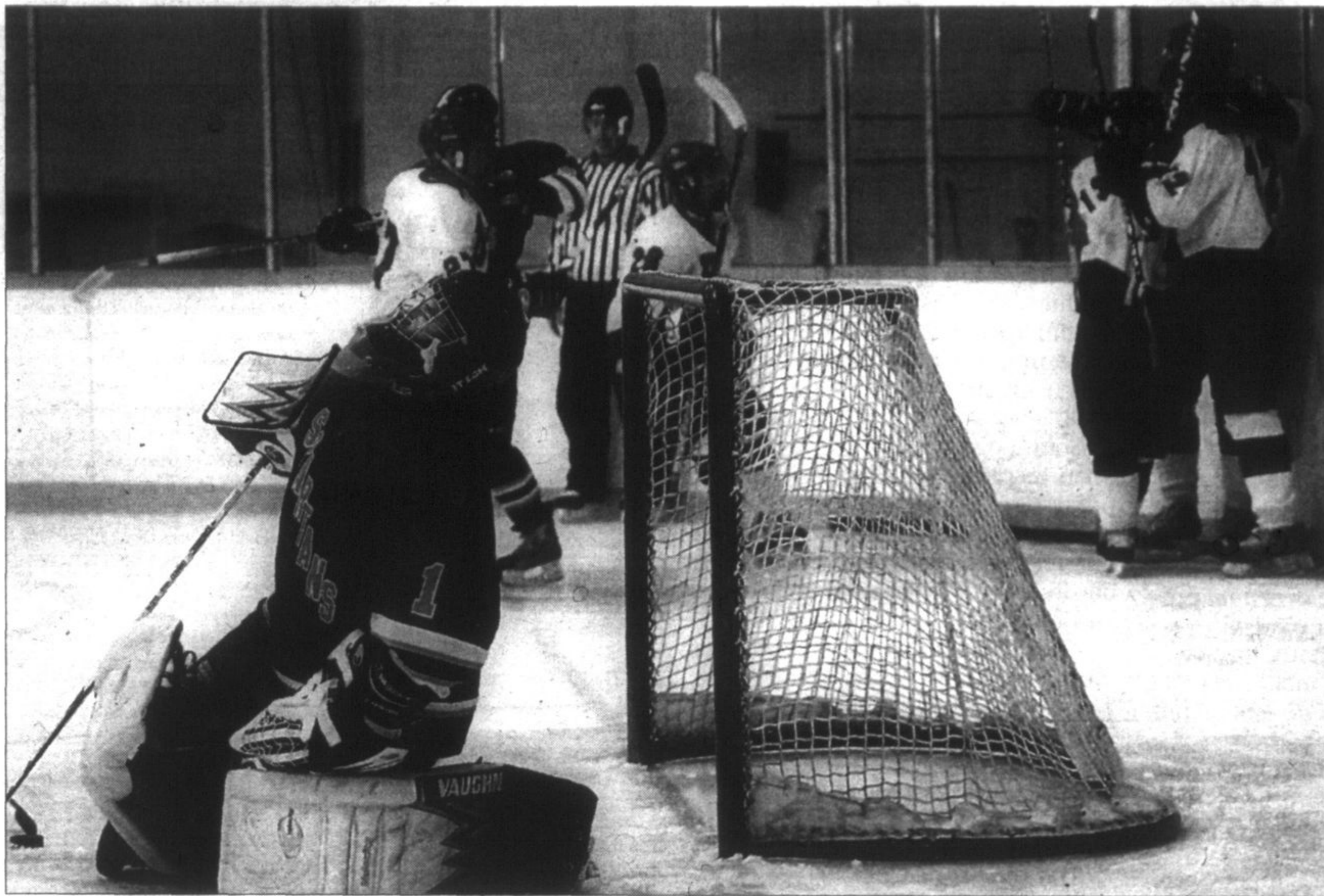


Stouffville Sun-Tribune

SPORTS



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Stouffville Spartan goalie Chris Pennanen looks disappointed as Brother Andre's Shawn Hulshof celebrates his game-winning goal in high school semifinal action Thursday. Brother Andre swept the series with a 5-2 win Tuesday.

Brother Andre wins bragging rights

Cardinals advance to York final, rival Spartans hope for spot at provincials

BY JIM MASON
Staff Writer

What Tuesday's York Region high school hockey game at the Stouffville Arena lacked in off-ice atmosphere it made up for in intensity, physicality and character.

The senior boys teams from Stouffville Secondary and Brother Andre of Markham have developed a nice little rivalry that borders on a high-school version of the Leafs-Canadiens or Flames-Oilers.

