

Coach steps down from sagging Spirit

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

In the world of sports, coaches are hired to get fired. Or to resign.

Especially when the team is in a prolonged slump.

With the Stouffville Spirit losing 11 of their last 12 Ontario Junior Hockey League contests and mired in last place in the Central Division standings, Dave D'Ammizio tendered his resignation as head coach Friday.

"When you lose this many games there has to be a change and it falls on the shoulders of the head coach," D'Ammizio said. "Hopefully, the Spirit can move forward and win some games."

Mark Joslin, Spirit general manager and associate coach, will fill the void left by D'Ammizio. He will also continue as GM.

Pat Pare will remain with the Spirit as an assistant coach.

D'Ammizio was named the head coach at the start of last season after serving as an assistant to Dan West.

"Dave (D'Ammizio) went to ownership (Zeev Werek and Dave Laren) Friday morning and felt it was in the best interest for him and the organization to step down," Joslin said. "We wish Dave success in what he does. As a coach, you get hired to be fired. You can't fire

all of the players."

Joslin acknowledged there will be added pressure on him to help stop the bleeding.

His first priority is to bolster the lineup, especially by adding some seasoned forwards.

"We definitely need to make a couple of moves that will help us. We'd like to get some experience up front to give us some added depth. It's a work in progress," he said.

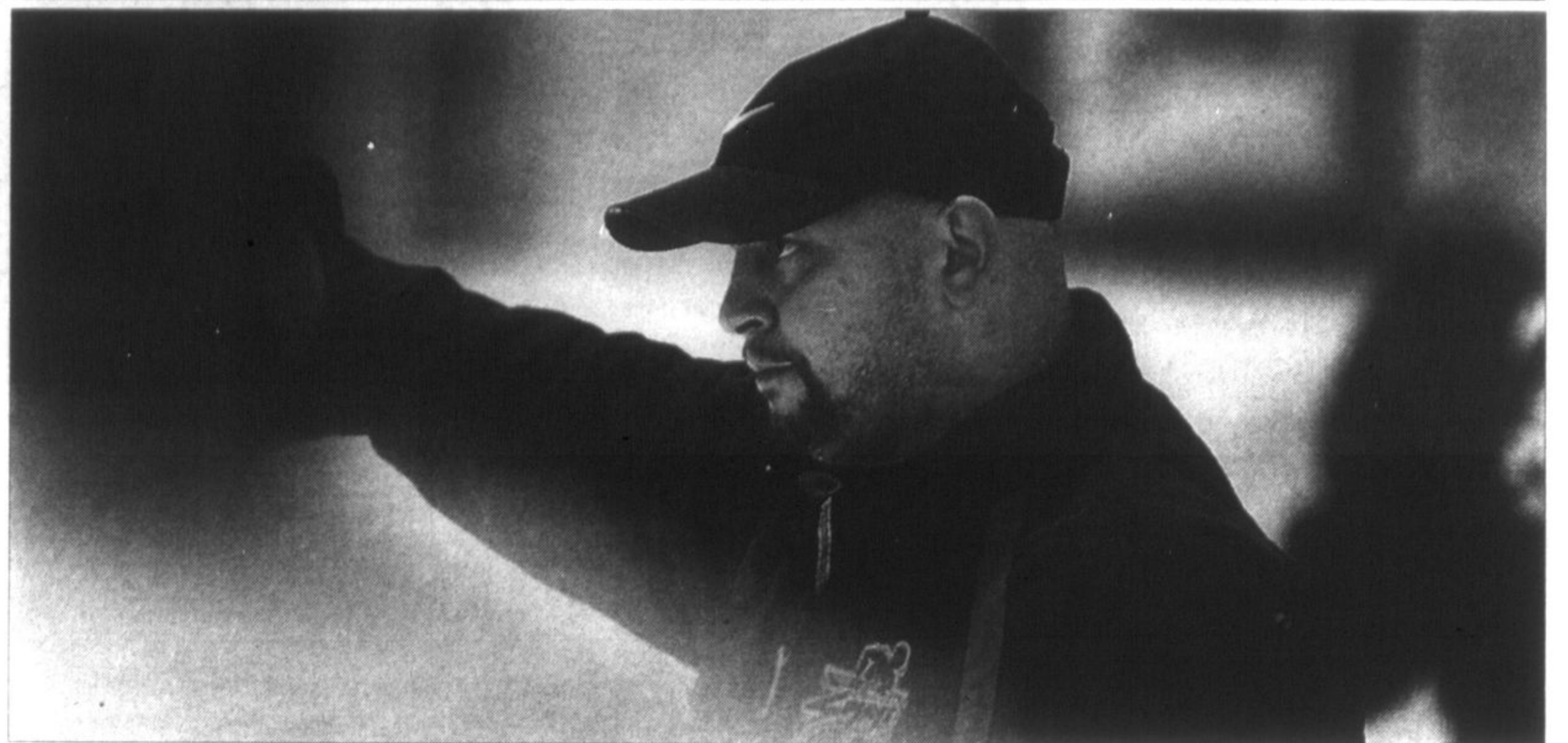
"I will work 24/7 to get that done. I feel we're close to being a .500 team. With a couple of breaks and bounces we could be there now."

Another coach might be added to the staff.

D'Ammizio said he will explore other possible opportunities in the junior A ranks and continue coaching a Vaughan Kings peewee club.

D'Ammizio said he had plenty of fond memories from Spiritland. High on his list was seeing seven of his Stouffville players move to U.S. colleges, two to the Ontario Hockey League and former team captain Randy Johnston playing for Muskegon Fury of the International Hockey League.

"I got to work with some good kids and help them move on," he said. "That's what the league is all about."



STAFF FILE PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEN

Dave D'Ammizio resigned as head coach of the Stouffville Spirit Jr. A Hockey Club Friday. The Spirit has won two of its first 15 games and is in last place in its division this season. GM Mark Joslin takes over behind the bench.

Juniors hope for better things starting tonight

The Stouffville Spirit snapped a 10-game losing streak Sunday. Now, the Ontario Junior Hockey League club will try and end another one.

Coming off the heels of a 5-2 road win over the Newmarket Hurricanes, the Spirit reverted to its losing ways after falling 4-3 to the Markham Waxers at the Stouffville Arena Thursday.

It was the final game for second-year head coach Dave D'Ammizio, who resigned Friday.

For a while it looked as if the Spirit might be on a roll. It took a 2-0 lead after 20 minutes on goals by Jason Heydon and Dustin Laren.

But after that, the roof caved in as the Waxers erupted with three un-

answered goals, including two with the extra man, in the second stanza to take a 3-2 lead.

The Waxers notched their third power-play goal of the game at the 50-second mark of the third period to pad their advantage at 4-2.

The Spirit made the game interesting when Laren delivered a power-play goal just before the midway point to cut their deficit to within one. That, however, would be as close as the Spirit would get.

The Waxers outshot the Spirit, who remain winless on home ice, 39-38.

"We took undisciplined penalties and Markham has a good power play. We had 12 penalties and they

(the Waxers) scored three times. That was the difference," said Mark Joslin, Spirit GM and associate coach.

The Spirit played the game without defenceman Jarred Seymour, who was out with the flu.

With just one regulation time and one shootout win, 11 regulation and two shootout losses, the Spirit is in last place in the Central Division.

The Spirit will play host to the St. Michael's Buzzers tonight at 7:30 p.m. and then take to the road Sunday for a game against the Toronto Junior Canadiens at 7:30 p.m.

For more on the Spirit, log on to: www.stouffvillespirit.com

- Mike Hayakawa

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