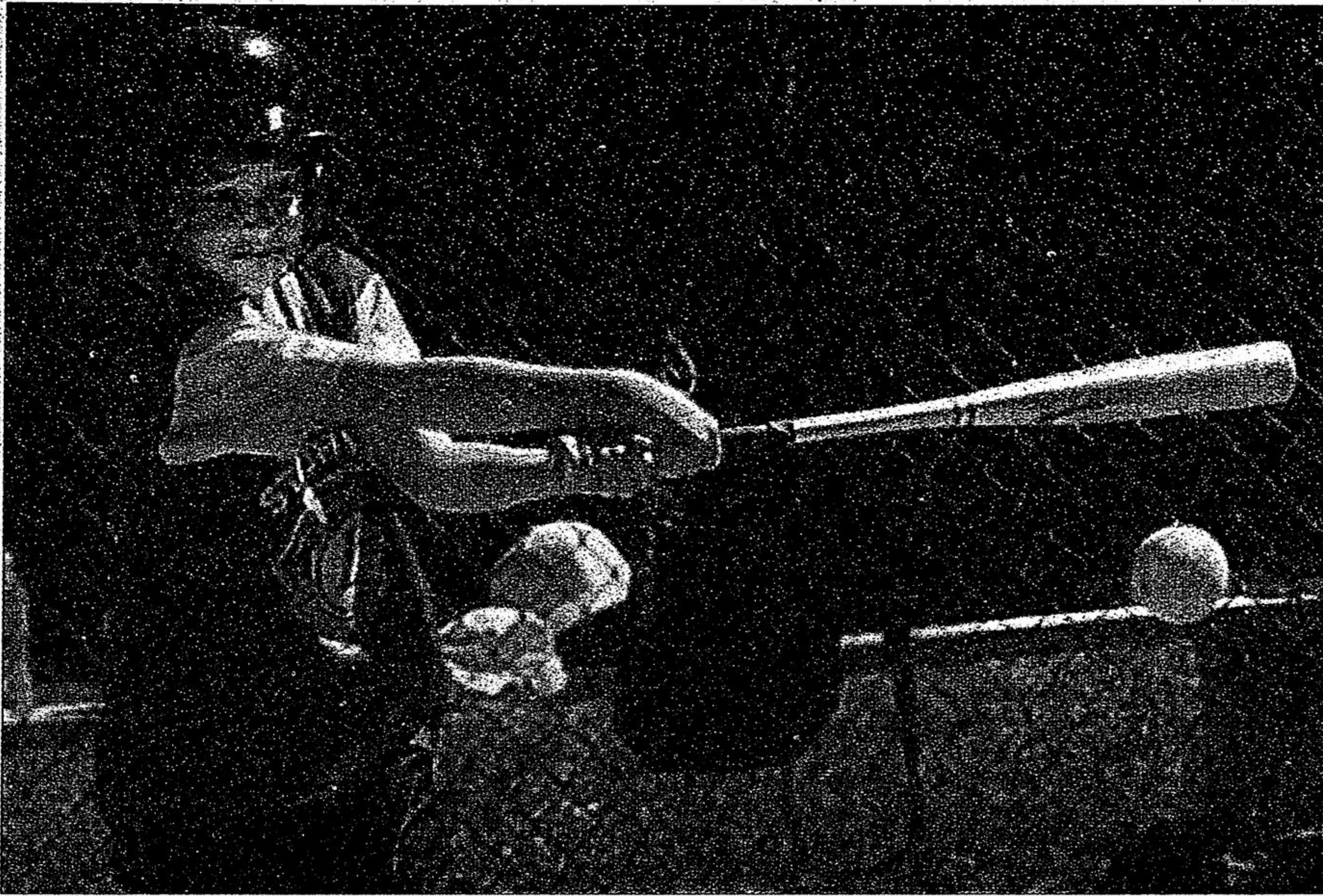


Stouffville Sun-Tribune

SPORTS

SWING, BATTER



Stouffville Lions Sullivan Stobo knocks out a hit against Famous Sam's during the Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Softball Association's year-end tournament in Memorial Park Saturday. For more information, go to wssa.netfirms.com/

STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

Veltman behind Rock bench in '09

Jim Veltman has announced he will end his playing career with the Toronto Rock after the 2008 National Lacrosse League season.

But for the 41-year-old Stouffville resident and Rock captain, it doesn't mean he will end his association with the club.

The Rock announced Tuesday Veltman has inked a five-year deal to become an assistant coach to Glenn Clark in 2009.

