## Spirit hopes 'exciting' win sign of things to come

LAST WEEK: Sunday: Stouffville Spirit 4 vs. Georgetown Raiders 3. Spirit record: three wins, one shootout win, four losses, eight points. Fourth place in North Division, Ontario Junior Hockey League.

COMING UP: Today: vs. Oakville Blades at Stouffville Arena, 7:30 p.m. Friday at Whitby Fury, 7:40 p.m. Sunday at North York Rangers, 3 p.m.

GAME NOTES: When the Stouffville Spint were engaged in closely contested games last season they found a way to lose. They hope that has changed this year. Especially after the Spirit and Georgetown Raiders were involved in a game that went down to the wire before Stouffville prevailed 4-3 for their second straight win. Helping to preserve the victory was a save on a penalty shot attempt by former Raiders' netminder Daniel Mannella on John Adams with 47 seconds remaining in regulation time.

The Raiders drew first blood in the contest just prior to the midway point of the opening period on a goal by defenceman Steve Midensky before the Spirit countered with a beautiful goal from rookie Tyson Bruce on a breakaway and one from Joseph Deveny with 30 seconds remaining before intermission to take a 2-1 lead. After the Raiders scored the lone goal of the second period to tie the game from the stick of Adams. they regained the upper hand just over two



DANIEL MANNELLA: Spirit goalie beats former team, stops last-minute penalty shot Sunday at home.

minutes into the third period when Steve Hladin lit the red light. But just 38 seconds after Hladin's marker, the Spirit tied the game on a goal by rookie Nick Thomakos. Just prior to the midway point, the Spirit took advantage of a power-play opportunity when Michael Morgan scored the gamewinning marker. Both clubs directed 33 shots on net.

INSIDER: Former Spirit forward Christian Finch has left Clarkson University to be

closer to home and is attending the University of Toronto. Finch played with the Spirit for three seasons, concluding in 2011-12 where he was on the club's OJHL championship squad and led the league in sconng with 104 points, was a first-team all-star and the Canadian Junior Hockey League's Player of the Year. In his one and only season at Clarkson last year. Finch had five assists in 18 games.

On the injury front, Morgan, who made a key shot block late in Sunday's game, incurred a minor and is listed day to day. Forward Chad Burrows was nursing an undisclosed injury from Thursday's 8-1 win over Burlington and is also listed as day to day. Spirit head coach Jeff Perrin expects both to be back in the lineup for tonight's home game against the Oakville Blades.

in the league statistical category, Mannella has the seventh-best goals against average at 2.36 in six games. In the team department, the Spirit sport the fifth-best power play percentage at 22.03 per cent and are 11th in penalty killing at 82.05 per cent.

GENERALLY SPEAKING: "It was exciting to say the least. Everybody likes to be in those moments as long as they go your way," Mannella said in facing his former Raiders' teammate on the penalty shot attempt late in the contest. "At the moment the referee made the call I wasn't aware it was a penalty shot at first. But once I realized it

was I was focused on trying to get our club the win."

Having played with Adams for a part of last season, Mannella said he had an idea of what his rival might do on his penalty shot attempt.

"I wanted to play him aggressively. I knew he had good hands and might deke. He made the first move, I bit a bit but recovered."

Reflecting on the game, Perrin was glad to see his club come up with the two points.

"It wasn't our best game but we found a way to win," he said. "The second period wasn't too good. But once we got the lead we did a good job in keeping it. I thought in the last 10 minutes of the game we limited their scoring chances for the most part. But Daniel (Mannella) made the one save he had to make."

With the Spirit scheduled to play three games in four days, starting tonight when they host the Blades, Perrin feels this will be the first crucial test for his club.

"If we can win these games it will give usa chance to move up in the standings," he said. "But in this league there are no easy games. We'll see what they can do."

For more on the Spirit, log on to: www. stouffvillespirit.com or catch up on Twitter.

Michael Hayakawa

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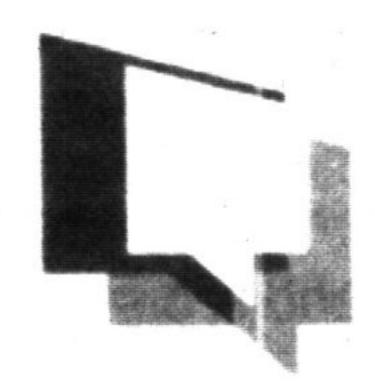
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