SPORTS: Jr. A team puts down golf clubs for games this weekend



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Kyle McLaughlin tees off with a hockey stick as Stouffville Spirit teammates Daniel Fitzgerald (from left), Tyler Ferry, Matt Neal, Brennan Serville and Christian Finch look on during the Jr. A team's golf tournament at the Maples of Ballantrae Golf Club Saturday. The Spirit visits Markham tomorrow and hosts Newmarket Sunday.

Buffalo trip good on Spirit

LAST WEEK: Thursday: Newmarket Hurricanes 6 vs. Stouffville Spirit 5. Sunday: Stouffville Spirit 3 vs. Hamilton Red Wings Tuesday: Stouffville Spirit 6 vs. Buffalo Jr. Sabres 5. Spirit record: 3 wins, 2 losses.

COMING UP: Friday: Stouffville at Markham Waxers, 7:30 p.m. Sunday: Newmarket Hurricanes vs. Stouffville at Stouffville Arena, 2:10 p.m. (WhiStle Radio).

GAME NOTES: The Stouffville Spirit moved into a tie with the Huntsville Otters for second place in the North Division of the Ontario Junior Hockey League Tuesday. The Spirit came back to beat the Buffalo Jr. Sabres 5-4 in Amherst, N.Y. The Spirit trailed 2-0 before Andrew Doyle scored a power-play goal with one second left in the first period. It was the first of four straight Spirit goals. Kory Kennedy, Declan Gunovski, Kyle McLaughlin and Drake Caggiula also scored. Aaron Green bounced back from a weak game to earn the win in the Spirit net. The Spirit's power play came to life, hitting on three of five chances. Known for outshooting most opponents by wide margins this season, the Spirit was outshot 49-32.

Robbie Acton's first Jr. A goal proved to be the game winner in the Spirit's 3-1 victory over Hamilton at the Stouffville Arena Sunday. Acton, 17, is the son of Toronto Maple Leafs' assistant coach Keith Acton. Captain Gunovski gave the Spirit a 1-0 lead after the first period. The teams exchanged goals in the second. McLaughlin's emptynetter with 25 seconds left sealed it. Mike Sheremeta picked up his first win in two starts. Hamilton was oushot 46-23.

INSIDER: The Stouffville Spirit's first game

ever outside of Canada during its 15-year history paid dividends on and off the scoresheet Tuesday. Several coaches and scouts from New York State colleges took in the 5-4 win over Buffalo in Amherst. This year's roster is drawing far more attention from schools than last year's, said head coach Craig Donovan. Matt Neal, Brennan Serville, who has de-committed to Canisius in Buffalo, and 16-year-old Drake Caggiula are some of the players drawing interest.

No Spirit graduate has played in the NHL. Simon Gysbers (Toronto) and Mike Duco (Florida) are the closest after playing in NHL pre-season games Tuesday, Fellow alum Ethan Werek suffered a leg injury at New York Rangers camp. ... The Spirit has played teams from Buffalo and Syracuse at tournaments in Ontario. Future NHLer Rob Schremp was on the Syracuse squad.

GENERALLY SPEAKING: "We have a pretty tough schedule to start this season, all against teams that expect to be at the top of their conferences," said Spirit coach Craig Donovan. To be 3-2 or 4-1 is about where we expected to be."

The Spirit takes its two-game winning streak into Markham Centennial arena tomorrow to take on the first-place Waxers. They host another longtime rival, Newmarket, Sunday.

"If we want to be near top of the conference, these are two teams we have to beat," Donovan said. "Markham is a natural rival and we always had close games with them last year. The players get up like it's a playoff game, not the regular season."

For more on the Spirit, log on to the team's new website: www.stouffvillespirit.com

- Jim Mason

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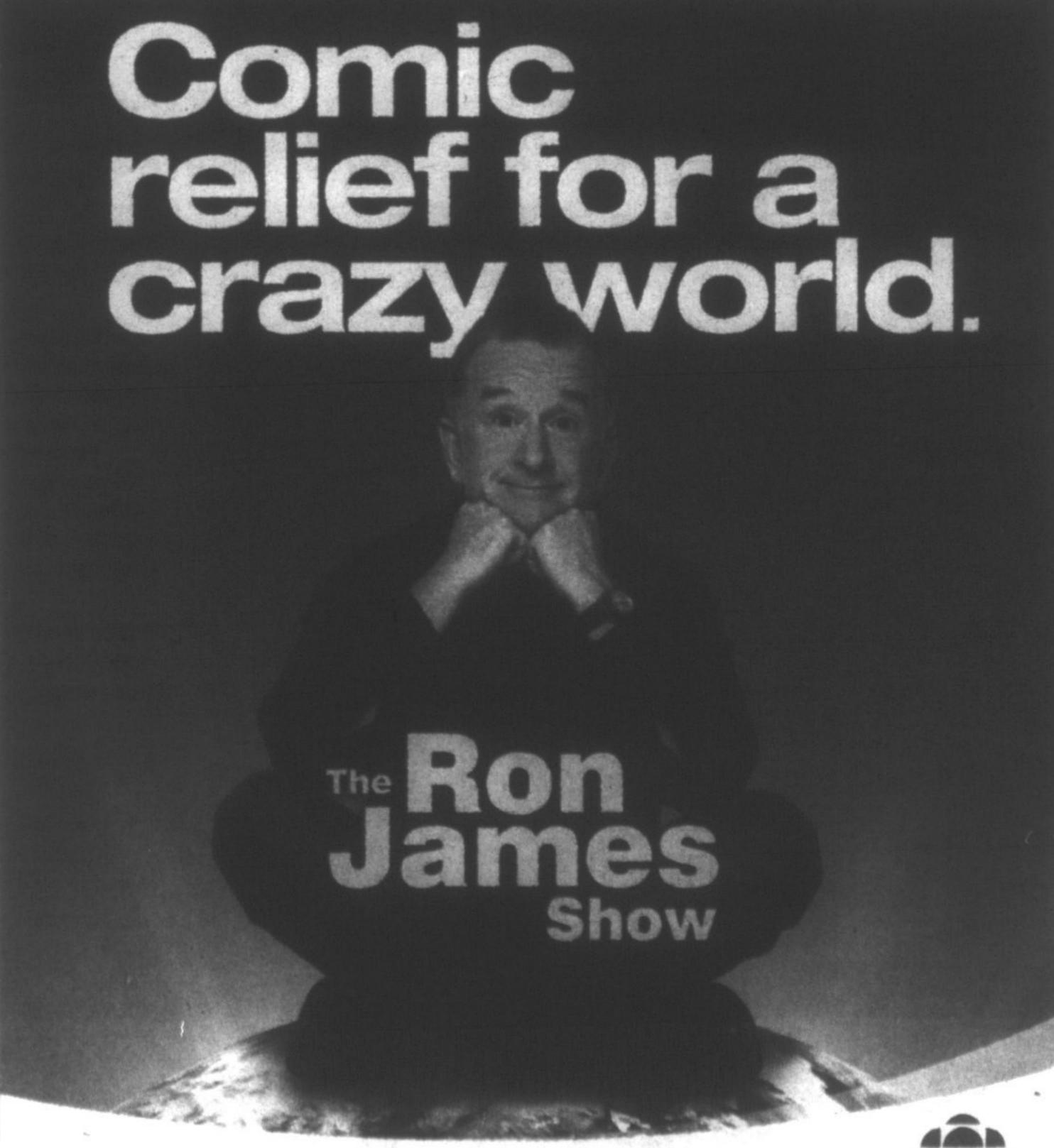


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