

SPORTS

New Spirit coach off to 1-1 start

LAST WEEK: Saturday - won 3-2 in shootout vs. St. Michael's Buzzers; Sunday - lost 3-2 at Toronto Junior Canadiens. One win, two shootout wins, two shootout losses, 12 losses for eight points. Last place in Central Division.

COMING UP: Tonight vs. Cobourg Cougars at Stouffville Arena, 7:30 p.m.; Monday at Hamilton Red Wings, 7:30 p.m.

GAME NOTES: The Mark Joslin era as the Spirit's new head coach began with an exciting shootout win and an excruciating loss last weekend. Playing host to the Central Division-leading St. Michael's Buzzers Saturday, the Spirit jumped out to a 2-0 lead through 20 minutes on goals by Donald Maloney and team captain Myles Gomes on the power play. The Buzzers whittled into their deficit by scoring a goal in the second period and one in the third to force overtime. After a scoreless overtime session, the contest was decided in a shootout where Matt McCann and Massimo Lamacchia scored on identical dekes and Spirit netminder Kori Coelho stopped both Buzzers' attempts to give Stouffville their first home-ice win of the season.

Playing on the road Sunday against the Toronto Canadiens, the Spirit got off to another good start when Christopher Chiste scored in the first period to give Stouffville a 1-0 lead after 20 minutes. Maloney scored the first goal of the second frame to pad the Spirit's lead to 2-0. But Toronto stormed back with two goals, including a power-play marker with just under two minutes left in the stanza to tie the game at 2-2. Toronto scored the lone goal of the final frame on a power play. The Spirit outshot Toronto 36-30.

NOTEBOOK: The Spirit played Sunday's game without the services of forward Jason Heydon, who incurred a lower body injury during Saturday's tilt. Joslin expects Heydon to be back in the lineup tonight when the Spirit hosts the Cobourg Cougars.

Former Spirit goalkeeper Dan McWhinney has joined the Wichita Thunder of the Central Hockey League for the 2008-09 season. McWhinney played last season with Amarillo of the CHL.

GENERALLY SPEAKING: "We had a team meeting before Saturday's game and talked about Dave (D'Ammizio resigning last Friday) and said we were all accountable for what's happened so far this year. We told the team we had to remain positive and try to simplify the game by playing good defence first and play safe, strong, smart and simple hockey. The guys responded. It was positive," Joslin said of Saturday's performance. "St. Mike's averaged six goals a game entering our game and we held them to two. To win in a shootout was outstanding. It was nice to get the win on home ice."

As for Sunday's loss, Joslin felt untimely penalties, which produced two Toronto power-play goals, and a lack of discipline were the deciding factors.

