

Spirit wants to take home play on road

LAST WEEK: Saturday: Stouffville Spirit 4 vs Lindsay Muskies 2. Sunday: Toronto Junior Canadiens 5 vs. Spirit 4, O.T. Spirit record: 15-12-2-1-33, second place in North Division, Ontario Junior Hockey League.

COMING UP: Saturday vs. Pickering Panthers at Stouffville Arena, 7:30 p.m. Sunday at North York Rangers, 3 p.m.

GAME NOTES: The Stouffville Spirit have been taking care of business at the Stouffville Arena. What the Ontario Junior Hockey League club has to do now if they hope to remain in the upper echelon of the North Division standings is to find a way to do the same when they're on the road. In the club's last four road outings, including a 5-4 overtime loss to the Toronto Junior Canadiens Sunday, the Spirit have come close only to be denied a win.

In that contest, the Spirit dug themselves into a hole when Toronto got goals from former Stouffville defenceman Ryan Kruss on the power play and Justin Maiolino on their first four shots on rookie netminder Aaron Taylor just prior to the midway mark of the first period. But before the period concluded, the Spirit battled back to tie the game on goals by Chad Burrows and Brodie Tutton on the power play. The Spirit carried that late momentum into the second period and took the lead on a goal by Nathan Hudgin. But Toronto battled back to tie the game entering the second intermission on a goal by Anthony Repaci. The Spirit regained the upper hand just over three minutes into the third period on a goal by Colton Sansom. Toronto, however, countered with a goal by Sal Filice just past the midway mark to set the stage for overtime where Aaron Spivak deposited the game-winning marker at the 1:53-mark of the extra five-minute session. Salvaging one point from the contest, the Spirit outshot Toronto 31-27.

The Spirit entered the game on a positive note after they doubled the count on the visiting Lindsay Muskies 4-2 Saturday. Chad Burrows netted a pair of Spirit goals in the second period. Playing an instrumental role in the Spirit win was their special teams play in the opening period as defenceman Michael Giacometti opened the scoring with a power-play goal just under three minutes after the opening face-off. After the Muskies tied the game on a goal by Stuart Fierheller, the Spirit got a shorthanded goal from Joseph Deveny to regain the upper hand entering the first intermission. Burrows then gave the Spirit a 3-1 lead with a goal early in the second period and delivered his second of the game late in the stanza. The Muskies cut into the deficit just past the midway mark of the third period with a power play goal by James Allen but could get no closer. Defeating Lindsay for the second time in as many outings this season, the Spirit held a 41-39 edge in shots on goal.

INSIDER: Nick Thomakos continues to lead the Spirit in scoring with 12 goals and 20 assists in 28 games while Tutton is second with 12 goals and 17 assists and Deveny is third with 15 goals and 11 assists. Spencer Roberts was a scratch from Sunday's game and will miss one more due to an instigator penalty he incurred during the third period of Saturday's tilt against Lindsay.

Former Spirit forward Drake Caggiula Drake Caggiula's performance on the ice with the University of North Dakota men's hockey team during the month of November drew plenty of attention. Especially from those who select the National Collegiate Hockey Conference's Player of the Month as the former Stouffville Spirit forward was bestowed with that honour for November, the conference announced last week. Currently in his junior year at the University of North Dakota, the 20-year-old Caggiula led all National Collegiate Hockey Conference players in scoring in November. During that time frame, he



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Tyson Bruce of the Stouffville Spirit tries to cut between two Lindsay Muskies during the Spirit's 4-2 win at the Stouffville Arena Saturday. The Spirit hosts Pickering, coached by ex-NHLer Paul Coffey, this Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

reached the scoresheet in eight of nine November games and finished the month with six goals and seven assists.

Former Spirit defenceman Brennan Serville collected three assists in the University of Michigan's 8-3 pasting of The Ohio State University Buckeyes in Ann Arbor, Mich. Friday. Currently in his senior year and a draft pick of the Winnipeg Jets in the 2011 National Hockey League entry draft, the 21-year-old Serville has four assists in 10 games with the Wolverines.

Stouffville resident and former Spirit forward Chris Porter had one assist in American International College's 4-4 tie against host Canisius College in Buffalo Saturday. The junior forward and assistant captain is fourth in the club's scoring with one goal and nine helpers in 15 games. Former Spirit forward Matt Neal had one helper in each of Rensselaer Polytechnical Institute's weekend contests that results in a 5-2 road loss to Yale University Friday and a 4-2 setback against Brown University Saturday.

GENERALLY SPEAKING: "We played good enough to win," said Spirit head coach Jeff Perrin after Sunday's heartbreaking overtime loss. "But we got one point and to get three out of four on the weekend was good."

While pleased in the club's ability to bounce back from a two-goal deficit in the opening period from Sunday's tilt, Perrin said it's now a matter of finding a way to close out games when they are on the road.

"Maybe it's panic," he speculated of his club's inability to win the close games on the road. "Once we figure that out or win a couple of those games..."

"Right now we know we can get better and that's what we're striving for every day."

In looking ahead to their upcoming schedule that includes a home game against North Division rival Pickering Panthers Saturday, Perrin said it represents another big opportunity for his club to put add some breathing space between them and a team that's hoping to overtake them in the standings.

"We've got to keep them below us. It's a big game that would enable us to separate us from them."

Next will be a road game against the North York Rangers, a team they have not yet faced this season.

"They've been a hot and cold team, but they're quick and they work hard," Perrin said.

In recording his first two-goal game of the season, Burrows feels the club is definitely making inroads. To that, the third-year forward was quick to credit the chemistry that now encompasses the team.

"There's a lot more confidence this year; everyone gets along," said Burrows, as Taylor Swift's Shake It Off blasted from the dressing room after Saturday's win. "It's been a lot more fun."

"There aren't as many individual efforts as there were before."

- Michael Hayakawa with files from Jim Mason

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