

When the Stouffville Spirit opened their main training camp, Ryan DaSilva had every intention of being a part of their roster for the upcoming Ontario Junior Hockey League season.

But those plans changed significantly when the veteran 18-year-old defenceman recently accepted an offer he could not refuse.

It's one that will see DaSilva take to the ice this season in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League as a member of the Drummondville Voltigeurs.

It's a big gain for Drummondville and at the same time, a big void on the Spirit blueline, after he was named to the OHA's Top Prospect First Team and to the OJHL's Second All-Star squad last season.

"It's definitely exciting," the Newmarket resident said from his new hockey residence in Drummondville Tuesday.

In making the decision to go to Drummondville, DaSilva acknowledged it was not easy. Especially since he had entertained thoughts of pursuing a U.S. collegiate scholarship while playing in the OJHL with the Spirit, who had acquired him early last season from the Orangeville Flyers.

Amassing 16 goals and 30 assists in 43 regular season games while in Stouffville, DaSilva noted Drummondville monitored his performance all last season and conducted ongoing discussions with him.

Prior to the start of this season, DaSilva said they extended an invitation for him to attend their training camp.

Being open to the idea of playing major

junior hockey, DaSilva discussed the pros and cons of going that route with his agent and family.

Through those talks, they felt it was OK to make the move.

"It's a different route, but it was one I felt I was ready to take," he said.

In making the move to a new team and a different province, DaSilva feels comfortable so far having played in two preseason games.

Saying the pace of the game is quicker than what he was accustomed to in the OJHL, DaSilva remained confident he can quickly adapt to the on-ice action.

Away from the ice, DaSilva's transition is made easier in billeting with forward Michael Carcone, who played in Stouffville in 2013-14. The Ajax resident signed a three-year contract with the Vancouver Canucks in July.

As well, with French being the primary language spoken around town, DaSilva is comfortable in the language, having attended a French immersion public school in Aurora.

While his original intentions were to return with the Spirit, DaSilva had nothing but kind words to say about his time in Stouffville and was quick to credit the team with helping him progress up the hockey ladder.

"I was happy with being in Stouffville and with the opportunity they gave me. It was a good development for me. I couldn't be happier playing in the Ontario Junior Hockey League," he said.

- Michael Hayakawa

BY MICHAEL HAYAKAWA
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If the world were perfect, Stouffville Spirit head coach Jeff Perrin would have the players he wants on his Ontario Junior Hockey League roster for the final three preseason games, to gain some cohesiveness in preparation for the start of the regular season.

But with the Labour Day weekend approaching, he accepts the notion his ideal plans have to be placed on the backburner.

With Ontario Hockey League clubs opening their training camps this week, some players expected to be on the Spirit roster who were drafted by OHL clubs will go for a skate with their respective teams.

Perrin cited seven or eight players will be attending OHL camps when the Spirit play their final preseason games, starting Thursday when they host the Toronto Patriots at the Stouffville Arena at 7:30 p.m.

The Spirit will then play their final two preseason tilts on the road starting with the Lindsay Muskies Friday at 7:30 p.m. and Cobourg Cougars Monday at 2 p.m.

PROSPECTS AT OHL CAMPS

"It is what it is," Perrin said in accepting the fact the Spirit and other OJHL clubs will be minus a few veteran bodies for a short period of time or possibly longer – if the OHL clubs sign any of those prospects.

With close to 35 players on hand at the start of main training camp, the Spirit roster came closer to being finalized when 12 players were designated as affiliates Tuesday.

"Basically we have our team picked," he said. "But with seven to eight extra players who are at OHL

camps, we need some extra players for our remaining exhibition games."

While Perrin anticipates most of those players at OHL camps will return before the Spirit commence their regular season against Pickering Panthers at the Stouffville Arena Sept. 10, he felt one or two players could remain behind.

TWO TO DRUMMONDVILLE?

Among those is forward Thomas Tinmouth, a fourth-round pick of the Ottawa 67s in this year's OHL priority selection.

"Tinmouth has a chance, but we know some U.S. schools are interested in him," Perrin said. "Hopefully by the end of the week though, we will have those players back. But you never know."

Despite suffering their first loss of the preseason in a 4-2 road decision against the St. Michael's Buzzers Friday, Perrin said training camp has been good.

Pleased with the level of competitiveness throughout camp, Perrin said the club could still use a defenceman to go with five possible returnees.

Especially one with experience, after they lost veteran Ryan DaSilva, who signed a contract with Drummondville Voltigeurs of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League last weekend.

"It's a big loss for us," lamented Perrin in losing DaSilva. "But that is what our league is about in developing players for the next level."

Also expected to sign with Drummondville later this week is forward Nathan Hudgin who was slated to play for the University of Toronto.

On the injury front, Perrin said forward Jackson Savery incurred a hand injury and could be out for a couple of weeks.



By Sam Potter

IF YOU suffer from low back pain and sciatica, you are one of over 10 million adults in Canada with this often crippling spinal condition.

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