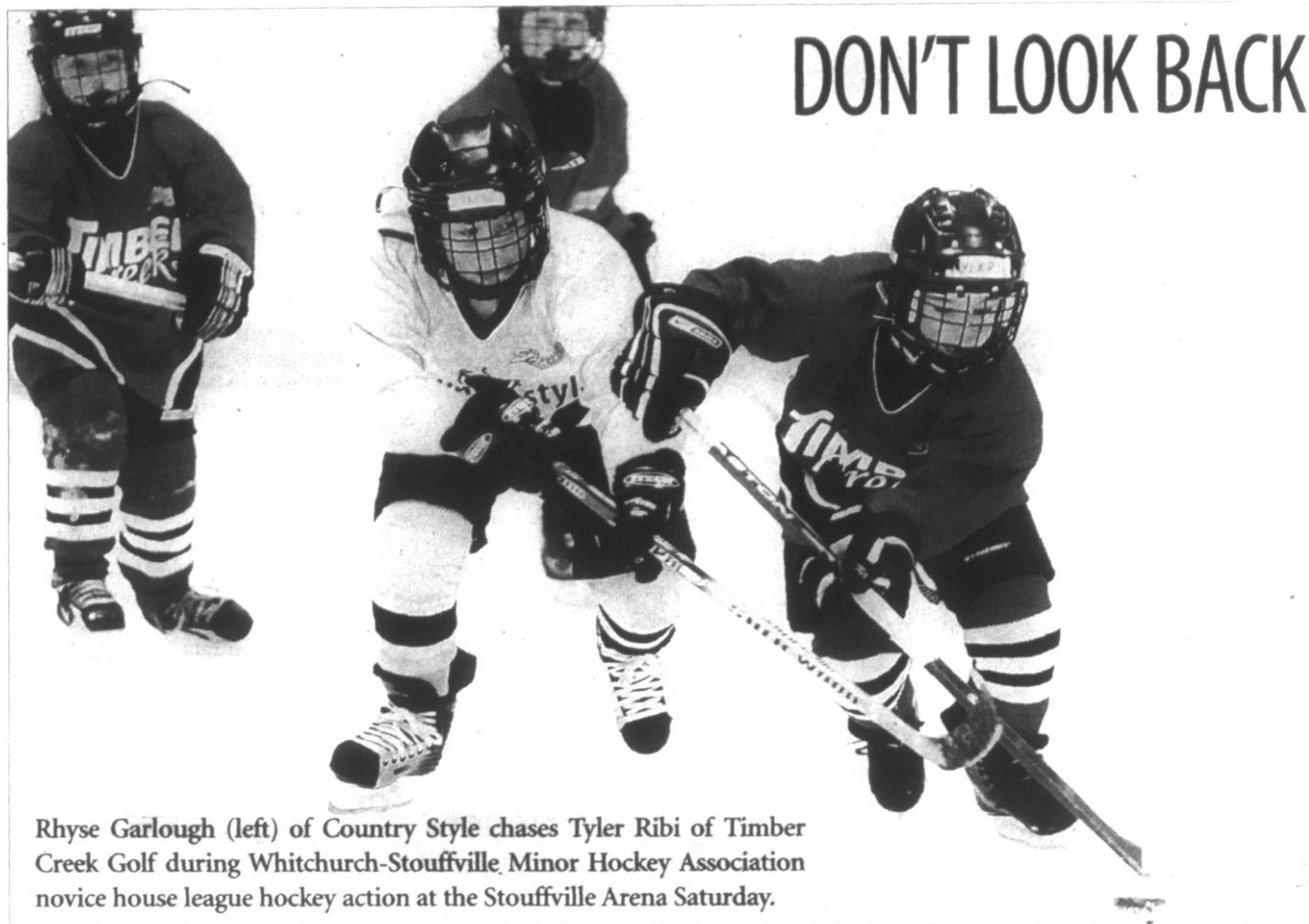
"We had 12 penalties and they (Toronto) scored two power-play goals. Any time you give good teams those type of opportunities they will capitalize," he said.

INSIDER: For live scoring and updates, go to pointstreak.com

For more on the Spirit, go to: stouffvillespirit.com

Some Spirit games are carried on WhiStle Radio.

-Mike Hayakawa



DON'T LOOK BACK

Rhyse Garlough (left) of Country Style chases Tyler Ribi of Timber Creek Golf during Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association novice house league hockey action at the Stouffville Arena Saturday.

STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Healthy Hughes relieved to back on ice

