| | Stouffville Sun-Tribune | Thursday, September |

Flagging Spirit facing unbeaten OJHL teams

LAST WEEK: Tuesday: Toronto Lakeshore Patriots 5 vs. Stouffville Spirit 3. Saturday: Aurora Tigers 4 vs. Spirit 2. Friday: Pickering Panthers 4 vs. Spirit 3. Spirit record: 2-3, third place in North Division.

COMING UP: Friday: at Trenton Golden Hawks, 7:30 p.m. Saturday: vs. Kingston Voyageurs at Stouffville Arena, 7:30 p.m.

GAME NOTES: After getting off to a good start in their Ontario Junior Hockey League regular season by winning their first two games, the Stouffville Spirit are in a bit of a funk having lost their last three. The latest transpired Tuesday when they came out on the short end of a 5-3 decision at the hands of the defending league champion Toronto Patriots in Toronto.

Trailing 1-0 after the opening period, the Spirit battled back in the second stanza to outscore the Patriots 3-2 and tie the score entering the final 20 minutes. Tyson Bruce, Nick Thomakos and Nathan Hudgin accounted for the Spirit goals. But the Patriots' special teams took over in the third period when Nicholas Geiser scored a power play goal just past the midway point to give them the lead for good. With just over two minutes remaining in regulation time, the Spirit had a golden opportunity to tie the game when they went on the power play after Geiser was sent off for cross checking. Along with having the man advantage, the Spirit elected to pull starting goalkeeper Conor McCollum to give them a two-man advantage. Unfortunately for the Spirit, the move backfired as the Patriots' Marcus Rose deposited a shorthanded empty net goal to secure the win. The Spirit outshot the Patriots 34-24. In Saturday's homeopening loss to the Aurora Tigers, the Spirit trailed 1-0 after the opening period and 2-1 through two. Kyler Challis on the power play, and Thomakos accounted for the Spirit scoring.

INSIDER: After thinking they had a deal for forward Brodie Tutton during the offseason, the Spirit finally have the Pickering Panthers' leading scorer from last year

under lock and key. In obtaining Tutton, who made his debut for the Spirit in Tuesday's road game against the Lakeshore Patriots where he was inserted on a line with Bruce and Thomakos and collected one assist, the Spirit dealt forward Brandon Salerno, 19, to the Panthers. Playing with Waterloo Black Hawks in the United States Hockey League, Salerno was obtained by the Spirit from the North York Rangers in exchange for forward Mike Morgan last week. In another separate move, the Spirit dealt 20-year-old forward Graham Pickard to La Salle Junior B's of the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League for cash. Pickard joined the Spirit part way through last season and had seven goals and 11 assists in 25 games. The original trade sent Morgan and Pickard to Pickering for Tutton.

GENERALLY SPEAKING: "All night we took lazy, stupid penalties. Our feet weren't moving and it cost us. We got outworked and they got two power play goals and an empty-net goal. We couldn't capitalize on our man advantage situations, we had two five-on-three chances. That was the difference. It was frustrating," said Spirit head coach Jeff Perrin after Tuesday's outing.

If there were any positives, Perrin was pleased with having Tutton in the Spirit lineup.

"He will definitely help us. He's got experience and he's a physical player who can score. That's why we got him," he said.

As well, Perrin praised McCollum's play between the pipes and felt his work enabled the score to be closer than what it was.

Having rotated McCollum with fellow rookie Aaron Taylor in the early going, Perrin is undecided at this juncture who will start the next game on the road against the East Division-leading Trenton Golden Hawks Friday. The Golden Hawks currently sport a 3-0 mark. After Friday's game, the Spirit will play host to the Kingston Voyageurs Saturday at 7:30 p.m. The Voyageurs have a 2-0 record



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Newmarket defenceman Jordan Oshowy checks Stouffville's Justin Wain last Thursday.

and are in a three-way tie in second place in the East Division.

"There are no easy games," Perrin said.

In preparing for their upcoming tilts, Perrin said they will place an emphasis on their special teams play and defensive coverage during practice this week.

"We have to work on picking up guys on the back check and do things that we work on every day," he said. "It's a case of repetition."

-Michael Hayakawa



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