

# Goalie didn't see trade to Stouffville coming

BY MICHAEL HAYAKAWA  
mhayakawa@yrmg.com

When Daniel Mannella attended a Nov. 30 Ontario Hockey League contest in Mississauga between the host Steelheads and Niagara IceDogs, it turned out to be an event he won't soon forget.

Not because the IceDogs defeated the Steelheads 6-4.

It was what transpired off the ice immediately once the final buzzer sounded when the 17-year-old Woodbridge native was taken aside by Greg Walters and given some surprising news.

The Georgetown Raiders general manager and head coach informed Mannella he was part of a five-player transaction that sent him, along with forward Mike Stevens and \$5,000 cash, to the Stouffville Spirit for goalkeeper Knick Dawe and forwards Alex Botten and Jacob Bauchmann.

"It was a real shock for sure," Mannella said when initially informed of the trade. "My teammates and myself were at the Steelheads game to watch our teammate, Thomas Welsh, who got called up to play for the Steelheads. Right after the game, Greg (Walters) called me over and told

me the news.

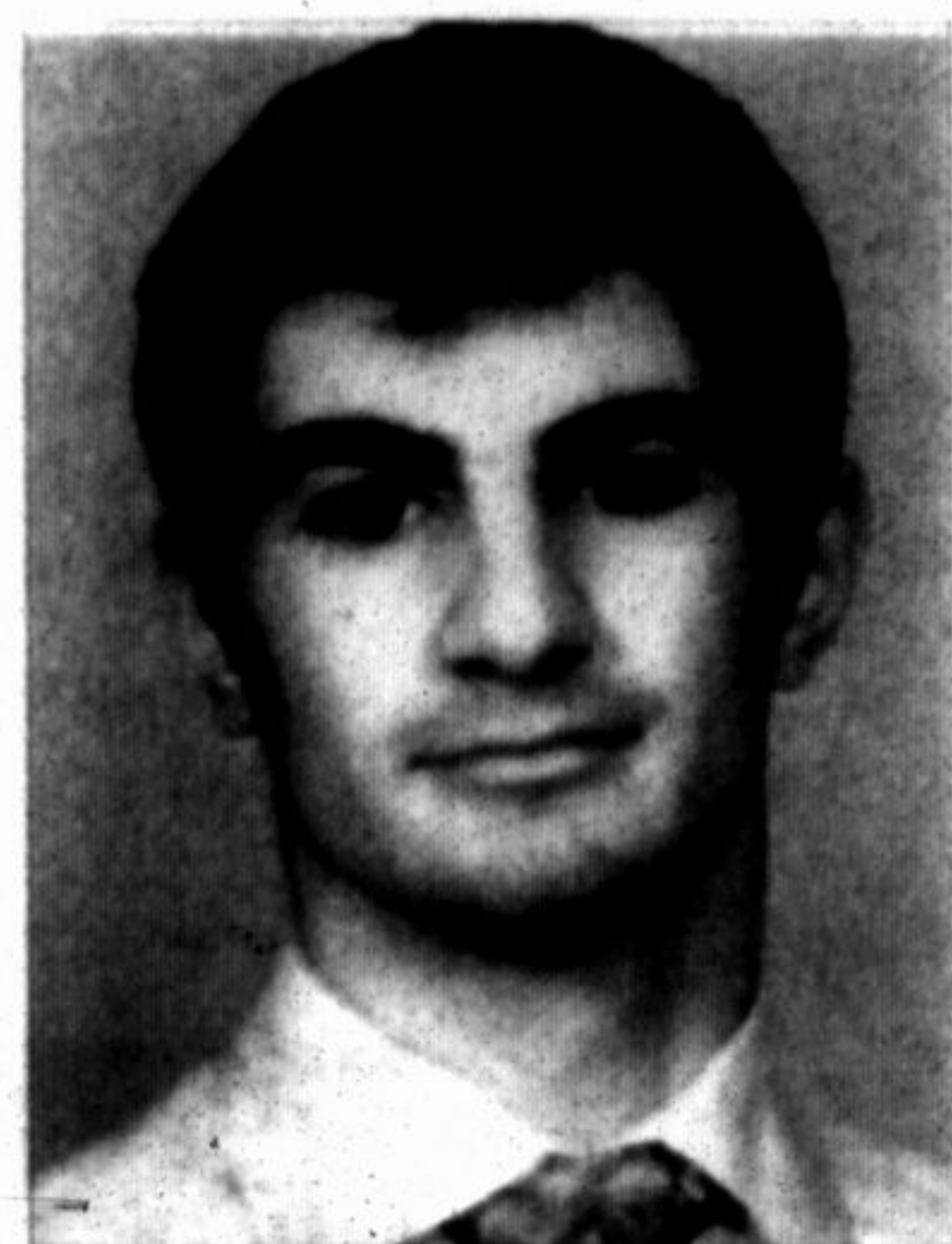
"Things happened pretty fast." Logging time in 22 games during his stint with the Raiders and sporting a nifty 2.44 goals-against average, one shutout and a 913 save percentage, Mannella felt he put up good numbers during his rookie Ontario Junior Hockey League season.