NHL prospect gets OK from doctors to play

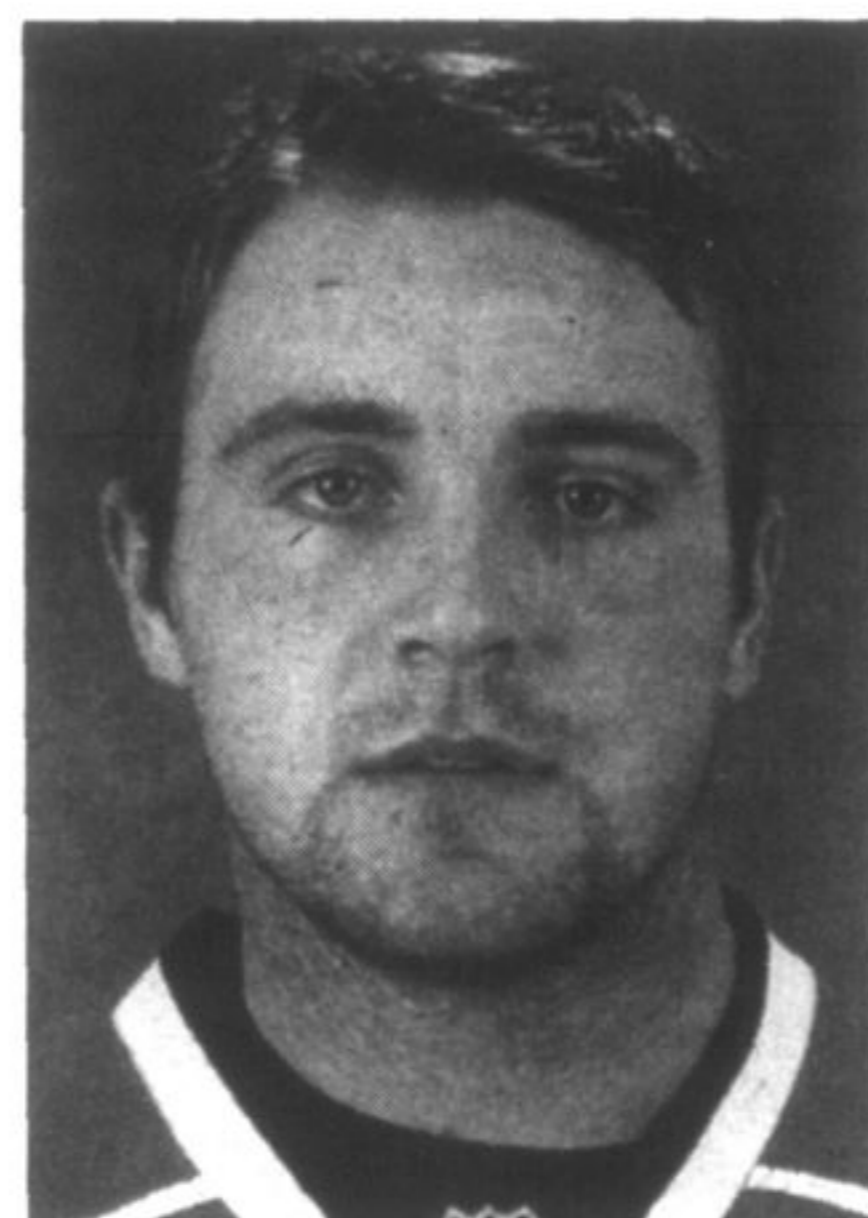
BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

When Bobby Hughes attended the Carolina Hurricanes' training camp last month, he wore a blue practice jersey.

After being assigned to their Albany River Rats' American Hockey League affiliate later that month, the 20-year-old Stouffville resident wore a yellow jersey during practices.

The colourful tops weren't fashion statements. They signified he was injured and was to avoid physical contact during drills.

But when the River Rats traveled to Binghamton, N.Y., to play the Binghamton Senators yesterday, Hughes anticipated he would don a red,



BOBBY HUGHES: Stouffville hockey player hasn't played since January due to medical scare.

black and white game jersey.

It's a moment he's long awaited after incurring an injury last season that limited him to 26 games during his rookie pro campaign. He had six goals and 10 assists.

Receiving an errant high stick to his nose in a Jan. 26

contest, Hughes underwent a precautionary CAT Scan in Albany, N.Y.

While the results revealed he had a deviated septum, they also unveiled possible congenital neck and back problems.

Since that mishap, Hughes visited doctors across North America to determine the severity.

However, nothing conclusive could be found and last week, Hughes was given the green light by team doctors to play again.

"Right now, I feel great and I'm really happy," Hughes said from his Albany residence. "It's definitely a huge relief to finally concentrate on playing hockey. I don't have any worries anymore."

The last eight months were frustrating, especially since he felt well enough to skate.

"For the most part I saw around seven different doctors since last January and

each said different things. It was like no one knew what was going on," he said. "But during the summer we started to get more of an understanding to what my problem was and the team doctors said it might be a risk but it wasn't great enough. No one knows what the risk is. It's something that doesn't happen often."

A fourth-round pick (123rd overall) of Carolina in the 2006 NHL draft, Hughes is getting his conditioning and timing back to pre-injury levels.