They've played 10 times during the last two years and met for the regional title in 2007 and 2008.

Stouffville's Spartans won both of those finals in dramatic fashion in front of hundreds of classmates.

It was the Cardinals of Brother Andre's turn Tuesday in front of a handful of parents, teachers and classmates, thanks to an early-afternoon start. They won 5-2 to sweep the regional semifinal in two games.

The teams know each other well and not just from the head-to-head

meetings. Many play minor hockey together on rep teams. Almost all of the Stouffville midget A Clippers were taking part on one team or the other. About half of the Brother Andre players are from the Stouffville area.

"It's always a great rivalry," Brother Andre head coach Dave Turner said. "There's a lot of respect between the kids. They always play hard and they know each other. But there's no monkey business, just hard work."

After the game, players and coaches from the teams exchanged pleasantries outside the dressing rooms.

On the ice, there were more bone-rattling hits than in many Jr. A games. Stouffville tied the game at 1-1 at the end of the first period with a buzzer-beater that was so close to the end of the frame, the two refs didn't bother with another faceoff.

Brother Andre's goals were scored by brothers Kurtis and Shawn Hulshof, their cousin Chris Porter, plus Joey Moncada and Mike Mastrangelo.

Lee Averill and Paul Geiger scored for Stouffville, in what may have been the Spartans' final game of the season.

The two-time defending Ontario A/AA champions were 3-9-3 in December, prompting their coaching staff to not declare for the provincials. But,

they caught fire in the new year and were added to a waiting list for the Ontario championships two weeks ago. Their record now is 14-11-9.

"I hope for the kids' sake, they get in (to the provincials), because they deserve it," Stouffville coach Jamie Hewitt said. "Something just happened to them after Christmas; they bought into the system we were teaching. But, they're young (five of the 20 are in Grade 12) and they'll be back."

Back to meet BA for another year.

"I think (BA) will be the No. 2 seed at the provincials (AAA/AAAA for larger schools)," Hewitt said. "They're a very good team that should do well. They're so deep, that even with last (line) change today (at home) it was hard."

First, Brother Andre will have to get by the winner of the other York semifinal between Sacred Heart of Newmarket and Richmond Hill's St. Theresa of Lisieux. The deciding game in that series will be played today. The final series will likely start Tuesday.

Brother Andre (33-5-1) is ranked second in the Toronto Star's coaches poll behind St. Mary of Pickering.

The Ontario championships go March 25 to 28 in North Bay for AAA/AAAA teams and in Peterborough for A/AA.

329 junior hockey games and counting

Stouffville centre ironman of OHL

BY JIM MASON
Staff Writer

Stouffville's Cory Tanaka is the new all-time ironman of the Ontario Hockey League.

The centre with the Belleville Bulls played in his 329th career game Sunday against the Brampton Battalion to surpass the mark set by Cody Thornton, who played five OHL seasons with Belleville and Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds ending in 2007.

Belleville won 3-2. Tanaka was held pointless, but was a plus-2.

Tanaka is a graduate of Glad Park Public School, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association and the Richmond Hill Stars AAA organization. He also played for Stouffville District Secondary School.

If Tanaka plays the balance of the Bulls' regular season games, he will set the new bar at 337 games. The most games that a player could play in a five-year career is 340.

