

# Spirit back to work tonight to open playoffs

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You didn't hear any complaints from the Stouffville Spirit during its 11-day postseason break.

But for the Ontario Junior Hockey League

club, it's time to get back to work today as it begins its quest to capture the league title when they play the Aurora Tigers in a best-of-seven North Division semifinal series at the Stouffville Arena starting at 7:30 p.m.

The second game is slated to be played

Friday in Aurora at 7:30 p.m. before returning to the Stouffville Arena for a Sunday matinee at 2:30 p.m. The fourth game will be played in Aurora Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.

Should a fifth game be required, it would return to Stouffville next Thursday at 7:30 p.m. A sixth game would go in Aurora March 2 at 7:30 p.m. The Spirit would host a seventh game if needed March 4 at 2:30 p.m.

During the regular season, the Spirit held the upper hand against the Tigers in head-to-head play, winning five of six contests.

## DOMINATED AURORA

The Spirit had a first-round bye after finishing second in the North Division with 73 points, nine more than the third-place Tigers.

The Spirit lost just once in regulation time during its last 27 regular season tilts.

Spirit head coach Craig Donovan is throwing all those numbers out the window.

"The playoffs are a new season," he said.

Donovan noted how the Newmarket Hurricanes had the Spirit's number during the regular season last season.

"It's a lot like last year when we only defeated Newmarket (Hurricanes, who finished first during the regular season last year) once. But we beat them in the playoffs."

Donovan also knows the Tigers sported one of the better records down the stretch run of the regular season, which included victories in six of their last seven regular season tilts and three of four games to capture their first round, best-of-five series against a pesky Orangeville Flyers team.

"They're a hard-working team who played some of their best hockey towards the end of the regular season. And they weren't that far behind us in the final regular season standings."

"I don't think this series will be a walk in the park. This will be a good challenge for us," Donovan said.

"For us we definitely have to match their work ethic," he said.

"Whoever wins the special teams battles will go a long ways," he said.

Having scouted the Tigers during their first-round playoff series, Donovan knows they prefer to dump the puck in and then create offence.



**KNICK DAWE:** Former Aurora Tiger goalie won't start but could see action against his former team

"We have to get the puck out of our own zone and win the battle of puck possession," he said.

Another key in the series will be goaltending and on that subject, Donovan revealed he will start the series with Jon Hall in net.

But he's not hesitant to utilize Knick Dawe, who once played with the Tigers and is familiar with the smallish ice surface at the Aurora Community Centre.

## FROM SICK BAY

"During the second half of the season Knick played really well for us and he's put up good numbers," Donovan said. "And he handles the puck well. That could be advantageous for us to use him in certain situations."

What could also work in the Spirit's favour is the return of several players who were nursing injuries down the stretch run of the regular season.

They include forwards Tommy Tsicos and Mike Robinson and defenceman Josh Chapman.

Forward Vince Cerone still has two games remaining to sit out after incurring a four-game suspension for a spearing infraction in a game against Newmarket Feb. 5.

For more on the Spirit, go to: [www.stouffvillespirit.com](http://www.stouffvillespirit.com)

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