

Player shortage forces Stouffville organization to ground squad

Juvenile Clippers won't defend Ontario minor hockey title

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

The Stouffville Clippers juveniles had a memorable season last year capturing the Ontario Minor Hockey Association A championship.

But, they will not be around to defend their title.

A shortage of players at five fall tryouts forced the Clippers to abandon ship for this season.

At the final audition, Sept. 29, only nine players took to the ice, said Mike Humphreys, president of the Whitchurch Stouffville Minor Hockey Association. Just three of the players were from the Whitchurch-Stouffville area.

"We had some board members come out to that practice and they spoke with the coaches and they then made the decision. We definitely weren't happy with it. It's unfortunate," Humphreys said.

Ideally, the team would have 17 to 19 players including at least six from the local area, he said.

"At the juvenile level, you need a substantial roster because you have players who are in university while others have work and some have



STAFF FILE PHOTO/JIM MASON

The Stouffville juvenile Clippers, shown celebrating their 2008 Ontario championship, won't be back on the ice this season.

other commitments and then you have some players during the year who might get suspended," he said.

"You never know each year. Every year we're on pins and needles seeing if we would have a team," he said.

Humphreys hopes the team

returns next season.

"We won't walk away from it. We will try to resurrect it, because our community is a great hockey town. We will continue to fight for one," he said.

In addition to winning last year's title, the Clipper juveniles won the OMHA championship in 2005 and were finalists in 2006.

Minor peewee Clippers blank Richmond Hill

Josh Brillinger scored two goals while Tyler Wright, Jeremy Hughes and Mario Rosano had once to propel the Stouffville minor peewee A Clippers to a 5-0 win over visiting Richmond Hill in Ontario Minor Hockey Association action last week.

Quinton Volpe and Ben Sear had two assists while Cody Leonard, Carter King, Mitch Witherpoon and Chad Harbour had one apiece.

Now 4-2 on the regular season, the Clippers resume league play against Innisfil at the Stouffville Arena today at 3:10 p.m.

Jr. A Spirit sleepwalks to 10th straight loss

For the Stouffville Spirit, the streak goes on.

It's one the Ontario Junior Hockey League club would like to end as soon as possible.

For now though, the Spirit continue to be mired in a funk after they lost their 10th straight game Thursday against the Toronto Junior Canadiens 5-4 at the Stouffville Arena.

The Spirit's only win in 13 starts this season came Sept. 14, 4-3 in a shootout in Newmarket.

Spotting the Canadiens a 2-0 lead in Thursday's first period, the Spirit came back to cut their deficit entering the second period on a goal by Matt McCann.

That seemed to give the Spirit some life as Matt Viola tied the game at the 1:46 mark of the second stanza.

After Toronto scored to regain the lead, the Spirit countered with a goal by defenceman Reed Smith to tie the game.

But that would be short-lived as the Canadiens, who took a timeout after Smith's goal, scored with just under two minutes left in the stanza to lead 4-3 entering the final 20 minutes.

After Toronto scored a goal at the 57-second mark of the third

period, the Spirit battled back to within a goal just 41 seconds later when Christopher Chiste scored.

That, however, would be the final goal of the game.

The Spirit outshot Toronto 48-41, including a 19-9 margin in the third period.

Spirit general manager and associate coach Mark Joslin thought his club's slow start was the game's turning point.

"It looked like we were half asleep after the warm-ups. We had a bad start for the first five minutes of the game and that set the tone," he said. "We beat ourselves and couldn't find a way to win."

Despite the loss, Joslin praised the work of Spirit goalie Kori Coelho, who made his debut with the club after arriving in a trade from the Vaughan Vipers earlier in the week.

Joslin continues to hint that other player moves are coming.

Occupying last place in the Central Division with four points (0 wins, 10 losses, one shootout win and one shootout loss), the Spirit will play in Newmarket Sunday at 3:30 p.m. and return to Stouffville Arena Thursday to host the Markham Waxers at 7:30 p.m.

- Mike Hayakawa

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