

Stouffville Spirit goalie Kyle Pescador plays the puck during the first period of his team's 7-6 Labour Day loss to the Toronto Jr. Canadiens at the Stouffville Arena.



OJHL IMAGES/BRIAN WATTS

SPORTS

Spirit sends 2nd sniper to Markham

LAST WEEK: Monday: Toronto Junior Canadiens 7 vs. Stouffville Spirit 6. Spirit record: 0-1-0-0-0.

COMING UP: Friday vs. Markham Royals at Centennial Arena, 7 p.m. Saturday vs. Milton IceHawks at Stouffville Arena, 7:30 p.m.

If the Stouffville Spirit could replay parts of their Ontario Junior Hockey League regular season opening game against the visiting Toronto Junior Canadiens Monday, it would be the first half and one costly play in the third period. It was during that span when the Toronto Junior Canadiens took full advantage of what opportunities came their way and skated off with a 7-6 win over the Spirit. Toronto jumped out to a 4-1 lead after the opening 20 minutes and were up by as much as 6-1 just past the midway mark of the game. While the Spirit could easily have folded their tent, they battled back before the end of the second stanza, when Cameron Lintner and rookie forward Jack Varga scored within a nine-second span late in the period to cut their deficit to 6-3 entering the second intermission.

Receiving an infusion of energy from those two goals, the Spirit opened the scoring in the third period on a goal by Chris Brill-Morgan to trail 6-4. But Toronto scored what would be the game-winning goal when Andrew Pucci knocked in a rebound left by rookie netminder Kyle Pescador after he had made the initial save. The Spirit though, continued to battle back and with a two-man advantage, got a goal from James Mense-Dietrich to claw their way back to 7-5. With Pescador pulled for an extra attacker in the late going, the Spirit got a goal by team captain Spencer Roberts to get back to within a goal before regulation time expired. Rookie forward Jonathan Yaremko scored the first goal of the season for the Spirit early in the first period after Toronto took a quick 1-0 lead just 61 seconds after the opening face-off. Both clubs directed 32 shots on net.

INSIDER: The Spirit dealt forwards Nick Thomakos and Liam O'Dette to the Markham Royals for cash Tuesday. Thomakos, 18, was the club's second-leading scorer last year. Burrows had already traded another top scorer, Tyson Bruce, to Markham.

Yesterday, the Spirit dealt second-year forward Brock Trill to the Lindsay Muskies for cash.

With veteran goalkeepers Aaron Taylor and Conor McCollum on the injured list for an indefinite period, Spirit general manager Kenny Burrows hinted the funds might be used to acquire an experienced netminder.

The Spirit welcomed forward Zach Roberts to their roster after he was released from the Owen Sound Attack. A Stouffville resident and nephew of former NHL forward Gary Roberts and younger brother of Spirit captain Spencer Roberts, Zach was a fifth-round pick of Owen Sound in the 2015 Ontario Hockey League draft and saw duty in Monday's opener. Also scheduled to return to the Spirit is forward Kyle Thomas, who was released from the North Bay Battalion. Thomas was an eighth round selection.

Kris Hamlin, a forward obtained by the club in a recent trade with the Markham Royals along with forward Otis Goldman, has returned to Thunder Bay and is debating his hockey future. Hamlin was recently cut by the Mississauga Steelheads of the OHL. Should Hamlin elect to remain at home, Burrows said the club would get another player from the Royals as compensation.

Still at OHL camps is veteran defenceman Greg Allen, who is auditioning for a spot with the Oshawa Generals. Forward Alex Gilmour is still with the Des Moines Buccaneers of the United States Hockey League after being their 12th round pick in the league's draft.

GENERALLY SPEAKING: "I think we were a little nervous," said Spirit head coach Jeff Perrin on his club's slow start out of the gate. "And we weren't moving our feet. We were doing a bit of puck watching."

Acknowledging that Pescador was placed in a difficult situation with Taylor and McCollum on the sidelines battling injuries, Perrin felt he did as well as he could considering the circumstances.

"I'm certain though there were a couple of rebounds here and there that he would have wanted back. But it was a tough spot for him to be in," he said.

While disappointed with the loss, Perrin found some positive aspects which he hopes will carry over into Friday's game against the neighbouring Markham Royals, who relocated after being in Hamilton.

"The biggest thing was that we did not give up and we got better as the game went on, where we didn't give up many scoring chances. We made a game of it," he said.

Along with that, Perrin was pleased with the effort provided by some of the rookies.

"They all made their typical rookie mistakes, but they competed hard and they all have good speed," he said.

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