

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

SPORTS

Juveniles win OMHAs on ice, in boardroom

Pelham coach 'not told' game was being played

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

It's now official: the Stouffville juvenile Clippers are indeed Ontario Minor Hockey Association champions.

The Clippers were officially declared champions yesterday when a protest filed by the Pelham Panthers after Friday's third game in their first-to-six-point final series at the Stouffville Arena was tossed out by the OMHA.

During the game, which the Clippers won 4-2 to take a five points to one series lead, a Panthers' player was assessed a 10-minute misconduct for not wearing a mouthguard properly.

The Panthers felt the referee made an error in judgement and should have sent the player to the bench and not the penalty box.

The Clippers filed a defence, which was sent to the OMHA offices in Richmond Hill Tuesday.

After reviewing documents in a conference telephone call Tuesday night, the OMHA ruled in favour of the Clippers.

USED OLD RULEBOOK

"We dealt with the facts and the series is over. Pelham's protest is denied. The game stands. Stouffville are the champions," Richard Ropchan, OMHA executive director, said Wednesday.

Ropchan said Pelham based its argument on a 2003 OMHA rulebook in which a player who did not wear a mouthguard in a proper manner was given a verbal warning first. But under the current rules, a player is now assessed a 10-minute misconduct.

The Panthers also claimed during Friday's game the Clippers had two players wearing No. 4. But to distinguish the two players before the game began, one of the jerseys had a strip of tape used to make it No. 14.

"It's up to the referee's discretion if they feel comfortable enough to distin-



STAFF PHOTO/JIM MASON

Stouffville juvenile Clippers celebrate their OMHA A championship Sunday. The OMHA confirmed the win yesterday when it denied a protest made by their opponents from Pelham, who failed to show for Sunday's game. For Jim Mason's take on the series, see his column on page 6.

guish between the two players," Josie Robinson, the Whitchurch Stouffville Minor Hockey Association's vice-president and OMHA rep, said. "They (Pelham) asked the referees about the two No. 4s and the referee said he could distinguish between the two players."

In making their official protest to the OMHA, in which they had to choose one or the other, Pelham elected to question the mouthguard ruling.

Technically, the Clippers wrapped up the series Saturday when they won 3-2 in Pelham.

However, during their trip home, they were informed a fifth game was to be played Sunday in Stouffville. Pelham, however, did not make the trip.

The Clippers, who showed up on the Stouffville Arena ice, won the game on a 1-0 forfeit after team captain Landon Wideman took the opening faceoff and were awarded the Mitchell F Hepburn Trophy before their hometown fans.

Panthers' head coach Jim Bonadie said there was miscommunication between his organization and

an OMHA director. Bonadie was told if he had not heard from the OMHA by 2 p.m. Sunday he was not to take the team to Stouffville.

"I was in shock just as the people in Stouffville were, too. I first heard about it at around 7 or 7:30 p.m. that night when I was outside of my home playing a road hockey game with a bunch of the players and I got a call from our ice scheduler who got a call from Stouffville's ice scheduler asking if we were stuck in traffic in getting to Stouffville," he said.

'THROUGH HELL AND BACK'

"I got concerned, since no one informed me."

Clippers' head coach Brent Gibson was relieved upon hearing the OMHA's final verdict.

"In my 18 years of being involved in coaching minor hockey I've never seen anything like this. It had everybody's heads spinning. They (Pelham) kind of put us through hell and back.

"But I feel sorry for their players. I think their coaching staff made a wrong decision," he said.

Robinson was also delighted.

"As an association, we're thrilled with the ruling. It was the only way the OMHA could have and should have ruled," she said.

"It was in black and white," she said of the regulations.

Ropchan said he had never heard of a team not showing up to play a game in the final.

Gibson was also head coach of the 2005 champion Clippers.

Matt Easter and Devin Paynter each had a goal and one assist for the Clippers in Friday's win. Kyle Miller and Nathan James added single tallies.

Andrew Stewart, Nathan James, Wideman and Jimiel Selmanovski each had one assist.

In Saturday's finale, Miller, Wideman and midget call-up Brad Maxwell scored for the Clippers. Wideman, Selmanovski and Paynter collected assists.

Despite the controversy, Gibson was proud of what his club accomplished.

"I've got to give my kids credit. They played well with big hearts," he said.

SDSS teams perfect at provincial finals

The Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans boys' and girls' hockey teams got off to good starts at the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations A/AA tournaments Wednesday.

In the girls' tourney in Pembroke, the two-time defending and top-seeded Spartans cruised to a 4-0 win in their opening game over the 20th-seeded North Grenville Secondary School Knights (Kemptville) then defeated 11th-seeded Roland Michener Secondary School Predators (South Porcupine) 6-0.

Playoffs begin today and end Friday.

In the boys' event at Ottawa, the top-seeded and defending OFSAA champion Spartans won 5-1 over Marc Gameau Secondary School (Ottawa) and 6-1 over Father Redmond Catholic High School (Toronto).

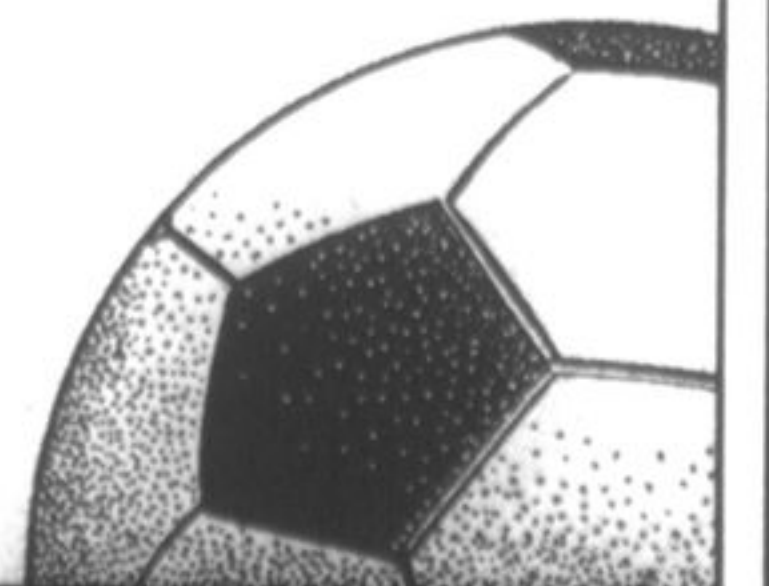
For more information on the events, go to: ofsaa.on.ca

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