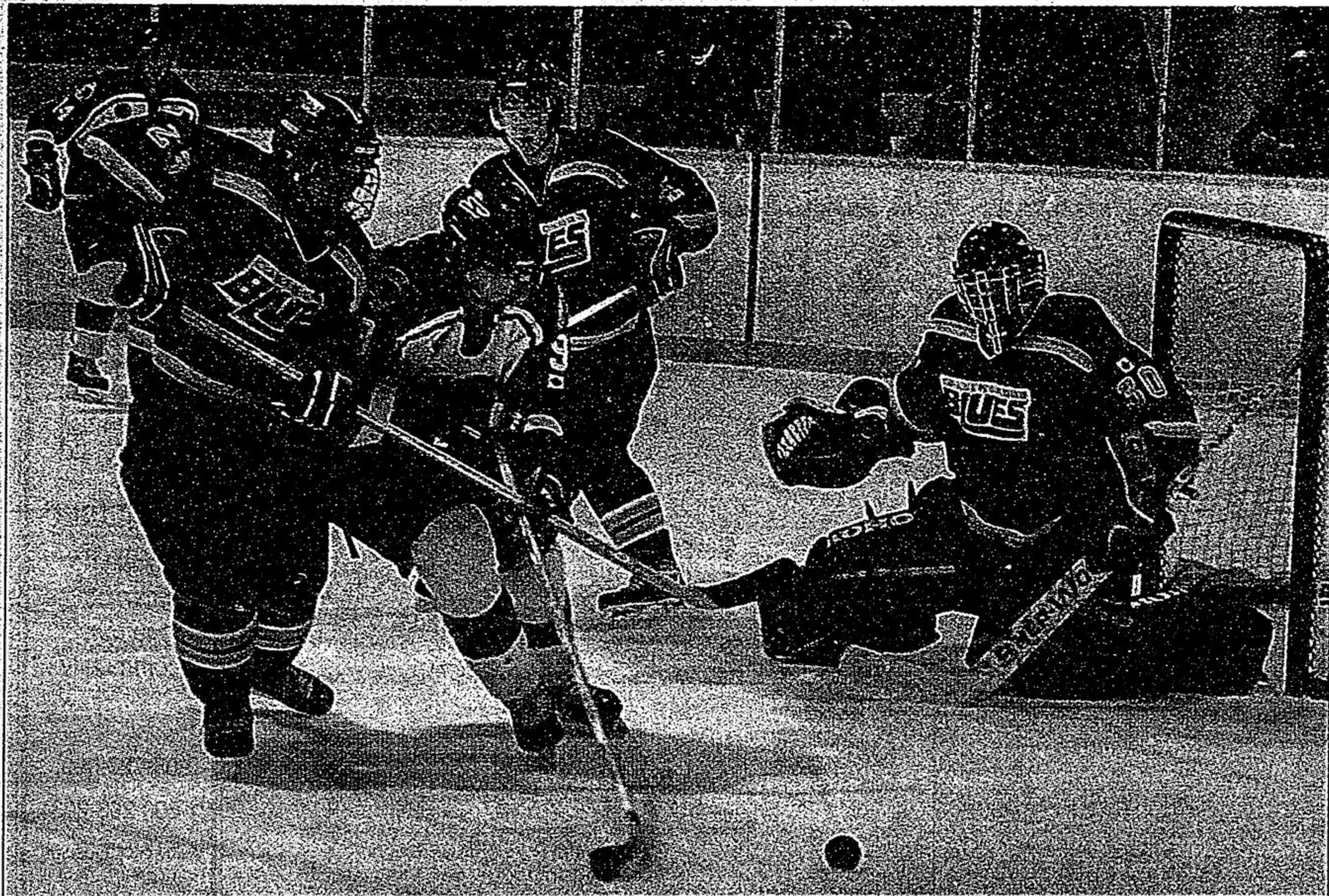


SPORTS



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Stouffville Spirit forward James McIntosh works the puck against Collingwood Blues Jordan Smith, and goalie Mike Nigalis during the Spirit's 7-3 win in the Provincial Jr. A playoff action at Stouffville Arena Thursday. The Spirit led the series 3-0.

Acton, Johnston lead Stouffville juniors to seventh straight playoff win

Spirit rolling at right time

Dan West couldn't put his finger on the moment it happened or what caused it.

