



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Champs feel pressure

Donning a jersey for the Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans senior boys' rugby team can come with a target on it.

Especially when the Spartans have created a dynasty of sorts on the pitch by winning the last five York Region Athletic Association championships and seven of the last eight.

Not to mention being silver medallists at last year's Ontario Federation of School Athletic Association AAAA championships.

That burden was felt by this year's edition of the Spartans when they opened defence of their YRAA tier one title against the St. Brother Andre (Markham) Cardinals with a 12-5 win on the Bill Crothers Secondary School field turf in Unionville Tuesday.

"The guys were definitely nervous going into the game," said Spartans' head coach Jamie Hewitt. "They know the pressure is on them with our program having won the York Region title the last five years."

"But I was pleased with the way they played. A win is a win."

The Spartans jumped out to an early 7-0 lead on a try by Jolu Odulamani and convert from Matt Renzoni.

TITLE TOWN

But midway through the first half, the Cardinals came back with a try to cut their deficit to 7-5 at the half.

Playing the match under cold, blustery conditions, the Spartans defended into the wind in the second half and added an insurance try by Rob Paul with around two minutes remaining in the match.

While satisfied with the win, Hewitt acknowledged his club lost a bit of focus during the middle segment of the match and let them know it during the halftime break.

"I told the guys you can do it our way or continue to do it your way and I think they got the message," he said.

In the junior match that followed, the Spartans got off to a good start with a 26-5 win over St. Brother Andre.

Ben Risi scored three tries for the Spartans, who took a 12-0 lead at the half. Chris Cadaret added one try and Quinton Coetsee booted three converts.

"I thought we played well. Give credit to St. Brother Andre, they have athletes and toughness. But maybe we had a bit more skill that might have been the difference," said Spartans' head coach Rob Edmondson.

The Spartans will be put to the test in their next outing as the seniors and juniors will face Bill Crothers on its pitch Thursday starting at 2 p.m.

- Michael Hayakawa

Pavlos Skarvelos of Stouffville Secondary runs the ball against St. Brother Andre in a snowstorm at Bill Crothers Secondary in Unionville Tuesday. The Spartans swept both ends of a doubleheader.

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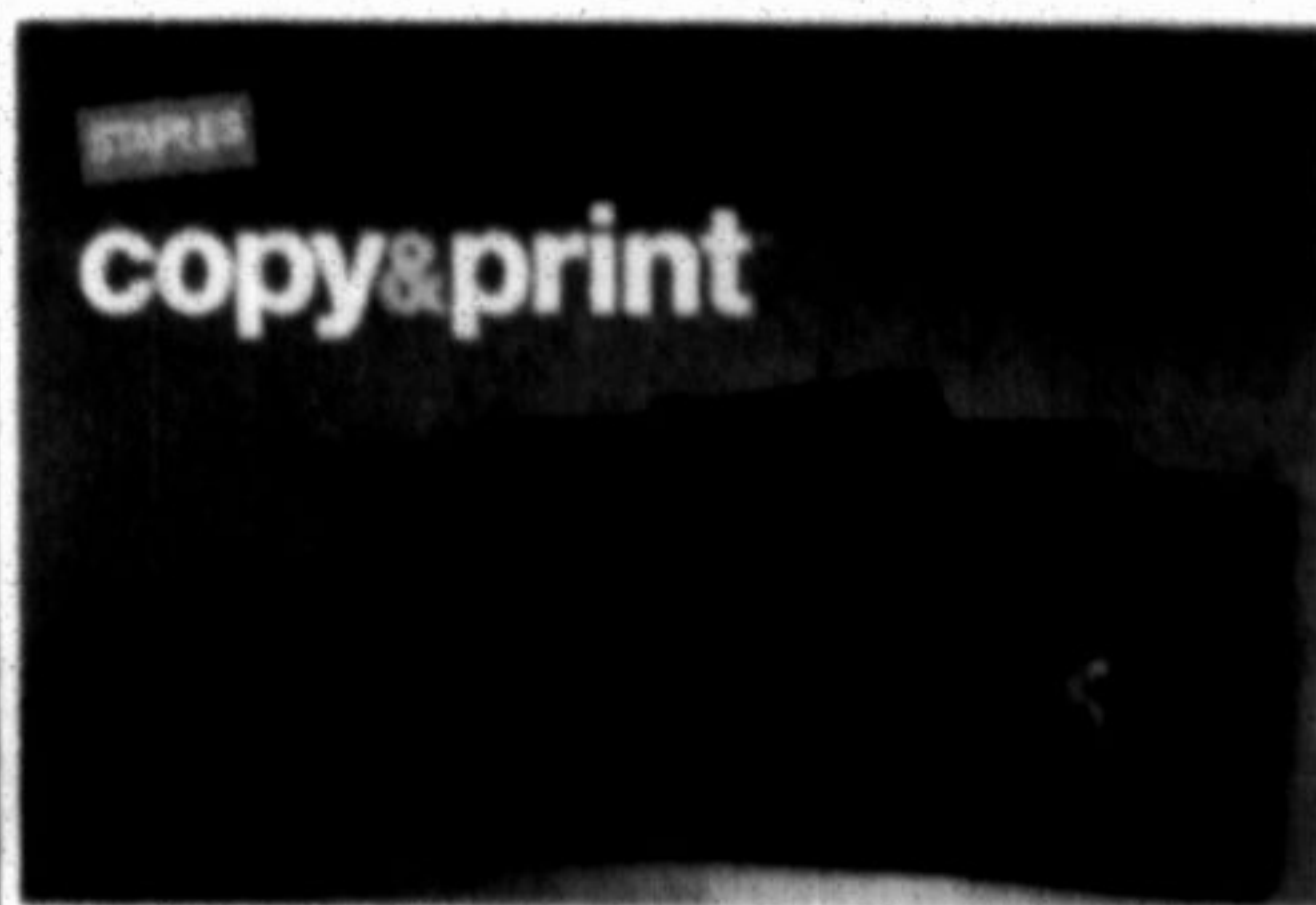
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