

SPORTS: Dan McNeil memorial award

World-class ball player scores hockey prize.

Referee/defenceman sees plenty of ice time

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Robert Kay's final season of playing house league in the Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association turned out to be a rewarding experience.

The 18-year-old Stouffville resident, who toiled this past season as a defenceman with the PACE Savings and Credit Union midget-juvenile team, was honoured during the association's annual general meeting Monday as the recipient of this year's Dan McNeil Award.

McNeil was a 19-year-old association graduate when he died in a car crash in 1992 returning from a game with his new team, the Uxbridge Jr. C Bruins. The award is presented to a player of bantam age or older who stands out due to leadership, sportsmanship and involvement in the community.

A graduate from Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School in Unionville with a French immersion diploma,



STAFF PHOTO/JIM MASON

Kay acknowledged the award caught him off guard and humbled.

The award was presented at the Lebovic Centre for Arts and Entertainment - Nineteen on the Park on Monday. Dan McNeil's mother, Sheila, and sister, Cindy, made the presentation.

REFS WITH MOM

Kay is also an elite-level softball player who played with Team Ontario at last year's Under-19 Men's International championships and with the Stouffville Mennos men's team.

"Every one of these achievements are special on their own," he said.

"This is really special because it's my last year playing hockey before I go away to Brock University. So it's especially gratifying to be recognized as I wind up my career over the past 14 years of playing hockey in Stouffville."

Introduced to the game when he was four years old, he rememberd Anne Salvagna and her son Patrick, who helped purchase his first set of hockey gear, along with his mother, Sue, who along with Anne, coached him in the four to six-year-old house league division.

Bruno DeRocchis, PACE Savings head coach, felt Kay's selection was

well warranted.

"Being the oldest and one the more skilled players on our team, Robert showed true leadership on the team by consistently supporting and encouraging his younger teammates no matter what their skill level was," he wrote in his nomination. "Nothing but positive reinforcement from the bench.

"His determination and work ethic on the ice was contagious and an inspiration to all his teammates."

Kay saw more ice time as an on-ice official with the hockey association, sometimes refereeing with his mother, Sue Kay.

Robert Kay accepts the Dan McNeil memorial award from the late Stouffville hockey player's mother, Sheila, and sister Cindy during Stouffville minor hockey's annual meeting at Nineteen on the Park Monday.

100 hopefuls at Jr. A camp

Wanted - a couple of defencemen, maybe six forwards and perhaps one goalkeeper.

That's what the Stouffville Spirit hope to unearth when they conduct their annual rookie camp at the Stouffville Arena this weekend.

About 100 hopefuls signed up to attend the Jr. A hockey club's three-day camp that began last night and will conclude Sunday, said Spirit general manager Ken Burrows.

That's down slightly from last year, but there's still enough talent on hand for the club's coaching staff to look over. Some of the players have been recruited, others registered on their own.

"Ideally, we'd like to find anywhere from eight to 10 players at the camp," Burrows said. "But we'll probably get around five kids out of this camp."

Once camp concludes, team officials will select two full rosters and stage an all-star game at the arena Tuesday from 8 to 10 p.m.

From that group, they hope to have some players signed for the 2010-11 Ontario Junior A Hockey League campaign.

The public is welcome to attend all sessions.



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