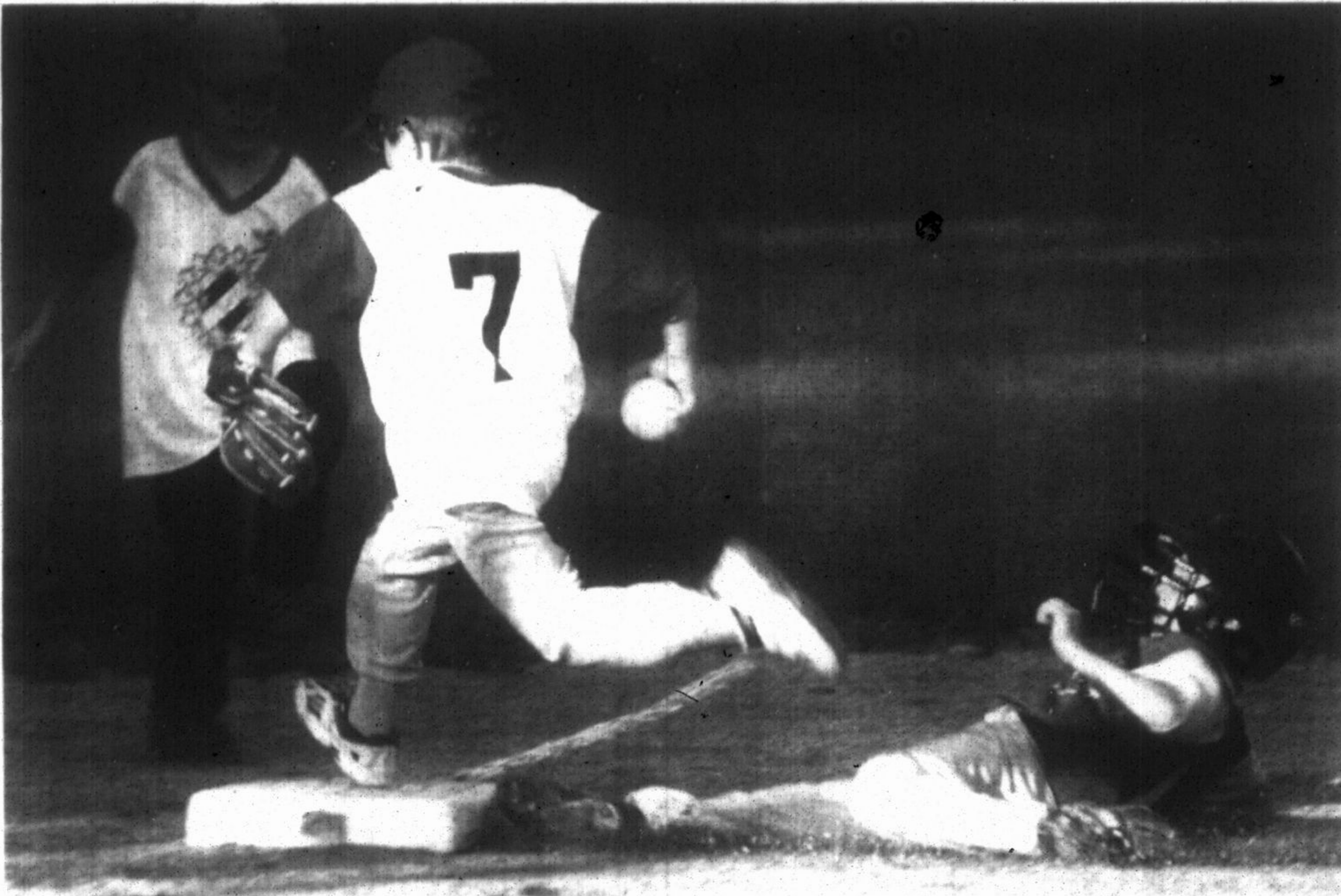


VIDEO REVIEW?



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

JR. A HOCKEY

Spirit opens camp with optimism, openings

BY MICHAEL HAYAKAWA
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Although the puck hasn't been dropped to start the 2011-12 Ontario Junior Hockey League regular season, Stouffville Spirit head coach Craig Donovan said the days leading up to the start of their main training camp are the fun time of the year.

For starters, Donovan was quick to note his club is undefeated – no wins and no losses.

But with the Spirit set to open their main training camp Friday at the Stouffville Arena's main pad at 6 p.m., Donovan said the fun begins in trying to determine who will be a part of this year's team.

A total of 38 players, including five goalkeepers, are scheduled to report.

"I'm really looking forward to it," he said. "It's the best time of the year."

'BEST TIME OF YEAR'

"This year will be a challenge because we lost a lot of players from last year's team (that advanced to the semifinals) who are off to college or the Ontario Hockey League. The challenge is to put together a group of kids, a lot of whom didn't know each other prior to camp, and to get them to play together and build a successful team. That's the fun."

During the first weekend of camp, which includes a four-hour session Saturday starting at 1 p.m. at the Stouffville Arena and a rookie game on the road against the St. Michael's Buzzers Sunday at 6 p.m., Donovan figures he will have a good idea of who wants to be a part of this year's team.

