

Spirit skates and waits for 8 players at OHL camps

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The last week of August represents a time of uncertainty for the Stouffville Spirit and other Ontario Junior Hockey League clubs.

This year is no different.

With Ontario Hockey League clubs set to open their main training camps by this weekend, the Spirit and other OJHL entries will be missing players who will skate during OHL free agent and rookie camps held prior to main camps.

This year, the Spirit have eight players at OHL camps: goalkeeper Daniel Mannella (Ottawa), defenceman Josh Carrick (Barrie), forward Chad Burrows (Mississauga), Peyton Backus (Mississauga), defenceman Kyler Challis (Plymouth), defenceman Cameron Lintner (Owen Sound), forward Tyson Bruce (Erie) and forward Chris Brill-Morgan (Sault Ste Marie).

"Every year it's like this," said

Spirit head coach Jeff Perrin. "You know it's coming, you just have to deal with it."

"With the OHL, you just never know. We could lose anywhere from four players to none that make it.

"For now, we can't really do anything until we know what the OHL clubs do."

The Spirit released three players Monday.

With that, Perrin said he now has a roster of 26 players to work with.

"We pretty well have our team picked," he said. "If guys elect to stay in the OHL, we will just have to pick up someone else."

The Spirit took to the ice for three preseason games last weekend and came away with a win, tie and loss.

The most recent outing was Sunday when they dug themselves into a hole they could not get out of and fell 5-3 to the Pickering Pan-

thers at the Stouffville Arena.

After the Panthers scored within the first minute of the third period to take a 5-0 lead, the Spirit offence finally came to life as Stefan vonEngelbrechten, Spencer Roberts and Jackson Savery, a 1998-born local prospect, delivered unanswered goals before regulation time expired.

TEAM PICKED

Tim Bester, a rookie from Waterloo, played the first 30 minutes in goal for the Spirit and stopped 13 of 17 shots, while veteran Daniel Mannella played the remainder and allowed one goal on 14 shots.

The Spirit directed 46 shots on the Panthers' net.

Both teams used a mix of veterans and rookies.

The Spirit launched the weekend with a resounding 9-1 win over the defending league champion Buzzers in Toronto Friday.

Connor Miller and vonEngelbrechten each netted a pair for the Spirit.

Liam O'Dette, Keenan Kennedy, Carrick, Backus and Daryl Thomson added single tallies.

Making their home preseason debut the following night, the Spirit and Whitby Fury played to a 1-1 draw.

Miller scored for the Spirit.

Spirit starting netminder Trent Kestin handled all 14 shots directed at him in just over 34 minutes of action, while Marcus Semiao stopped 12 of 13 shots.

The Spirit outshot the Fury 47-31.

"We played well on Friday and Saturday," Perrin said. "But on Sunday we didn't play well. We just weren't ready."

Now 2-1-1 in preseason play, the Spirit is scheduled to host St. Mike's at the Stouffville Arena today at 7:30 p.m.

The Spirit wraps up preseason play Tuesday in Whitby and Perrin hopes to have some players back from OHL camps in his lineup.

The Spirit opens the regular season Sept. 12 at home to the Milton Icehawks.

NOTES: Dan McWhinney, who led the Spirit to its first OJHL final in 2006, took in the weekend games. The Sault Ste. Marie native is working at a goalie school in the GTA this week. The 28-year-old was traded by the Huntsville Havoc to the Mississippi RiverKings in an off-season move in the Southern Professional Hockey League ... Brayden Barton won the family grudge match Sunday The Oshawa minor midget was playing for Pickering, while his father, Brad, an assistant coach with the Spirit, was on the opposing bench. Brad played and coached with the Panthers, too. He had a seven-year pro career.



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