

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS: Hockey's own 'Group of Death'



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Stouffville Spartan Peter LeBuffe is sent flying by St. Theresa of Lisieux Lion Mike Vitelli during the Spartans' 3-0 win at Stouffville Arena on Wednesday. The Spartans are in a tourney in Peterborough this weekend.

Spartans in playoff picture after first win of season

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In the FIFA World Cup, highly ranked teams pooled into one division are called the 'Group of Death'.

That same terminology could also be applied to the York Region Athletic Association's senior boys' ice hockey east division, which fields five strong entries, including the Stouffville Secondary Spartans.

With such a highly competitive group, Spartans head coach and league convenor Jamie Hewitt knows one team will miss the post-season.

The Spartans took a big step towards being in the playoff picture after skating off with their first victory of the season - a 3-0 blanking of the second-place St. Theresa of Lisieux (Richmond Hill) Lions at the Stouffville Arena Wednesday.

With the win, the Spartans moved out of the cellar and into fourth place with a 1-3-2 record.

"It was by far the best game we played as a team," Hewitt said.

Making the victory even more impressive was that the Lions upended the first-place Bill Crothers (Unionville) Colts 4-3 Tuesday.

"In our division, everyone is beating everybody else," Hewitt said.

"Unfortunately, there'll be one good team that won't make the playoffs from our division. All five teams from our division are good."

The Spartans took a 1-0 lead through one period on a goal by Alex Dajia.

Curtis Crago made it 2-0 with 1:44 remaining in the game.

Scott Miller scored into an empty net with 44 seconds left.

Kyle Pontone recorded the shut-out.

While pleased his players executed their game plan for the majority of the contest, Hewitt noted Pontone's performance came to the front late in the second period when the Lions held the upper hand in territorial play.

"Kyle definitely bailed us out," Hewitt said. "I couldn't wait for the flood to take place between the second and third periods."

"But St. Theresa is a good team. We just worked harder, I thought."

After taking part in the St. Peter's Classic in Peterborough this weekend, the Spartans resume league play Monday with a road game against Markham District at Markham Village Arena starting at 2:30 p.m. The Marauders occupy last place with an 0-3-3 record.

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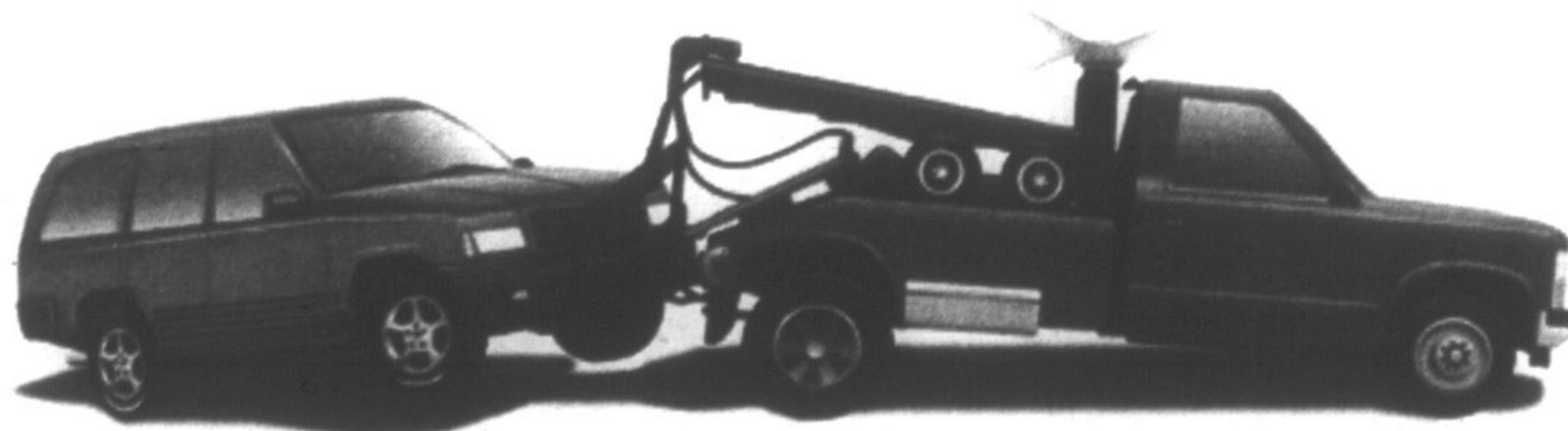
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