

Stouffville Sun-Tribune SPORTS

Spirit home to Newmarket in early fight for first

LAST WEEK: Sunday: Stouffville Spirit 3 vs. Kingston Voyageurs 0. Spirit record: one win, no losses, two points. Tied with Newmarket Hurricanes for first place in North Division.

COMING UP: Today: vs. Newmarket Hurricanes at Stouffville Arena, 7:30 p.m. Friday at Pickering Panthers, 7:30 p.m.

GAME NOTES: Entering its Ontario Junior Hockey League regular season opener against the Kingston Voyageurs, Stouffville Spirit head coach Jeff Perrin was a little concerned about how his team would come out at the Stouffville Arena Sunday.

Especially after the Spirit ended its pre-season slate on a five-game losing streak.

As it turned out though, the first-year Spirit head coach did not have to worry as his club skated off with a 3-0 win to start play for keeps.

The Spirit accounted for all of their scoring in the second period on goals by rookies Peyton Backus and Michael Morgan and assistant captain Alex Botten.

With incumbent Spirit goalkeeper Knick Dawe still at the Sarnia Sting's Ontario Hockey League camp, newcomer GianLuca Palmieri was given the starting nod and made a case for him to at least be the backup goalkeeper for the club after stopping all 29 shots directed at him to record his first Jr. A

shutout.

The Spirit directed 40 shots on the Voyageurs' net.

INSIDER: Along with Dawe, the Spirit is also awaiting word if forward and Stouffville native Mike Robinson will remain with the OHL's Niagara IceDogs.

After Sunday's game, Perrin said the club did not incur any serious injuries.

GENERALLY SPEAKING: "It sure was a nice way to start the season," said Perrin of his first victory as a Jr. A head coach. "After the last few games that we played, to come out and start the year with a shutout was nice.

"That should definitely give the guys some confidence."

Perrin acknowledged his charges were probably a little nervous.

"I definitely thought we got better as the game wore on," Perrin said. "We began to establish and forecheck and we created turnovers and this time around buried our chances. That was something we didn't do during the last few pre-season games."

While elated with Palmieri's effort, Perrin was quick to point out it was a team effort.

"(Palmieri) was good enough for the shutout. But we did a good job in our own end and we kept a lot of their shots to the outside which made things

easier," Perrin said.

Palmieri, 20, is a native of Richmond Hill. He's played Jr. A in North Bay and Bramalea and for the Chatham Maroons Jr. B team.

What has also impressed Perrin has been the club's work ethic.

"During the week we watched video and had a practice (Saturday) and the guys picked things up quick and didn't make any real mistakes today and that helped."

A big test for the Spirit will take place tonight when they play host to their North Division rivals the Newmarket Hurricanes at the Stouffville Arena at 7:30 p.m.

During the last two seasons, the Spirit eliminated the Hurricanes in the division playoffs, each in a gruelling seven-game series.

"We're looking forward to playing them," Perrin said. "Newmarket is a division rival and we've had some good playoff series' against them in the past. This should be a good test for both teams."

The Hurricanes are 1-1, after winning 3-2 in Pickering Friday and losing 4-0 in Whitby Tuesday.

For more on the Spirit, go to: www.stouffvillespirit.com

- Michael Hayakawa



STAFF PHOTO/NICK IWANYSHYN

Spirit captain Tom Tiscos fires a shot on Kingston goalie Charlie Finn during the Spirit's 3-0 win Sunday.

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