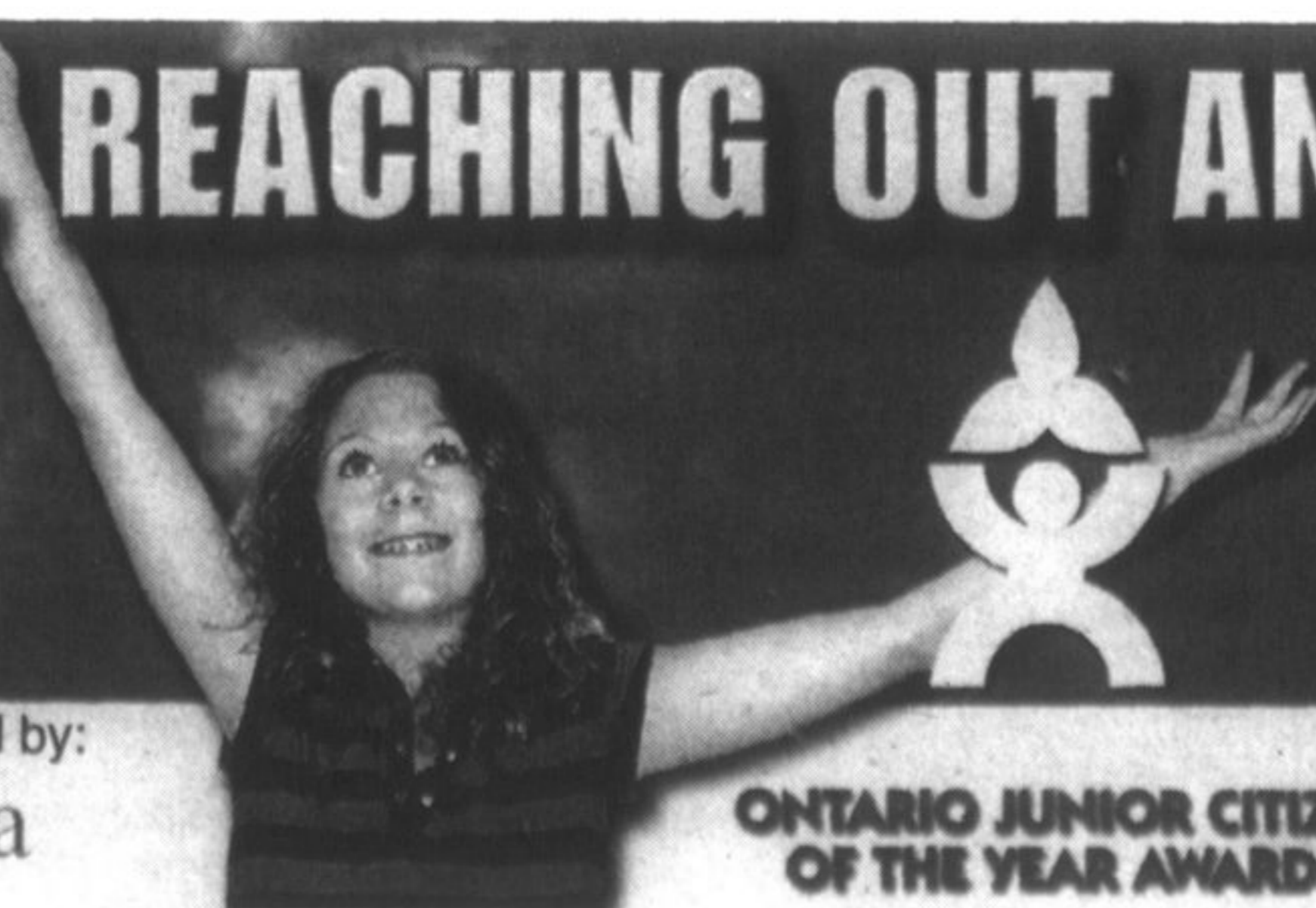
"Hopefully, I will be on the third or fourth line to start with but I know I'll have to work my way to get to the first or second line," he said.

With the River Rats opening with three games in four days this week, the coaching staff intends to get him into at least two of those tilts.

"They'll assess how I do in each game. Hopefully, it won't be too long where I will be in every game," he said.

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