincials is especially significant because we're primarily a first-year bantam team."

"This demonstrates the depth of this team and once again shows that hard work and a lot of heart can take you a long ways," he said.

The OASA A provincials are slated to take place Aug. 11-13 in Stratford.

Silverthorn makes waves at junior provincials

Jake Silverthorn put the Stouffville Swim Club on the map by becoming the first member to compete at the Ontario Junior Provincial Championships.

In taking to the pool in Nepean, he earned an opportunity to swim in next year's short course and long course provincial championships.

Swimming in four events in the 50-metre Olympic-size pool, the 10-

year-old Silverthorn's best effort was in the 100m butterfly in which he placed second among boys 10 years of age and under and posted a time of 1:26.60.

In the 50m butterfly, he placed ninth overall with a time of 38.23.

Silverthorn also swam the 100m backstroke and was clocked in 1:30.29. In the 200m individual medley, Silver-

thorn recorded a time of 3:00.78.

While the next competitive swimming campaign does not commence until September, the Stouffville Swim Club is always looking for new members.

For additional information, call head coach Brandon Oates at (905) 472-9132 or visit www.ducksswimming.ca