

Firing 'shocked' Spirit coach

'Want someone to develop kids,' owner says

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

Dan West thought directing the Stouffville Spirit to a Provincial Junior A Hockey League North-West Conference title last season and reaching the North Conference final this past season should have warranted his return next season.

He was wrong. Just after the club had its annual team photo session Tuesday evening, Spirit owners Zeev Werek and Dave Laren informed West his contract would not be renewed next season.

"I was shocked; to put it in better words, I didn't see it coming at all," West said. "I thought we did a good job for two years. I guess they (Werek and Laren) wanted to go in a different direction."

West said he wasn't given a clear reason why he was let go, but speculates it might have to do with both owners' sons being on the Spirit roster next season.

"They might not see me as being the right guy for that," West said.

Although disappointed, West said he has fond memories of his two seasons in Stouffville.

"We played a lot of hockey and I had a chance to meet a lot of great people and work with a lot of great people, guys (such as) Ken Burrows (Spirit general manager)," he said.

"It was definitely fun to be part of watching great players (such as) Will Acton, Corey Trivino and Randy Johnston become better players and to have a hand in their progress," West said.

He said he has received several calls from players and parents since the news broke of his firing.

The future?

"I think I'll sit tight for a week or two and pursue some other job. I know there are openings around the league and I'll check the OHL and try to get my name out there to see if I might be able to be an assistant coach at that level," he said.

"I think I'll bounce back somewhere along the line."

And the Spirit?

"They've got a good group of players coming back," he said. "I told the guys after we lost to Aurora (in the North Conference final) that Aurora was built for this year. But we're still growing and we



DAN WEST: Head coach fired by Stouffville Spirit owners following second season with Jr. A team.

hope to be champs next year. They've got a good base to succeed next year."

The decision was not made hastily and had nothing to do with the team's record or personality conflicts, Werek said. The owners wanted a coach that would be more visible in the community.

"It was a difficult decision not to bring Dan back," Werek said. "Dan is a real gentleman who knows the game inside and out. I'm certain he will find a job quickly. We would highly recommend him."

"But we just looked at what we needed in the future

and what we wanted to see was someone to develop kids and have them more community minded. Therefore, we thought we needed a coach who could spend that time in the community. With Dan recently getting married and living in Lindsay it would be quite a trek for him to do that."

The search for a successor is underway and the new coach could be in place in 10 days.

The club's annual rookie camp goes May 6 and 7 at the Stouffville Arena.

"We have two or three individuals on our short list now that are excellent and fit what we want to do," he said. "We just want to make sure we don't go through what we're currently going through."

NOTES: It was a reunion of Spirit alumnus when Clarkson played UMass in Rochester, N.Y., during the sweet 16 round of NCAA hockey yesterday. Clarkson's Mike Sullivan and UMass forward Kevin Jarman were Spirit teammates four years ago. For updates, go to ncaasports.com

For more on the Spirit, go to stouffvillespirit.com

Winless last season, tykes take U.S. event

Daryl May remembers his Stouffville Clipper tyke select hockey players failing to win a game during the regular season as mites last year.

This season has been a totally different story for May's contingent of players, aged seven and eight. In York Simcoe league play, the Clippers finished fourth out of eight teams.

Relegated to the consolation round of the playoffs, after losing their first-round series, the Clippers eliminated Markham and Clarington and are in the best-of-five final against Aurora.

But that's not all.

Travelling to Buffalo, N.Y., earlier this month for the Pepsi Hockey Invitational, the Clippers skated off with the Little NHL Pacific Select Division crown. They won 7-3 over the Brampton Battalion Seconds in the final.

Luke Sear ignited the Clippers' attack in the finale with three goals while Steele Rodin added two goals, Vaughan McCusker one goal and two assists and Connor May one goal, one assist. Gerrit Timmersma, Austin Meiliunas and Rhys Barker collected assists.

To reach the final, the Clippers defeated the Buffalo Regals 9-2, Grimbsy Super 7's 8-0 and Brampton Battalion 5-2.

May, the brother of veteran NHLer Brad May, attributes the turnaround to several factors.

"We've got a good group of kids to start with," he said. "It's all about confidence and putting the kids in the right places. Right now, any of our lines can be competitive."

