

# Stouffville Sun-Tribune SPORTS



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

Stouffville Spirit forward Alex Botten dumps Orangeville's Alex Adams during the Spirit's 4-1 OJHL win at the Stouffville Arena Sunday. Former Flyer Botten had two points.

## No rookie jitters for Spirit

**LAST WEEK:** Friday: Huntsville Otters 5 vs. Stouffville Spirit 3. Sunday: Stouffville Spirit 4 vs. Orangeville Flyers 1.

**COMING UP:** Saturday: Spirit at Orangeville, 7 p.m. Next home game, Sept. 22.

**GAME NOTES:** Through its first two games of the Ontario Junior Hockey League regular season, the Stouffville Spirit won one and lost one. But if Lady Luck were on their side, the Spirit could easily be undefeated.

A couple of untimely breaks during Friday's opener in Huntsville came back to haunt the Spirit as they suffered a 5-3 loss to the Otters. The Spirit drew first blood on a goal by rookie forward Vince Cerone just over seven minutes into the first period. But the Otters battled back to tie the game when Spirit rookie forward Robert Rawlins was inadvertently knocked down by an official, leaving the Otters player he was guarding wide open to put the puck past Jon Hall.

With the score tied at 1-1 through 20 minutes, the Otters took advantage of two early power-play opportunities, including one on a deflection, to take a 3-1 lead. The Spirit though, battled back to cut their deficit on a goal by Chris Porter just past the midway point of the second period. In the final 20 minutes, the Otters scored first to regain their two-goal bulge before Thomas Tsicos scored his first goal as a member of the Spirit to get Stouffville back to within a goal. With time winding down, the Spirit pulled Hall in favour of an extra attacker. But the Otters iced the game with just 42 seconds remaining with an empty net goal. The Spirit outshot the Otters 33-31.

Making their Stouffville Arena debut against the Orangeville Flyers Sunday afternoon, the Spirit got goals from four different players en route to a 4-1 win. Spotting the Flyers a 1-0 lead, the Spirit took advantage of a power-play opportunity when defenceman Paul Geiger scored with just under two minutes remaining in the first period to tie the score at 1-1. The Spirit accounted for the lone goal early in the second period when former Flyers' forward Alex Botten scored. Nursing a one-goal lead, the Spirit put the game away early in the third period when Porte scored at the 46-second mark and Christian Finch just over six minutes into the stanza. The Spirit outshot the Flyers 37-33.

**INSIDER:** The Spirit's other goalie, Knick Dawe, remains in London on a tryout with the Knights of the Ontario Hockey League. The former Aurora Tigers netminder stopped 33 of 36 shots in a 3-3 tie with Plymouth played in St. Thomas Saturday. With Dawe currently in London, the Spirit dressed apprentice Wyatt Pickerel as

a back up to Hall. The Spirit played Sunday's game without the services of Brandon Gaudette, who incurred a lower body injury Friday. Spirit head coach Craig Donovan expects Gaudette to be back in action Saturday in Orangeville. Also expected to be missing Saturday is Tsicos, who incurred an instigator infraction during Sunday's game. That carries a one-game suspension.

Stouffville residents playing elsewhere in the OJHL as rookies this season include Kevin Stevens in Whitby and Shawn Hulshof and Daryl Thomson in Trenton.

Spirit players raised \$1,000 for the Terry Fox Run during their annual charity car wash at Houston Ford Saturday. The run goes Sunday from the Lebovic Leisure Centre.

**GENERALLY SPEAKING:** "I would rather we be 2-0 than 1-1," Donovan said. "We had a couple of bad bounces in Huntsville that hurt us."

"And I thought maybe we played a little tentative being on the road and with a roster of a lot of younger guys. But I thought we had the higher quality of scoring chances. Give credit to their goalie (Leo Podolsky) he played well and made some big saves when he had to." Reflecting on Sunday's win, Donovan felt his club's ability to wear down the Flyers, who were playing their second game in as many days, surfaced as the game progressed.

Several individual performances caught the coach's attention, including Tsicos.

"He used his speed and got the puck deep on the other team. I really liked the way he played," Donovan said of the former Collingwood Blackhawks' forward.

As well, Donovan was glad to see Botten, who also assisted, finally light up the red light after generating numerous scoring chances during the first two games.

