

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

SPORTS

Change of heart: Werek in OHL

Good things can come to those who wait.

For the Kingston Frontenacs, their persistence paid off enticing Ethan Werek to join their Ontario Hockey League club this week.

The 17-year-old Stouffville-area resident and former Stouffville Spirit forward elected to join the Frontenacs Monday after being their first-round pick in the 2007 OHL draft.

Compiling 29 goals and 41 assists in 37 regular season games last season with the Spirit, Werek had committed to a scholarship at Boston University for fall 2009. His father, Zeev Werek, has been a co-owner of the Spirit for 10 years.

Ethan was in Indianapolis, Ind., at training camp of the Indianapolis Ice of the United States Hockey League last week. But he had a change of heart on the weekend and drove back to his family's home near Goodwood.

"It was a tough decision to give up a scholarship to Boston University. It was definitely one of the hardest decisions of my life," he said Monday from Kingston where he began workouts with the Frontenacs.

\$250,000 SCHOLARSHIP

After taking part in intra-squad drills in Indianapolis, Werek felt the best route for him to his ultimate goal of turning pro was to play in the OHL.

"I just thought (Kingston) was the best place for me to develop my hockey future.

"Ultimately, my goal is to play professional hockey," he said.

Werek is touted as an early-round pick for next June's NHL draft in Montreal.

Werek gave up a scholarship at BU valued at \$250,000, but receives an education package from the Frontenacs and will take courses this year at prestigious Queen's

University.

OHL players are deemed professional by the NCAA and are ineligible to play U.S. college sports.

"The atmosphere in Kingston is great and I'm excited to get started and they're excited in having me around, too," he said. "I'm definitely much more at ease now. I'm in a great situation."

One of his best friends, Bobby Mignardi of Richmond Hill, plays for Kingston, too.

BIG NEWS IN KINGSTON

"It's been a long time coming, but we are really excited that Ethan has committed to playing for the Frontenacs," said Larry Mavety, Frontenacs director of hockey operations and head coach. "He is a big kid forward with great tools and talent."

The signing was big news in Kingston. The daily paper dedicated three stories to it Tuesday and a local TV station aired a lengthy story Monday night, complete with footage of Werek signing a contract and slipping on a Kingston jersey and cap.

Last season, Werek was also a member of the Canada East team that won silver at the World Junior A Hockey Challenge, played in the Canadian Junior A Hockey League Prospects Game and saw limited ice time with the Ontario team that won the World Under 17 Challenge in London in January.

Being left off the list of prospects for the under-18 national team, a squad dominated by major junior players including OHLers, this year may have helped make the decision.

Werek was scheduled to play in the team's final two exhibition games, last night in Belleville and Friday at home to Peterborough.

Kingston opens the regular season Sept. 18 in Peterborough.

—Mike Hayakawa



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Stouffville Spirit GM/associate coach Mark Joslin watches his players prepare to open their Jr. A hockey season tonight.

Spirit set for first of 3 opening nights

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

Mark Joslin isn't making any promises the Stouffville Spirit will win the Provincial Jr. A Hockey League championship.

Nor is the first-year Spirit general manager/associate coach making any guarantees his club will finish atop the standings in their new eight-team Central Division.

But he wants local hockey supporters who follow the team to know they will do their utmost to be competitive.

HOST NEWMARKET TONIGHT

The Spirit hope to back Joslin's words up tonight when they make their regular season debut at the Stouffville Arena against the Newmarket Hurricanes at 7:30 p.m.

"I really enjoy the community of Stouffville. We had a successful (Terry Fox car wash) last Saturday and we're working hard to put a good product out for the hometown fans," Joslin said. "We're looking forward to the new year in trying to make the most of it to be competitive."

The team will go as far as its work ethic carries it, said the former coach in Pickering and Aurora.

Joslin feels his team's strength is in its back end.

The defence core includes veterans

► For more on the Spirit and other Jr. A teams, go yorkregion.com and click on sports

Myles Gomes, Patrick McEachen, Jarred Seymour, Ryan Goldberg, Reed Smith and rookies Ian Chapman and Bryant Doersam.

Netminders are Joe Moore and Michael D'Angelo.

The biggest concern Joslin has is at forward, where only five players return, Dustin Laren, Matt Viola, Don Maloney, Matt McCann and Craig McDowell.

The newcomers include Stouffville brothers Justin and Kurtis Hulshof, Matt Neal, Chad Johnston, Josh McIntosh, the younger brother of former Spirit forward James McIntosh and Brett Joslin.

The two 1992-born players are Christopher Chiste (a member of the York Simcoe minor midgets last season and drafted in the 13th round by the Barrie Colts in the 2008 OHL draft) and Stouffville's Evan Bruno, (11th round draft pick by the Oshawa Generals in the 2008 draft.)

"We did score some goals during the preseason, more than I thought we would and that's good," Joslin said of his team that went 3-1 in exhibition games. "We will give our forwards the freedom to be creative on their own. We will let them take advantage of their new surroundings."

While Joslin hopes the club can make tonight's season and home-opener a success, the Spirit will have little time to dwell on it.

The Spirit will play their first road league game Friday against the Markham Waxers at Markham Centennial Arena at 7:30 p.m. and then play the Hurricanes again Sunday in Newmarket at 3:30 p.m. All three games are home openers.

"We have three big games coming up and we've got to come out of the gate strong. To play seven teams in our new division we can't afford to fall behind early," Joslin said.

GOMES NAMED CAPTAIN

The Spirit named Gomes as its captain with Viola, McEachen and Maloney the assistants.

"Between the four we have a great leadership core and that's important," Joslin said. "I'll be giving them plenty of responsibility helping our younger guys on and off the ice."

The Spirit also announced one trade as they sent 1990-born forward Jacob Mooney to the Aurora Tigers for cash.

In Newmarket, Stouffville resident Jamie Wise is a rookie forward. Brian Perrin (coach/GM) and Ken Burrows (director of player personnel) worked together in Spiritland.

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