

Three games in three nights for red-hot Spirit

LAST WEEK: Saturday: Stouffville Spirit 7 vs. Hamilton Red Wings 4. Spirit record: 10-9-1-21, fourth place in North Division, Ontario Junior Hockey League.

COMING UP: Today vs. Toronto Lakeshore Patriots at Stouffville Arena, 7:30 p.m. Friday: at Lindsay Muskies, 7:30 p.m. Saturday vs. Toronto Jr. Canadiens at Stouffville Arena, 7:30 p.m.

GAME NOTES: It sure helps a team if they can set the tone in a game. The Stouffville Spirit did just that when they played host to the Hamilton Red Wings and skated off with their sixth win in the last seven outings, a 7-4 verdict Saturday.

With Alex Gilmour scoring just 17 seconds after the opening faceoff, the Spirit fed off of that momentum and got goals from Stouffville resident Joseph Deveny, the first of his three on the night, and Tyson Bruce just past the midway point of the opening period to take a 3-0 lead before Hamilton countered with a goal before the first intermission.

The Spirit power play went to work in the second period and accounted for the only scoring during that timeframe when team captain Matt Heffernan and

Deveny lit the red light to give Stouffville a commanding 5-1 advantage through 40 minutes. Both clubs exchanged goals in the final 20 minutes of regulation time with Gilmour, notching his second of the game, and Deveny, rounding out the hat trick, accounting for the Spirit's final tallies.

The Spirit directed 44 shots on Hamilton's net while rookie Stouffville netminder Conor McCollum stopped 29 of 33 shots. The Spirit is in fourth place in the North, four points back of the second-place Newmarket Hurricanes and three points up on the last-place Lindsay Muskies.

INSIDER: Entering Saturday's contest the Spirit roster was bolstered with the return of forwards James Mense-Dietrich and Nathan Hudgin.

Frank Robinson, Spirit director of player personnel, revealed the club signed forward Liam O'Dette. While no stranger to the Spirit after playing part of the season with them last year, O'Dette was sent to the Markham Waxers midgets after he was hampered by shoulder issues that required surgery in June. Practising with the Spirit for over a month and receiving medical clearance,

O'Dette is scheduled to make his return to the Spirit lineup in time for this weekend's game against the Toronto Junior Canadiens.

On a separate note, Robinson revealed he has been talking with rival teams as the club is getting ready for the first player card cut down on Dec. 1 where teams go from 35 player cards to 25. He cited the Spirit currently have 22 players rostered with room for one more.

Bruce will join Heffernan and Nick Thomakos at the 2014 Central Canada Cup Challenge in Toronto this weekend. Bruce was added as a late replacement, Spirit head coach Jeff Perrin said.

The Spirit presented jerseys and tuques to Luca Gennuso and his sisters, Sabrina and Lilliana, in their dressing before Saturday's game against Hamilton. The players have been collecting pledges for penalty kills this season with the money going to Luca, who is undergoing therapy after nearly drowning on Victoria Day.

Former Spirit netminder Daniel Mannella who toils with the Oakville Blades was named the Gongshow Gear Goaltender-of-the-Month for October after posting a spectacular 1.67 goals against average

in eight games played. Former Spirit forward Drake Caggiola had a productive weekend in helping the second-ranked University of North Dakota extend their unbeaten streak to eight games after recording one assist in a 4-3 road win over the University of Wisconsin Badgers Friday and one goal and one assist in a 5-1 win over the Badgers Saturday.

Former Spirit defenceman and Clarkson University captain Paul Geiger scored the game-winning marker in a 2-1 win over Brown Saturday. The Stouffville resident who is in his junior year netted the game-winning marker just past the midway mark of the second period. Geiger was also credited with an assist in the game's first goal.

GENERALLY SPEAKING: "Getting off to a quick start was key," Perrin said of Saturday's victory. "We made it 1-0 just 17 seconds in and we just kept going from there. It's a lot easier to play when you're ahead and that's what we're trying to do. I thought we played well for two periods. But the third was a little disappointing. That's the way it is when you have a big lead. Overall it was a good team effort. Everyone came to play."

In looking ahead to tonight's contest against the defending league champion Toronto Lakeshore Patriots, who occupy first place in the South Division and ride a three-game winning streak, Perrin said it will be a measuring stick.

"They're the defending champions. It will definitely be a challenge. Toronto has a good team and a good power play. We have to stay out of the penalty box," Perrin said.

The Spirit will have little time to dwell on that outing as they take to the road for a game against the Lindsay Muskies Friday and return to the Stouffville Arena to host the Toronto Junior Canadiens Saturday.

"There's nothing we can do about the schedule. We just have to be ready to play every day. If everyone plays well things will work out," Perrin said.

The absence of Thomakos, Bruce and Heffernan on the weekend will hurt.

"It's good for them," Perrin said of Heffernan, Thomakos and Bruce's inclusion to this event. "But it will be tough for us since they won't be in our lineup Friday and Saturday."

- Michael Hayakawa

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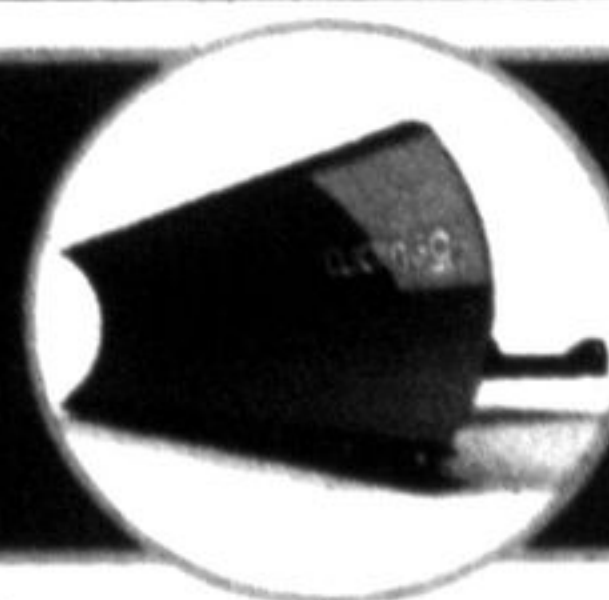
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