"He had eight to 10 great chances to score against Huntsville. He even apologized to his teammates on the bus coming home," Donovan said. "And even against Orangeville, he had three or four great chances to score. But it was a big relief for him to score. Alex is ready to have a breakout year."

Starting the season with a relatively young defence, Donovan also liked the way they performed.

"We used six defencemen and our guys are getting on-the-job training and experience. They're playing and learning. There's no wading into things. They've jumped right into the deep end."

For more on the Spirit, go to: [www.stouffvillespirit.com](http://www.stouffvillespirit.com). Some games are carried on WHISIE Radio.

-Michael Hayakawa

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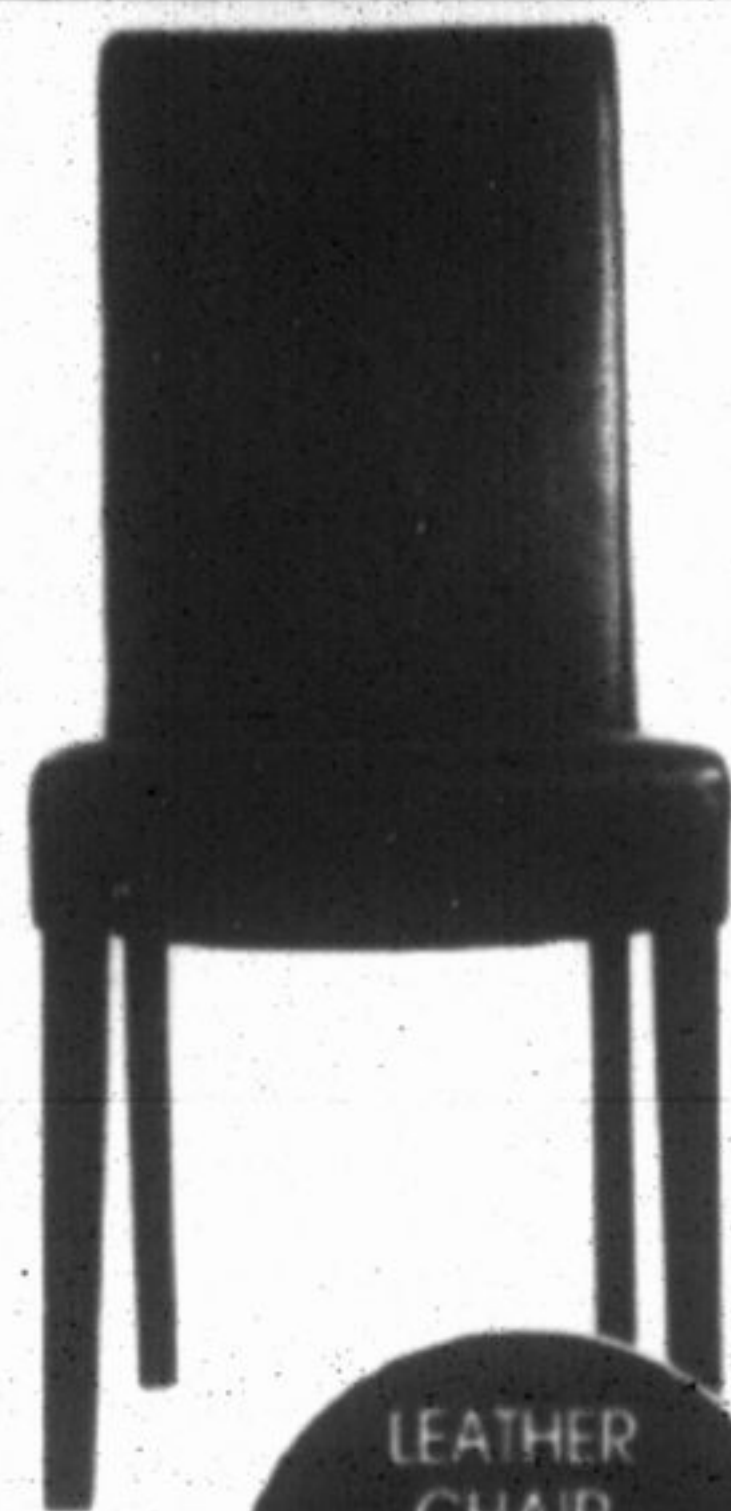
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