

# SPORTS

Stouffville Storm players and coaches celebrate winning the Ontario bantam elimination fastball tournament in Napanee Sunday. The sweep of the weekend tourney included two wins over arch rival Napanee. Both teams qualify for the Eastern Canadian championships next month. It's the third straight trip to the eastern event for the Stouffville squad.



## Storm blows through Ontario teams

*Stouffville bantams sweep provincials, head to Newfoundland*

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA  
Staff Writer

Over the past six years, the Stouffville Storm and Napanee Express have developed a nice little rivalry on the softball diamond.

Storm head coach Mike Heffernan described the intensity as reaching the point where players representing the two teams don't socialize on the field.

When the two teams renewed acquaintances last weekend in Napanee at the 16-team provincial bantam elimination tournament, the rivalry almost boiled over.

Fortunately for the Storm, they were able to focus on the task at hand to go undefeated, climaxed with a 7-1 win over the Express in Sunday's A final tilt.

A first-inning two-run homer by Robert Kay set the tone for the

Storm as they erupted for four runs and never looked back. Bruce Cringan worked the first 4 1/3 innings to earn the win while Travis Connor relieved him.

The hostilities became evident during Saturday evening's first meeting between the two clubs.

With the Storm nursing a 7-1 lead in their half of the fifth inning, Stouffville added to the margin when third baseman Scott Riepert belted a two-run triple.

Taking a gamble, Heffernan, who was coaching at third, thought Riepert could leg out an inside-the-park home run.

### PLAYERS EJECTED

Riepert collided with Express catcher David Pratt, who was guarding home plate as he awaited a relay throw. After the collision, the two players exchanged words. Players from both benches came onto the field, but no physical exchanges took place.

Both players along with Storm pitcher Bruce Cringan, who tried to intervene, were ejected.

More important for the Storm though, was that they won 9-3 to gain a berth in Sunday's final and another trip to the Eastern Canadian championships. The two finalists represent Ontario at the eastern nationals every year.

Caleb Bayliss worked the first four innings to earn the win. Offensively, Heffernan, said his hitting was distributed throughout the batting order.

"It was a highly competitive game," Heffernan said. "I think since the game was played in front of a home crowd, Napanee didn't want to be shown up."

"But both of these teams (Storm and Express) have battled it out for the last six years. We've virtually been the top two teams in Ontario."

The trip to the Eastern Canadians, in Torbay, Nfld., will be the third straight for the Storm.

Despite the mild hostilities that broke out in Saturday's tilt, Heffernan was proud of the way his club performed in the double elimination competition.

"The boys played excellent," he

said of his charges. "We went in there and played almost flawless ball."

Stouffville began the tournament Friday with a 5-2 win over Strathroy.

The following day, it recorded victories over Newmarket 4-1 and Walkerton 7-4 to set the stage for the first meeting against Napanee.

It's been a near perfect Storm season that has them sitting atop the Durham York Softball League standings with an undefeated record.

"Our key overall has been our depth, our experience and maturity. The guys have been focused this year," he said.

As well, he was quick to praise the veteran leadership provided by Cringan and catcher Kay.

"Both of these guys have led this team. They've kept the guys in line," Heffernan said.

Looking ahead to the Eastern Canadian Aug. 23-26, Heffernan is optimistic his club can return home with a medal.

In preparing for the championships Heffernan has already filled

one of two pickups he's allowed by bringing in Tyler Kuntz from Walkerton.

"Tyler can play infield and outfield and he can pitch a little as well. And he has a great stick," Heffernan said.

"Two years ago, Napanee picked him up and he haunted us at the Eastern Canadian championships."

### NAPANEE ISN'T WORRIED

Napanee is doing the same, adding an unnamed right-handed pitcher and middle infielder to its roster.

Express head coach Al Whitfield, who was also thrown out of Saturday's game following the brouhaha with the Storm, told the Kingston Whig-Standard he's not worried about meeting Stouffville again.

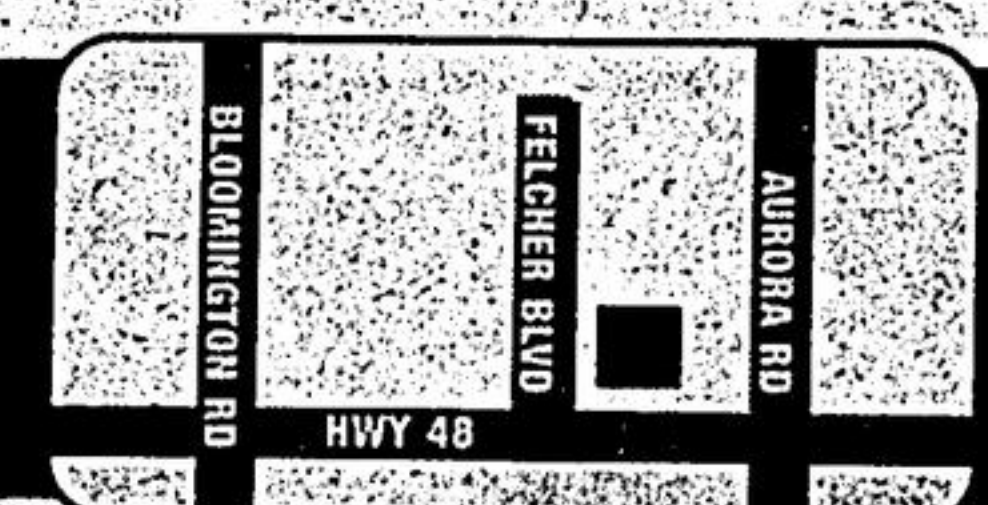
His brother and assistant coach, Bob Whitfield, was tossed Sunday for arguing an illegal pitch call.

Express pitcher Justin MacDonald questioned whether the Stouffville players knew how to slide in the same story.

Let the rivalry continue.



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