Adding to the challenge Donovan and his Spirit coaching staff are faced with is a relatively short training camp with the regular season slated to begin Sept. 9 when the Spirit visits Huntsville.

"We'll find out who is in shape and who is ready to compete," he said. "We have stiff competition for the last couple of spots up front, on defence and to back up Jon Hall (in goal). I hope the guys are ready to compete hard due to the small window that we have for training camp. We have to get our team together quickly."

With training camp scheduled to continue throughout next week at the Stouffville Arena, Donovan hopes to have the core of his roster in place by Aug. 26.

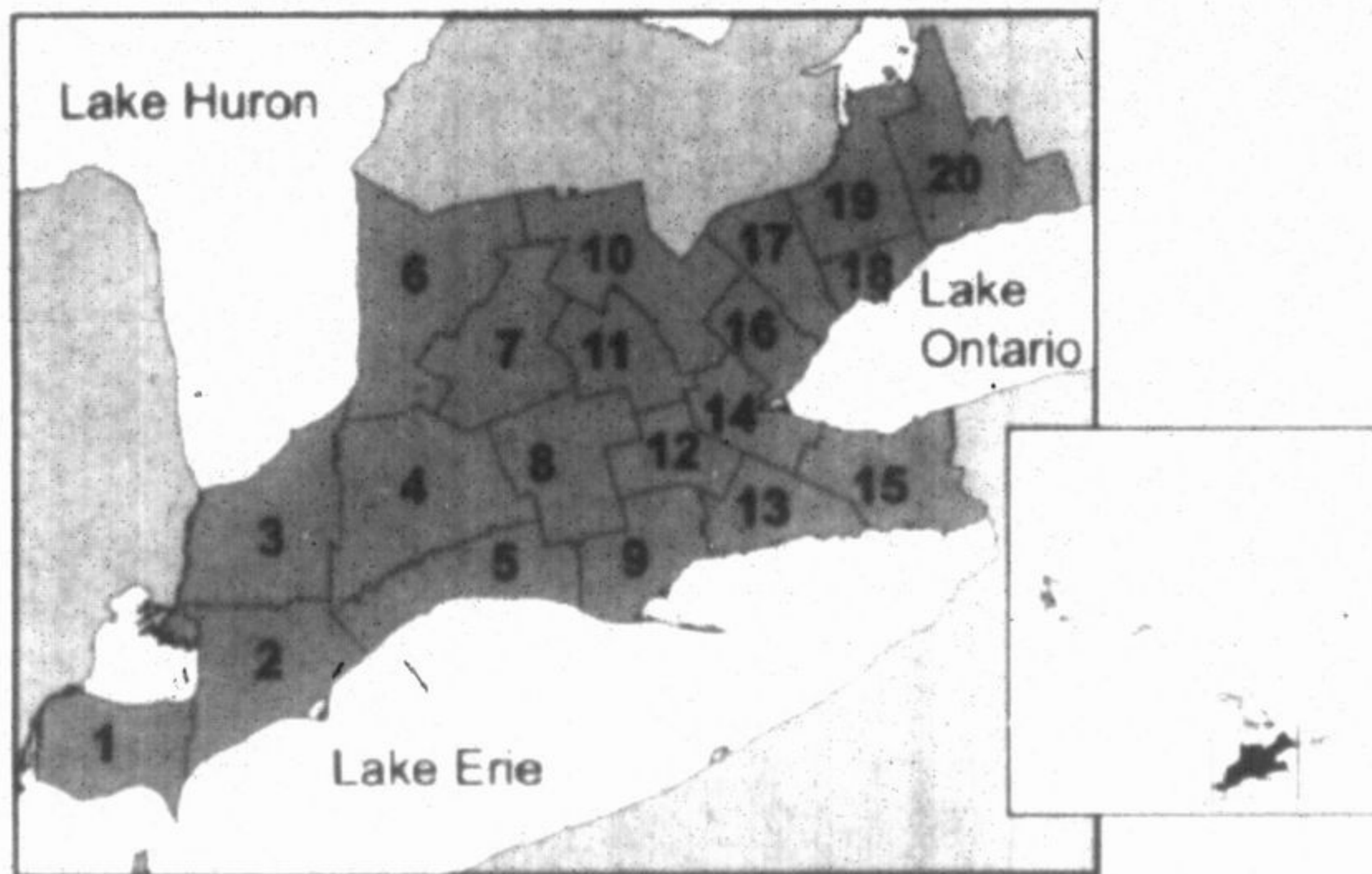
"By then we will know who stays," he said.

For more on the Spirit, go stouffvillespirit.com

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EAB regulated area in southern Ontario



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Julian Troiani (7), of the Stouffville Kinsmen team narrowly beats Bryson McNeil of the Independent Planning Group squad to third base for an out in Whitchurch-Stouffville Softball Association five-pitch advanced house league action in Thicketwood Park Monday. Looking on is Evan Kilpatrick

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