

Losing skid no need to panic, Spirit coach says

LAST WEEK: Sunday: Trenton Golden Hawks 6 vs. Stouffville Spirit 3. Spirit record: nine wins, one overtime win, two shoot-out wins, one shootout loss, four overtime losses, 10 losses, 29 points. Third place in North Division.

COMING UP: Today: vs. Whitby Fury at Iroquois Park Arena, Whitby, 7:30 p.m.

GAME NOTES: The Stouffville Spirit are currently in the midst of an eight-game winless streak. But it's definitely not for a lack of effort that the Ontario Junior Hockey League club has been in a skid, insisted head coach Jeff Perrin. Being on the receiving end of a fortuitous bounce here or there would certainly be a plus as the Spirit haven't had Lady Luck side with them during their recent drought. At the same time, Perrin said they can ill afford to ease up during any portion of a game. Those two facets came to the fore when the Spirit were on the losing end of a 6-3 verdict against the East Division-leading Trenton Golden Hawks at the Stouffville Arena Sunday.

Trailing 1-0 after the first period, the Spirit dug themselves into a deeper hole when the Golden Hawks erupted with three unanswered goals. The Spirit finally got on the scoreboard with more than two minutes remaining in the period when rookie Michael Morgan scored on a power play. Carrying that

momentum into the third period, the Spirit power play connected for a second goal when Dylan Savory scored to cut Stouffville's deficit to 4-2. That would be short-lived, though, as the Golden Hawks restored its three goal cushion just 44 seconds later. The Spirit still kept their hopes alive a little more than two minutes later when Matthew Dunlop scored to cut Trenton's lead to 5-3. But with time winding down, the Spirit pulled goalkeeper Knick Dawe in favour of an extra attacker. The move failed as the Golden Hawks added their sixth goal into an empty net.

INSIDER: In the OJHL scoring race, Spirit captain Alex Botten is fourth overall with 40 points (13 goals and 27 assists) in 27 games this season. Former Spirit forward Will Acton netted his third goal of the season as a member of the Toronto Marlies in a 2-1 road loss against the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins in an American Hockey League contest Saturday. The son of former NHL player and current Columbus Blue Jackets' assistant coach Keith Acton, Will has three goals and three assists in 17 games so far this season. Also playing for the Marlies is former Spirit defenceman Simon Gysbers. On the injury front, Perrin said injured forward Taylor Joseph should be ready to return to the lineup for today's road game against Whitby. Joseph, the son of former NHL goalkeeper



Curtis Joseph, was in the midst of recovering from a hand injury incurred earlier this month.

GENERALLY SPEAKING: "The start of the second period was rough," Perrin said of his club's loss to the Golden Hawks. "We couldn't afford to take stupid penalties like we did and they score on them. We're not putting together 60 minutes of hockey and not working hard the whole time. In this league and the way teams are if you don't show up to play for an entire game you'll pay."

"Sure we're in a slump, but it's not because we're playing badly. That's the frustrating thing. During our slump there were four

games that went into overtime that could have gone our way. That's frustrating."

If there's any consolation for the Spirit, they still remain just three points behind the Newmarket Hurricanes and Aurora Tigers, who were tied for first place in the highly competitive North Division.

"We got four points in four games that went into overtime that we lost. A win or two could have changed things. For now that's all right. There's no need for us to panic," Perrin said of his club's current standing in the North Division.

Looking ahead to the club's road game tonight against Whitby, a team the Spirit defeated in last year's OJHL final, Perrin acknowledged his club will be put to the test.

"It won't be easy for sure," he said. "But we've just got to find a way to win the game. Hopefully we can do it."

As for making any roster changes for today's game, Perrin hinted he might give Dawe a rest and go with backup Braydon Banitsiotis.

For more on the Spirit, log on to www.stouffvillespirit.com or catch up on Twitter with the Stouffville Spirit Jr A Hockey Club.

— Michael Hayakawa



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