It doesn't matter. The Stouffville Spirit head coach is just rolling with his hot junior A hockey club.

His team defeated the Collingwood Blues 7-3 Thursday night to take a three-games-to-none lead in their Provincial Jr. A Hockey League North Conference semifinal.

Game 4 was to be played last night in Collingwood.

The Spirit is 7-0 in the post-season and 17-2-1-0 since Christmas.

"I guess we peaked at the right time," said West, whose team was on a skid before the holidays.

"We're just really rolling right now."

The insertion of Stouffville's Will Acton into the lineup has helped.

After sitting out six weeks on the injured list, the third-year forward returned to the lineup to start the Spirit-Collingwood series.

He has five goals in the past two games, including a hat trick during Thursday's win.

Randy Johnston had two goals and two assists and shared Farmer Jack's player of the game honours with Acton. Johnston has six points in the last two games.

'I guess we peaked at the right time.'

Dan West
Stouffville Spirit head coach

Third star Donovan Munro had a goal and two assists.

Tyler Gubb had the other goal.

James McIntosh and Myles Gomes earned two assists each.

Trevor O'Neill earned the win to go 6-0 in the playoffs.

The Spirit was without Corey Trivino (Canada Games) and Mark Kubicz (St. Mike's Majors). Both are expected back

this weekend.

If necessary, Game 5 would be played tonight in Stouffville at 7:30. The sixth game would go Monday in Collingwood and Game 7 Tuesday in Stouffville.

Tigers, Canes working overtime

Overtime has been the story of the other North semi.

The upstart Newmarket Hurricanes defeated the Aurora Tigers 3-2 in double overtime Thursday to tie their series at 2-2. Ex-Stouffville player Rick Schrank netted the winner.

Aurora needed extra time to win the previous two games.

Aurora is the top-ranked Jr. A team in Canada.

Spirit games are broadcast at whistleradio.com

For more information, go to stouffvillespirit.com.

Atoms win opener

The Stouffville atom A Clippers got off to a good start in their Ontario Minor Hockey Association best-of-five semifinal series against Whitby Wednesday with a 4-3 road win.

Spencer Roberts, Chris Jarrett, Josh Burkholder and Mitchell Smith scored for the Clippers. Eric Zambri collected two assists. Cameron Nowikow was solid in goal.

The second game of the series goes tomorrow at the Stouffville Arena at 4:30 p.m.

Girls make final

If the Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans varsity boys' hockey team can do it, why not the girls?

Like the Spartan boys, the girls' varsity squad gained a berth in the York Region Athletic Association tier one final after winning its first-to-three-point semifinal series over Newmarket's Sacred Heart Catholic High School.

After battling Sacred Heart to a 3-3 tie in Tuesday's series opener in Newmarket, the Spartans took full advantage of playing in the confines of the Stouffville Arena Wednesday and skated off with a 3-1 victory.

Igniting the Spartans' offense in Wednesday's finale were the Hughes sisters, with Hayley scoring twice and younger sister Heather once. Hayley had all three Spartan goals in the opener.

"We definitely got some timely goal scoring from the Hughes sisters and great defensive play from our defensive core," Spartans head coach Dan McConnachie said.

"Our goalie, Courtney Humphreys, deserves a tip of the hat for shutting the door down in the third period when Sacred Heart had us back on our heels. All in all great teamwork did the job," he said.

The Spartans will face the Markham District High School Marauders in a one-game, winner-take-all final. The date was not determined as of press

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deadline yesterday.

By finishing atop the South Division standings, the Marauders will have home ice advantage.

Both teams will be going to the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations championships, the Spartans to the A/AA tourney in Belleville March 20-22 and Markham to the AAA/AAAA event March 20-23 in Ottawa.

For the defending OFSAA champion Spartans, it's their fourth consecutive appearance at the provincial championships.

"It's been quite a run," said McConnachie, who doubles as school band leader.

Boys final delayed by bad weather

The York Region high school hockey championship game will have to wait.

Yesterday's nasty weather postponed the winner-take-all contest at Mount Joy Arena in Markham between Stouffville District Secondary School and Markham's Brother Andre Catholic High School.

The game has been rescheduled for Monday at 1 p.m. at Mount Joy.

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