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Stouffville's Keith Acton won't be back with the Toronto Maple Leafs as an assistant coach for a 12th season. He was fired by the Leafs Monday.

SPORTS: Leafs replace two assistant coaches

Acton taking high road

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Keith Acton officially left the Toronto Maple Leafs this week, taking the high road out of Hometown.

The Stouffville resident was relieved of his duties as assistant coach with the National Hockey League club, the Leafs announced Monday.

Acton and fellow assistant coach Tim Hunter were replaced by Scott Gordon and Greg Cronin.

Acton was informed last week. Gordon told TSN Tuesday he was offered the job "a week or two ago".

It is possible Acton and Hunter will be reassigned to a new role with the team.

"I feel very privileged and proud to have worked for the Toronto Maple Leafs for 11 years," Acton said at his Stouffville home Tuesday. "It's a great organization, from ownership on down, and I've been lucky to work with a lot of great people there."

Acton, 53, had been an assistant coach with the Maple Leafs

since the 2001-02 campaign and served under Pat Quinn, Paul Maurice and Ron Wilson.

Leafs general manager Brian Burke told a news conference Monday he told Wilson to make the change, and that Wilson did the interviewing and hiring.

"As I watched our team play last year, it became obvious to me we needed a change," said Burke, citing the team's poor power play and penalty killing in the past three seasons.

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"I believe with our existing staff we got stale. Stale is a word that doesn't work in professional sports. I reached the conclusion we needed a new look and new approach and that our players need to hear new voices."

But he added Wilson's job is safe, for now.

"I believe every head coach has

a shelf life, and I don't believe Ron has reached that shelf life. At some point the motivational tools a coach uses become stale," said Burke.

"I believe Ron Wilson's performance over the last part of the season dictated this team still plays for him, still respects him, and wants him to return," he added.

During his playing days, Acton spent 15 seasons and more than 1,000 games with the Montreal Canadiens, Minnesota North Stars, Edmonton Oilers, Philadelphia Flyers, Washington Capitals and New York Islanders from 1980 to 1994.

He was a member of the Edmonton Oilers team during the 1987-88 season that won the Stanley Cup.

During his coaching career, Acton also served as an assistant with the Philadelphia Flyers for four seasons, from 1994-95 to 1997-98, and with the New York Rangers for the following two campaigns before coming to Toronto.

-with files from Torstar News Service

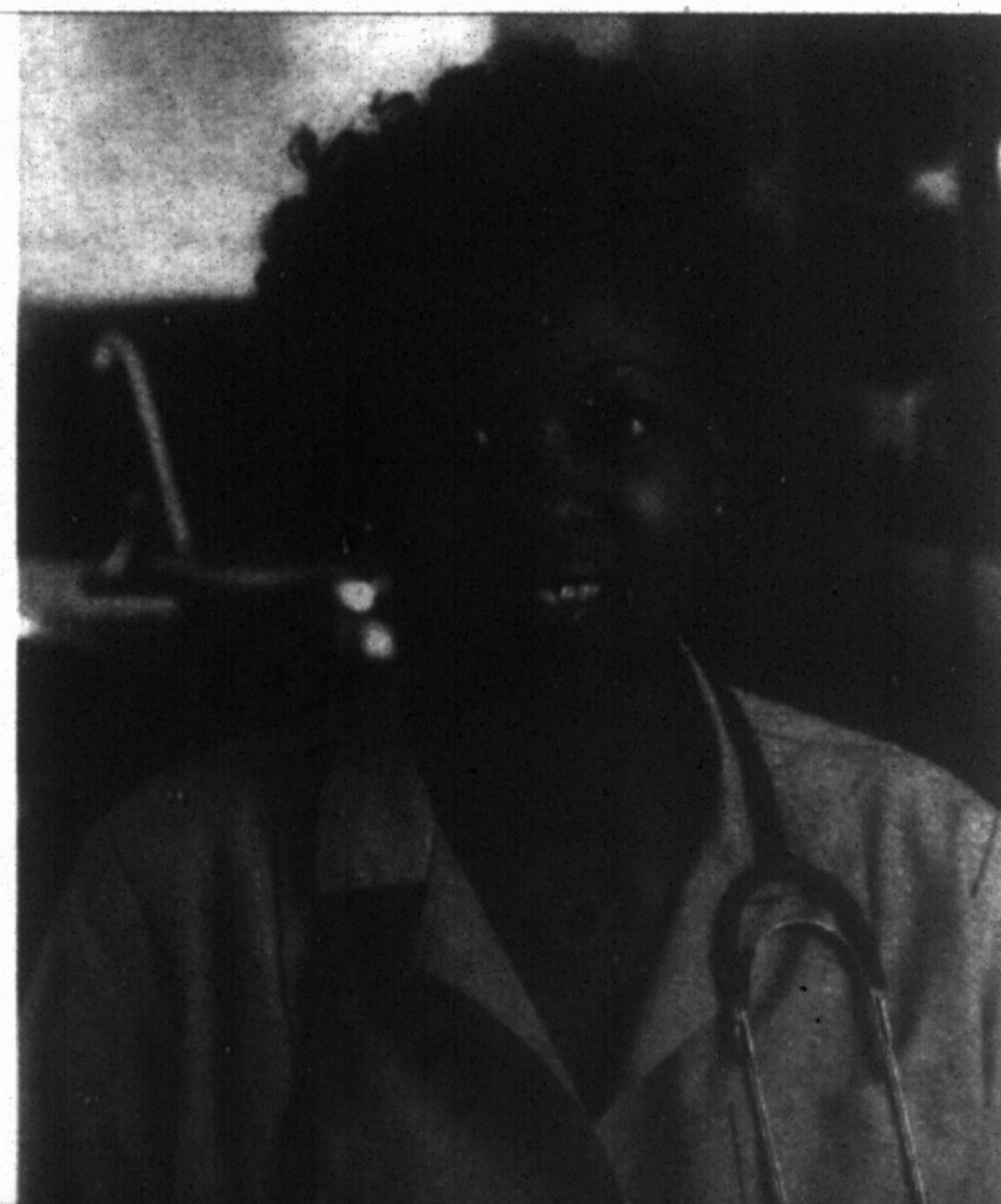
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