Other team members are: Adrian Addante, who recorded his second shutout of the season against Grimbsy, defence-men Camryn Tait, Matthew Hunt and Timothy Barker and forwards Zachary Roberts, Kyle Kincaid, Jackson Mistelbacher, Chris Gilmour, Kieran Beaudoin and Miller Boothby.

May was assisted on the bench by Steve McCusker and Greg Roberts, brother of Pittsburgh Penguin Gary Roberts.

Jay Meiliunas is trainer and Tamara Meiliunas manager for the club sponsored by Shoeless Joe's, Global Pet Foods and Farmer Jacks.

The Clippers and Aurora opened their consolation final series with a 1-1 tie Wednesday.

The remainder of the series includes dates: Monday at the Aurora Community Centre, 6 p.m.; Wednesday in Stouffville, 6:10 p.m.

If required, the series would return to Aurora Thursday at 6 p.m. and Stouffville next Saturday at 6:10 p.m.

—Mike Hayakawa

Redshaw rocks Newmarket bonspiel

Stouffville's Scott Redshaw skipped his Uxbridge Curling Club foursome to the main event title at a Little Rock York Bonspiel during March break at the York Curling Club in Newmarket.

Redshaw skipped his club of vice Matthew Edwards, second Trevor Roberts and lead Patrick Edwards to a 13-0 win in their first game and a 6-1 decision in their second match.

Redshaw's rink took first place on the basis of the two scores.

Second on the scoreboard was another Uxbridge team skipped by Brooke Buncombe. Vice Lauren Reid and second Carmen Stiller filled out the team.

Despite having their fourth player sick, the girls managed dominating wins of 6-2 and 8-1.

Coming in third was the other Uxbridge team of skip Andrew Edwards,

SPORTS DIGEST

vice Zac Houston, second Aidan McCoy and lead Danny Wright. They recorded 6-5 and 8-2 victories.

Katherine Brown coaches the young curlers at the Uxbridge club.

McWhinney UHL goalie of week

Stouffville Spirit graduate Dan McWhinney was named United Hockey League Goaltender of the Week Tuesday.

The Fort Wayne Komets netminder finished the week with a 3-0-0 record, a 1.87 goals against average and a .935 save percentage.

He won on three straight nights last weekend, defeating the Port Huron Flags 5-2, Rockford 4-3 and the Muskegon Fury 5-1.

The 21-year-old native of Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., has won his last five decisions and has a 9-3-0 record with a 2.87 GAA in 15 appearances this season.

McWhinney graduated from the Spirit last spring after two seasons with the Provincial Jr. A Hockey League club. He led the Spirit through five playoff rounds in 2006 to the North Conference and North/West titles.

McWhinney's only bad news of the weekend?

He was cut from the TV show Making the Cut: Last Man Standing on Global Saturday.

The reality series was taped last summer in British Columbia.

Atom AE Clippers reach final

The Stouffville atom AE Clippers advanced to the York-Simcoe league minor hockey finals after clinching their best-of-five semifinal series against Orillia in four games Monday with a 4-1 road win.

Justin Dube netted the hat trick while Matt Carrick added one. Paul Henderson collected an assist.

Patrick Coutts was solid in goal.

The Clippers took the series opener March 16 with a 3-1 win at the Stouffville Arena. Carrick scored twice and Dube once. Nathan Kirkness and Henderson each had one helper. Jordan Clements handled netminding duties.

After Orillia tied the series with a 4-2 home ice victory last Saturday, the Clippers regained the lead with a 4-0 win Sunday in Stouffville and set the stage for Monday's finale.

Henderson, Dube, Spencer Tait and Hunter Davidson scored. Tait, Davidson, Mark Gavrillov and Jack Porter assisted.

Tournament weekend at arena

The Stouffville Arena is a beehive of activity this weekend with the Whitchurch Stouffville Minor Hockey Association hosting its novice, novice AE, minor atom, minor atom AE and atom AE tournament.

The host Clippers are fielding teams in the novice A, novice AE, minor atom A, minor atom AE, atom A and atom AE divisions.

The tourney opened yesterday. Games continue today and Sunday.

The finals, played on both ice pads, run from 12:35 to 6:30 p.m.

Admission is free.



SCOTT REDSHAW: Stouffville skip leads Uxbridge team to victory in Little Rocks curling event.

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