A 15-year veteran and the league's all-time leader in corralling loose balls, Veltman was ecstatic.

"It was a pretty big day," he said. "I'm excited about the deal, my wife is happy, so are my kids. When you sign a five-year deal it's a good deal for everybody involved."

"We actually talked about it two years ago when Terry Sanderson was relieved as head coach and Glenn (Clark) came on board. There was talk of what I would do when

I finished playing and I liked the idea to come in gradually as being an assistant or co-head coach first and learn," the Brampton native said.

Things changed six weeks ago when Veltman was contacted by the Colorado Mammoth about becoming their head coach once he retired from active duty.

"I had to come up with a decision," Veltman said. "I researched the job and talked to people in the Rock organization and things just accelerated into yesterday (Tuesday's signing)."

Teammates for nine seasons, Clark welcomes Veltman's presence.

"It's great. Jim has a great lacrosse mind and he'll be a good asset to our staff. Jim and I have been good friends on and off the floor and this is pretty exciting and it's good for the organization," Clark, a former Stouffville resident who now lives in Thornhill, said.

Mike Hayakawa

Perfect in pre-season, Spirit plays for real tonight

Hosts Collingwood in Provincial Jr. A opener

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

You won't hear Stouffville Spirit head coach Dave D'Amazio complain about his club going undefeated through its Provincial Junior A Hockey league pre-season schedule.

The nine-game exhibition run was capped off Sunday with a 5-1 win over the Mississauga Chargers in the final of the OHA Pre-Season Tournament at the Al Palladini Community Centre in Vaughan.

While the first-year Spirit head coach is proud of the way his troops played, he is quick to note it's a thing of the past.

Starting tonight, the Spirit begin play for keeps when they open the regular season at the Stouffville Arena against a young Collingwood Blues

team at 7:30 p.m.

"Sure we had a great start in the pre-season. But now the real stuff starts," he said. "It's no good to go 8-0 in the pre-season and go 0-2 in your first two regular season games. Now we've got to start a new winning streak."

"Hopefully though, winning the tournament is a sign of things to come."

D'Amazio couldn't be happier with how his troops have grasped the staff's new philosophy.

"We've progressed far more than what I had expected," he said. "I don't want to take too much from the pre-season, but we're happy with the development of our players."

The coaches are still experimenting with line combinations and doesn't anticipate anything concrete until after the first 10 games.

"We're definitely deep with our forward lines and we've been playing guys on different lines and trying

them in different roles," he said.

The blueline has been banged up, but D'Amazio anticipates almost everyone will be healthy for tonight's game. However, he's pleased with the leadership provided by veterans Daniel Spivak, Tom Kokelj and Trevor Smith and newcomers like Matt Westlake, Jarred Seymour, Michael Gillen and Tim Halloran.

Seymour suffered a bruised back during the tournament but could be ready for tonight's opener. Halloran could be out one to two weeks after his forearm was cut by a skate.

While incumbent Trevor O'Neill will see the bulk of the work between the pipes, D'Amazio said the backup role should be ably manned by German Tsatura. A member of the Petrolia Jets of the Western Ontario Hockey League last season, Tsatura made his first start for the Spirit in its dramatic 3-2 overtime semifinal win Sunday over the Milton Icehawks.

"German played phenomenal,"

D'Amazio said. "Trevor is our No. 1 goalie and German can play any game and be solid for us."

Spirit general manager Matt Gibson has also been pleased with the work of Tsatura and declared he is the club's "final piece to their puzzle."

"He has some definite junior experience," Gibson said.

Scoring for the Spirit in Sunday's final were Donovan Munro with two goals while Corey Trivino, Randy Johnston and Taylor Law added singles.

Trivino scored the game-winning goal earlier that day in their overtime win over Milton.

Leading up to the semifinal, the Spirit finished atop its pool after defeating the Chargers 7-3 Thursday, the Icehawks 3-2 Friday and Burlington Cougars 4-3 Saturday.

For information more on the Spirit, go to stouffvillespirit.com

Rained out Tuesday, Mennos try again

Hockey isn't the only game in town tonight.

The elements did not do the Stouffville Mennos or Oshawa Ravens any favours Tuesday.

What was supposed to be the first game of their best-of-three Oshawa City and District Fastball League semifinal series in Oshawa was cancelled after one inning due to rain.

The Mennos had scored two runs in their half of the inning before the game was called.

As a result, the first game will be played tonight at Memorial Park at 8:30 p.m.

The date for the second game has yet to be determined as of press time.

For updates, go to ocdfl.ca



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