

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

SPORTS

Special teams, youth Spirit's demise: GM

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

Could have, would have, should have.

That is how the Stouffville Spirit feel after their Provincial Jr. A Hockey League season come to a sudden conclusion Friday. The defending national champion Aurora Tigers skated off with a dramatic 3-2 overtime win to claim the best-of-seven North Conference final in five games.

For the Spirit, it's wait until next year.

"It's never good to accept a loss, but we were not blown out or taken advantage of in this series," Spirit head coach Dave D'Amazio said. "Most of the games could have gone either way. (Aurora) They're a great team and have been through this before."

PREDICTION COMES TRUE

"I thought we could have beaten Aurora," Spirit general manager Thomas Milne said.

Milne felt several factors attributed to their demise, including the Spirit's youth.

Aurora lists nine 20-year-old players on its roster. The Spirit had just four.

"I predicted from Day 1 when I took over as general manager that special teams is what wins playoff games. I thought our penalty killing was good. But our power play went 0 for 15 (0 for seven last Thursday and 0 for eight in Friday's finale)," he said. "I thought we had a talented enough team. Our defence and goaltending is what got us through."

Milne felt the club transformed into a group of over-achievers in the playoffs.

"I was happy that we made it to the North Conference final. But when you get to that stage you want to win.

"I think though you've got to lose in the short term to win in the long run. As a whole our team under-

achieved during the regular season. But in the playoffs we picked it up a notch."

Forward Jonathan Cristini, who was acquired part way during the season, felt the club had its chances.

"I thought it was one of those series where we were battling hard," he said. "But we weren't getting the bounces. By the last game we were trying to figure out how to beat their goalie (Aaron Barton). Nothing was working. We outshot them (45-26) and we had a lot of power-play opportunities. But it was our fault. We shouldn't have been down three games to one to start with."

"All series long they got the breaks. We had momentum and then they'd shut us down. We had our chances," said Spirit forward Corey Trivino, who will be attending Boston University this fall on a full scholarship.

The desperation from the semifinal series win over the first-place Huntsville-Muskoka Otters was missing, Cristini said.

"Our intensity might not have been as intense as it was against Huntsville. There was no do-or-die attitude and I think we might have let it get to our heads. That's what it felt like to me anyways," he said.

'DEFIED THE ODDS'

"We had a good year and defied the odds," Trivino said. "A lot of people thought we would lose in the first round, and then in the second."

In Friday's game, Trivino and Darren Archibald each scored for the Spirit, who overcame deficits of 1-0 in the first period and 2-1 in the second to tie the game and force overtime that concluded with a goal by Jeff Vanderlugt at the 1:10-mark of the first overtime.

-with files from
John Cudmore

OUT OF DANGER



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Devin Tyhurst of LCE Aviation clears the puck from his zone against Timber Creek during novice playoff action in the Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association's house league at the Stouffville Arena Saturday. LCE won 2-1. House league playoffs continue through April 5.

OMHA
finals
here on
weekend

*Bantams, minor peewees
can win championships*

Two Stouffville teams can win Ontario Minor Hockey Association championships on home ice this weekend.

A third opens its OMHA final.

The minor peewee Clippers need one win to capture an OMHA banner, following a pair of victories over Brampton last weekend. Game 3 goes Saturday at 3:10 p.m. at the Stouffville Arena.

*Minor peewees need one more
victory to hoist OMHA banner/
page 26.*

The Stouffville bantam Clippers drew first blood in their best-of-five final against SouthPoint with a 4-2 win in the opener Sunday in Wheatley, near Leamington.

The Clippers juveniles will open their best-of-five final against Pelham Saturday at the Stouffville Arena at 7 p.m.

Other games will take place March Sunday in Pelham, March 28 at Stouffville, March 29, if necessary, at Pelham and March 30 in Stouffville.

The bantam Clippers struck quickly Sunday as Chris Smith staked Stouffville to a 1-0 lead two minutes in.

Eight seconds later, Josh Machesney scored to pad the lead to 2-0. Joseph Palladino made it 3-0 in the second period.

SouthPoint rallied with two unanswered goals to cut the Clippers' lead to 3-2 in the third.

With SouthPoint pulling their goalie for an extra attacker in the waning moments of the period, the Clippers got an insurance goal from Smith.

Mathew Miniaci, Kyle Sauro, Connor Cadaret and Steven Tait had assists.

Helping to preserve the win was some steady netminding from Kyle Pontone.

The series resumes in Stouffville with games Saturday at 5 p.m. and Sunday at 3:10 p.m.

It scored 96.

Everyone at dinner RAVED.

EXCLUSIVE
imported wines
at great value!

And you can't get them anywhere else.

Visit YorkRegionWineClub.com and
check out our handpicked selection
of exclusive imported wines -
all delivered anywhere you
choose in Ontario.

YRWC
YORK REGION WINE CLUB

north

CELEBRATION
JAS

yrmg

yorkregion.com
it clicks homeWine
Online.ca
Taste the Difference