

SPORTS: Jr. A coach will commute to Stouffville

# London calling but Donovan staying in Spiritland

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As enjoyable a time Craig Donovan had in directing fortunes of the Stouffville Spirit last season, there were occasions when he pondered if it might be his last.

Not for a lack of success the club had on the ice.

Far from it as the Spirit enjoyed a successful campaign having reached the Ontario Junior Hockey League semifinals before bowing out to the eventual league champion Wellington Dukes.

It was the team's second-best finish during its 15-year history.

### TEAM HAPPY

While Donovan's position with the Spirit is a part-time profession, his everyday responsibilities has him employed by Great-West Life where he regularly shuttles to and from its London, Ont., office and his family home in Newmarket.

While the travel at times was taxing, especially during the unpredictable weather during the winter months and with his children still attending high school, Donovan pondered the idea of pulling up stakes and residing full time in London.

But after having a series of dis-

cussions with Spirit co-owner and general manager Kenny Burrows upon conclusion of their season and spring rookie camp, Donovan decided to remain on board for the upcoming campaign.

"For me it's a big relief," Donovan said. "I still work in London most of the time and my kids go to school in Newmarket and my wife works there."

"At the time (last season) we weren't sure what we would do with the kids being in school. My wife and I had to make sure school was good for our kids and things have worked out."

"Kenny (Burrows, the team's part owner and general manager) and I talked about my situation and I asked him if he was OK with it and he was."

"As long as Kenny was happy and I was happy, we're good to go forward."

Donovan, who played college hockey at Cornell, has also coached junior hockey in Newmarket and Uxbridge.

Another factor which swayed Donovan to remain on board was seeing a rough draft of the 2011-12 regular season schedule.

In that draft, Donovan noted the majority of their games are slated to be played on weekends.

With most of the contests to be played on those days, Donovan was quick to point out he's fortunate in having a good staff of assistant coaches that included Mark Savery, Shawn Leonard and Doug Orr, who came to the club late in the season, to run weekday practices when he's not around due to his other work commitments.

Orr, who played for the Spirit 10 years ago before suiting up for McGill University and in Europe, is the nephew of NHL legend Bobby Orr.

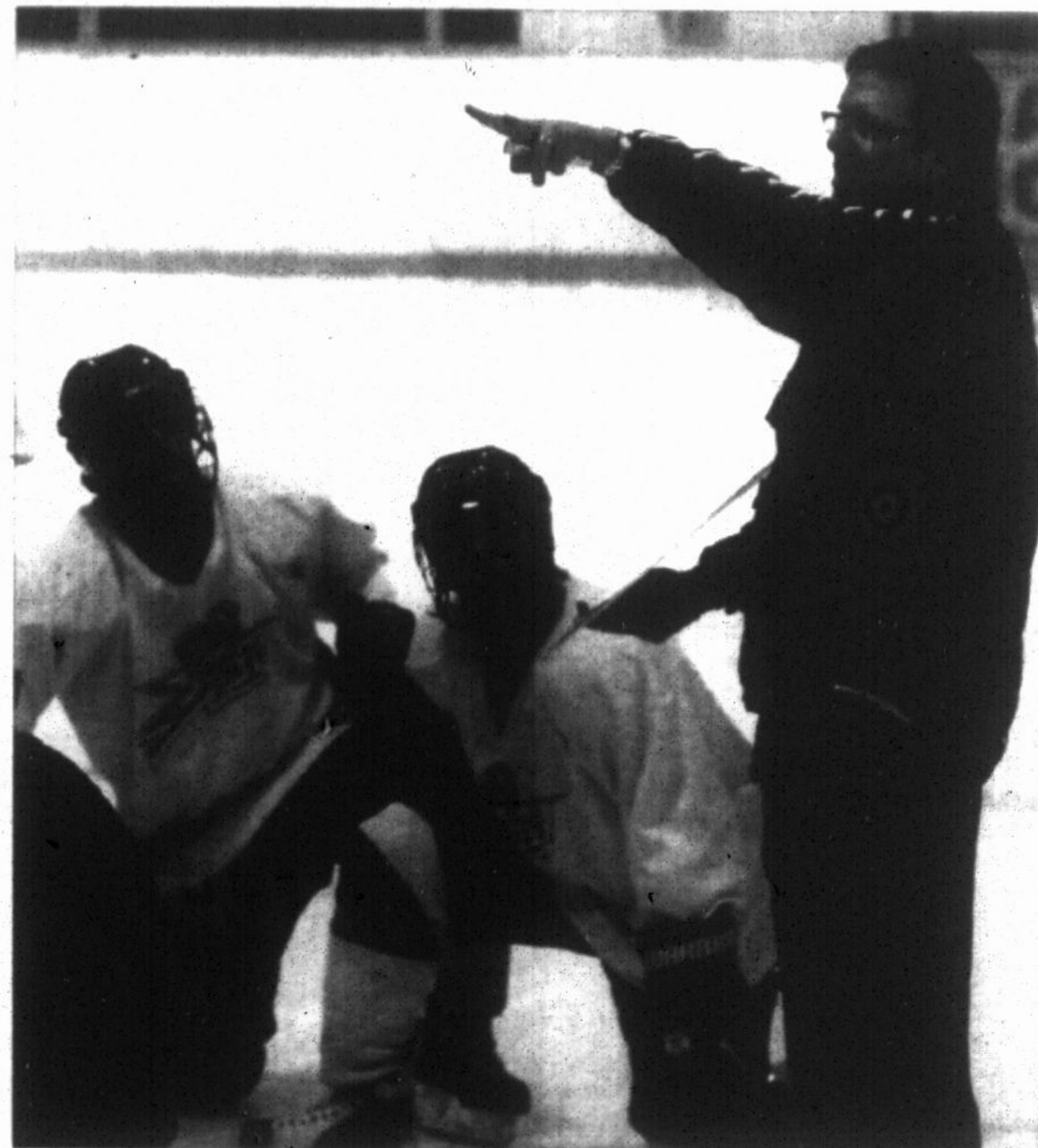
### GOOD FOUNDATION

In making a decision to return to the club, Donovan is looking forward to the new season.

"We have a good foundation to work with here. Sure, we lost some high-quality players, but we have some high-quality players who are returning, guys who we hope will take the next step forward in their careers," he said.

While Donovan is relieved to have come to a decision, the Spirit is equally glad he will remain on board.

"At first I thought he wasn't coming back," Burrows said. "It's a lot of commitment for him. But I'm glad he's coming back because he did a great job for us."



SUN-TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Craig Donovan, who contemplated moving to London where he works, will stay in York Region and coach the Stouffville Spirit this season.

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