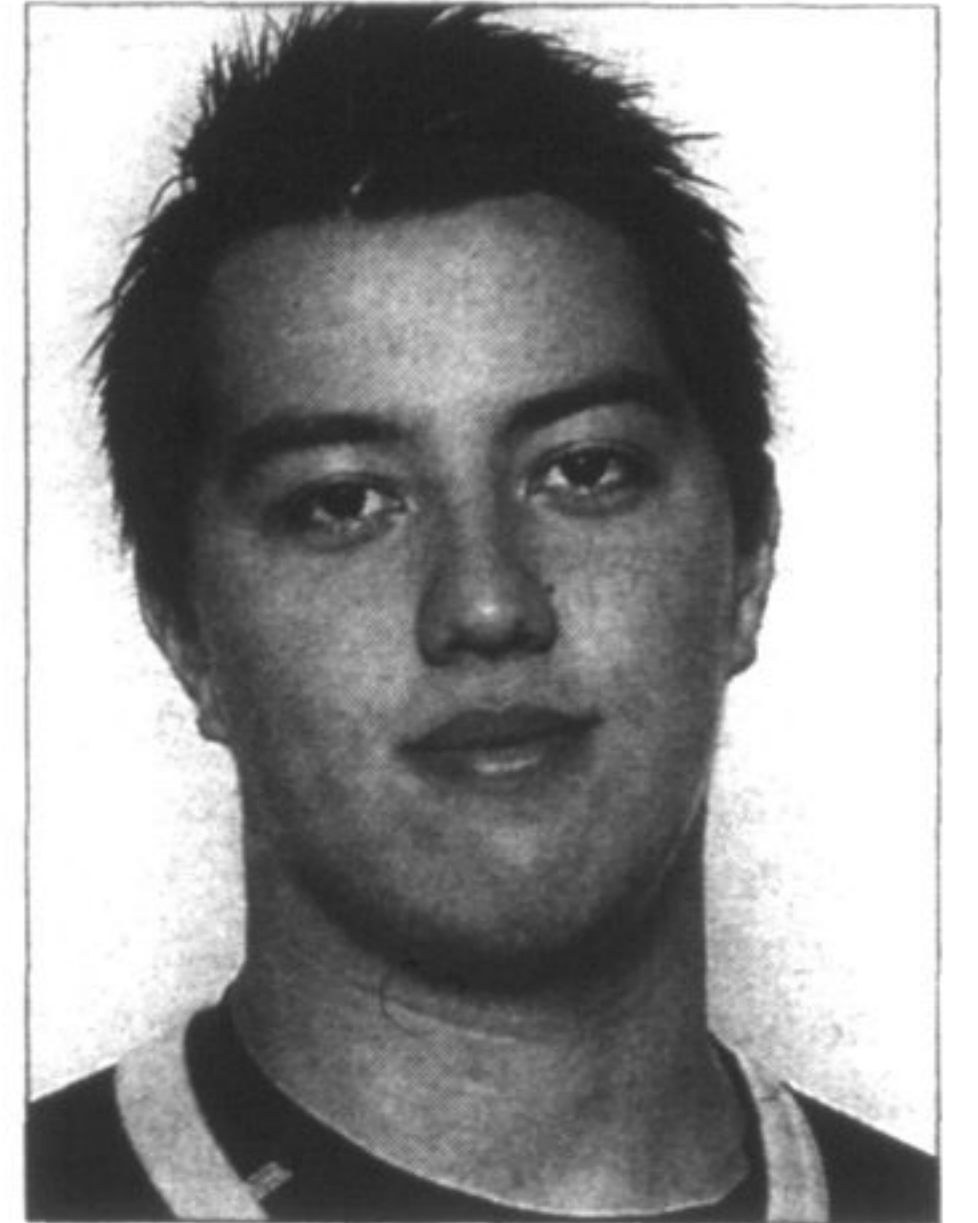
He has missed three games in five years.

"It's just good luck I guess. I've been fortunate not to have any serious injuries and I've just been in good shape," Tanaka told ontariohockeyleague.com. "I work hard in the off-season and during the hockey season so hopefully I can stay healthy and just continue this season."

Tanaka was a second round pick of the Plymouth Whalers in 2004 and played 67 games in his rookie season, scoring 10 goals and 21 points. He was traded to the Bulls part way through his second OHL season and played 67 games that season as well.

He didn't miss a game in the next two seasons with the Bulls, helping the team to the Eastern Conference championship series in 2007 and to the OHL championship series and Memorial Cup last season. He missed one game this season, last month.

George Burnett knew what he was getting when he acquired Tanaka. The coach and GM of the Bulls has been in the OHL for



CORY TANAKA: Stouffville product has missed three games during five seasons in Ontario Hockey League.

11 years. He scouted Tanaka as a minor midget on a starry Richmond Hill team.

"It's a terrific honour to have played for five years and play healthy, knock on wood," he said. "He's been an integral part of our program for four years here and may have an opportunity to play at the pro level."

Burnett uses him to shut down top players.

"Skill wise, he's somewhat under-appreciated, but he is among the best penalty killers in the league," he said. "He plays his best hockey for us at critical times. In the playoffs and the Memorial Cup and in those 3-2 and 2-1 games, he'll get a key goal."

Belleville was ninth in the latest edition of the Canadian Hockey League's rankings. The Bulls lead the OHL's East Division with a 41-15-2-2 record.

Tanaka has scored a career-high 15 goals this season to go along with 29 assists for 44 points in 58 games. In his career, he has 53 goals, 112 assists and a plus-33 plus-minus record.

"When it's over I will try to look back at all the memories of playing," Tanaka said. "I'm just happy that I can be in the record books."

Older brother Cale Tanaka is a third-year forward on the Alabama-Huntsville NCAA team.

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