He was also rewarded by being a member of the Canada East team that competed at the recent 2012 World Junior A Challenge in Yarmouth, N.S.

"I wasn't expecting anything to happen," the Grade 12 Holy Cross Catholic High School student said when asked if he heard any trade winds blowing prior to the deal.

In reporting to the Spirit, Mannella was thrown into the fire immediately as he was given the starting nod when they played host to the Lindsay Muskies last Thursday.

Despite getting off to a bit of a rough start when he allowed four goals just prior to the midway point of the game, Mannella came up big when the contest was on the line after making two big stops during the shootout session to



**DANIEL MANNELLA:** Former Georgetown Raider part of new youth movement in Stouffville.

help the Spirit snap their 10-game winless streak with a hard-fought 6-5 victory.

"It wasn't so much nerves at first," Mannella said in reference to making what might appear to be a shaky start between the pipes with his new club. "I wasn't comfortable at the start. It was a different environment with new teammates. But as the game went on I felt better and I just played my game."

Despite joining a Spirit club that

had hit a deep valley after going winless in 10 straight games and noting the team was laden with younger players, Mannella senses their fortunes will begin to go in a positive direction.

"This is a team that's full of talent and everyone is positive and there's lots of excitement. The guys here are hungry to win and improve and I feel we're a good team. They brought me here for a reason," he said.

Introduced to the game when he was six years of age starting in the City of Vaughan Hockey Association house league, Mannella worked his way up the competitive ranks to where he was with Greater Toronto Hockey League's Toronto Titans major midgets last season before joining Georgetown at the start of this season.

A goalkeeper since the first day he took to the ice and idolizing veteran New Jersey Devils' goalkeeper Martin Brodeur, Mannella was quick to credit much of what he's learned in recent years through private sessions he's had with Piero Greco, goalkeeper coach with the Kitchener Rangers of the OHL.

"He's taught me a lot and he's

never lost faith in me," Mannella said of what Greco has taught him.

Through those sessions and during his time with the Spirit Mannella hopes the hard work will culminate in obtaining a collegiate scholarship south of the border.

As well, he hopes his performance between the pipes will be a major ingredient in helping the Spirit take the same path it did last season en route to winning the league title.

"I'll do what I can to make it happen," he said.

## BUSY BOYS

The Stouffville Spirit will get a steady diet of the Whitby Fury during the next eight days.

The teams that met in the OJHL championship series last spring - the Spirit won in six games - will play three times through next Thursday, starting tonight at the Stouffville Arena.

The Spirit will host the arch rival Newmarket Hurricanes Saturday and visit Whitby Sunday afternoon.

The Spirit (13-17) is in third place in the North Division of the OJHL, seven points back of the Aurora Tigers and two up on the Lindsay Muskies.

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