

# Spirit guaranteed better start to this season

**LAST WEEK:** Saturday: Spirit 5 vs. Pickering Panthers 4 (overtime). Spirit record: 1-0-0-0-2.

**COMING UP:** Thursday: vs. St. Michaels Buzzers at Stouffville Arena, 7:30 p.m. Saturday: Aurora Tigers at Stouffville Spirit, 7:30 p.m.

At least one thing is for certain with the Stouffville

Spirit as they embarked on their 2016-17 Ontario Junior Hockey League regular season Saturday.

It's one that was positive and hopefully bodes well for their future this season as they launched it on a winning note with a hard-fought 5-4 overtime win over the Pickering Panthers at the Stouffville Arena.

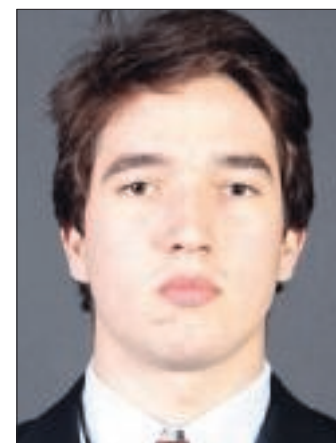
It also assured the Spirit they won't endure a repeat of what transpired last season when they failed to record a win in their first 10 outings.

Rookie forward James Waldron gave the Spirit the two points with a goal at 3:24 of overtime. Brody Jennings, Kyle Thomas, Joseph Teofilo and Max Novick each added single tallies for Stouffville, who battled Pickering to a 1-1 tie after 20 minutes and 3-3 through two, before each club exchanged goals in the third period to force overtime. Josh Argier, Cameron Lintner and Connor Evans each earned two assists for the Spirit. Stouffville directed 29 shots on goal while veteran Spirit netminder Aaron Thomas handled 21 of 25 shots to help preserve the win.

**INSIDER:** Prior to Saturday's contest the Spirit acquired forward Joseph Visconti from the Toronto Patriots in a cash deal. A Markham native who played last season with the Victoria Grizzlies of the British Columbia Hockey League, Visconti, 19, played with the Spirit during the preseason before a deal was reached between the two clubs. Spirit co-owner and general manager Kenny Burrows said he's still trying to acquire a defenceman. On the injury front, Spirit head coach Jeff Perrin said forward Jackson Savery might be back in the lineup for Thursday's game against the St. Michael's Buzzers. Heading into Thursday's tilt, Perrin added the club incurred no further injuries during Saturday's opening night win.

**GENERALLY SPEAKING:** "It certainly was a better start than last year," an elated Perrin said.

In analyzing his club's performance, the veteran Spirit head coach felt the key was his club's resolve. Especially when Pickering battled back early in the third



**KYLE THOMAS:** Second-year forward scores to help Stouffville Spirit win season opener at home.

period to tie the game and force the extra five minutes of overtime.

"We kept competing and we never gave up," he said. "The guys found a way to win."

"In the overtime there was no panic. We just went out and got the extra point."

Refusing to hand out any individual kudos to any of his players, Perrin was quick to praise his entire team.

"It was a team effort. Everyone played well," he said.

- Michael Hayakawa

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