



STOUFFVILLE STORM PHOTO

Stouffville Storm celebrates winning the Eastern Canadian bantam softball championship in Newfoundland Sunday. It was the first title in three trips to the event for the Storm, which won Ontario and provincial elimination titles this summer.

E. Canadian title for Stouffville boys

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stepped on the field.

The blueprint for success started with the players' parents and level of dedication they exhibited in getting the players to practices, league games and weekend tournaments throughout the year. Not to mention their level of tolerance in allowing coaches and players to do their thing on the field of play.

"You've got to have parents who are committed and I knew that I had a good bunch," he said.

The players, too, went beyond the call of duty.

"We had every player to work as one," Mr. Heffernan said of the players, including three who have been with him since Day 1. The Stouffville residents are his son and first baseman Tyler Heffernan, catcher Robert Kay and pitcher Bruce Cringan.

Mr. Heffernan praised the Whitchurch Stouffville Softball Association's house league and select programs in feeding his club with talent. Among those who graduated from the selects were shortstop Erick Espiritu-Santo, infielder Braham VanZeeland and outfielder Mike Finn.

With a successful club in the works, the Storm began to attract interest from players in centres that did not have a competitive team or those who wanted to play at a higher level.

They include second baseman Steven Ashbridge, who came in from Oshawa. Also joining the team from Kitchener was third baseman Scott Riepert while pitcher Caleb Bayliss made the trek from Bradford.

"Our success was an allurements for the kids to come to our team," Mr. Heffernan said. "These players were willing to come great distances. And these guys played as a unit."

That created depth.

A case in point this season was pitcher Travis Connor, who had an injury-prone year that included a broken

collarbone and an arm in a cast.

While Connor was on the shelf, others such as Cringan and Bayliss were able to step up. During the Eastern Canadian championships, the Storm brought in Tyler Kuntz, as one of two allowed pick-ups, from Walkerton.

"The team banded together very well. They won as a team and lost as a team," the coach said.

Also key was naming some players on-the-field coaches. The players can get more of a first-hand feel of what's transpiring on the field than the coaches in the dugout, Mr. Heffernan said.

PLAYER/COACHES

Those players, including Kay, Cringan, Espiritu-Santo and Ashbridge, give input prior to, during and after games to the coach.

"These guys are our best communicators on the team," Mr. Heffernan said. "I get a lot of input from them, because they see things on the field more than what the coaches do and I have a lot of trust in these four. This has worked out well."

In reaching the final, the Storm won its first two games over Nova Scotia (St. Joseph's Lakers) 8-0 and host Torbay All-Stars 9-0.

After incurring their lone setback during their third outing, a 5-4 loss to the arch rival Napanee Express, the Storm routed New Brunswick (Big Cove) 13-0 and Newfoundland (Conception Bay Central) 6-2 to clinch first place.

The Storm then gained a measure of revenge on the Express by dismantling them 15-0 to reach the final.

Named to the tournament's all-star team were Ashbridge at second base and Espiritu-Santo at shortstop.

Finished as bantams, the Storm will play in midget ranks, where they will have three years of eligibility.

"There's some strong midget teams out there. We won't be as successful as this past year. But I think we will field a good team," Mr. Heffernan said.

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