

Markham Royals' Brett Ouderkirk takes a tumble beside Stouffville Spirit goalie Aaron Taylor in the first period of the teams' Ontario Junior A Hockey League game Friday at Markham Centennial Arena. Markham won 3-2.

Susie Kockerscheidt/Metroland

Spirited turnaround for Stouffville

BY MICHAEL HAYAKAWA
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When the puck was dropped to start the Ontario Junior Hockey League season, the Stouffville Spirit were hoping history would not have a way of repeating in which they went winless in their first 10 games last year.

Through the first nine games this season, it certainly hasn't.

In fact, the Spirit have done a complete about face in which they have won seven games and lost just twice.

The latest of which saw the Spirit rebound from a 3-2 road loss to the Markham Royals Friday to defeat the host Aurora Tigers 4-1 Sunday.

For their early season success, the Spirit occupy top spot in the North Division.

"To be honest no one expected it to be like it is now," conceded veteran Spirit goalie and Gormley resident Aaron Taylor on their positive start. "You go into a season hoping we don't have the same thing happen like last year. You want to win games."

In explaining the club's early-season success, Taylor attributed it to the chemistry of this year's roster and a bit of Lady Luck.

"We have a core group of guys back and we didn't want the same start as last year," he said. "Right now, everyone has been going with the flow and we've been getting the bounces."

Also acknowledging his club has exceeded his early season expectations, Spirit head coach Jeff Perrin detects a good vibe with this year's group of players on and off the ice.

"There's something about this team that there's a good feeling about it," he cited. "The guys are finding ways to win and they've been competing hard."

While satisfied with the progression of his club so far, Perrin warned his players cannot afford to get overconfident.

Especially since their next two tilts will be against the Wellington

Dukes, a team that has won nine of their first 10 games and share top spot in the East Division with the Trenton Golden Hawks, at the Stouffville Arena Thursday before a rematch against second-place Markham at the Stouffville Arena Saturday.

Both games with a puck drop at 7:30 p.m.

"Our next two games will be tough and it might indicate where we're at. Hopefully we can build on what success we've had so far. But we can't let it get to our heads," he cautioned.

In their win over Aurora, the Spirit received power play goals from Connor Evans, Joseph Visconti and Kyle Thomas and one even strength from Joseph Teofilo.

Rookie netminder Hunter Jones handled 34 of 35 Aurora shots while the Spirit directed 39 on net.

The Spirit played Sunday's game without the services of rookie forward Beau Binnie, who incurred an upper body injury against Markham.

Perrin said Binnie is expected to be back in action for their game against Wellington.

The Spirit also named Cameron Lintner as their captain for this season while Max Novick, Alex Williamson and Jack Varga will serve as assistants.

Spring Lakes Golf Club opens fairways to high school team

BY MICHAEL HAYAKAWA
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Private golf facilities are generally focused on catering to its membership.

While Spring Lakes Golf Club adheres to that, it is also placing an emphasis on reaching out into the Whitchurch-Stouffville community.

With a change in the club's management earlier this year and intent on re-branding its image, the 54-hole private golf course began its outreach initiative by welcoming the Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans senior and junior boys' golf teams Tuesday.

After head pro Shayne Dysart provided a clinic to nine budding student athletes at the practice facility, the players proceeded to the fairways to play a round in preparation for the York Region Athletic Association's fall season.

"It's about how we can create a community outreach approach," he said. "What we want to do for starters is to develop a relationship with the high school."

"It's all about participation and how we can support the school and help to make it better for the students."

With the Spartan golf team members taking to the Spring Lakes Golf Club fairways for the first time, each was appreciative of the opportunity provided.

Along with that, they were quite impressed with the course layout.

"It's good...really nice," said Adam Bain, a 16-year-old Grade 11 student and member of the senior team. "I like how open it is and I can rip it."

While welcoming the Spartans' golf team was a start to what management feels will be a good relationship with the local high school,

Dysart said there exists a number of other golf-related opportunities the course can provide to their students.

Among the avenues Dysart hopes to create are through potential work-based school programs at the course through the food and beverage department and grounds-keeping crew.

The course is also exploring the possibility of conducting physical education classes where it could provide its practice facility if golf was offered as a part of the curriculum.

"It's about how we can be good corporate citizens with the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville," Dysart said. "We would like to show the students what a great place Spring Lakes Golf Club can be for them to come and it's close to the school too."

Lisa DeVos, Spartans' golf coach and head of the school's Personalized Alternative Education program, was appreciative of the opportunity Spring Lakes provided the team and school when Dysart made initial contact with them just days after the start of another academic year to bring up several intriguing proposals.

"It's such an amazing gift that Shayne (Dysart) has offered and it's appreciated."

"It's opened a door and Shayne wants to help build a program for the school. It's definitely nice to have someone to help out," she said.

Upon conclusion of the team trials, Dysart felt the initial contact with the school was a success.

"The kids were awesome," he said. "I just tried to talk to them during the clinic about some basic things but we wanted to make sure they had a good time."

"It's all about participation."

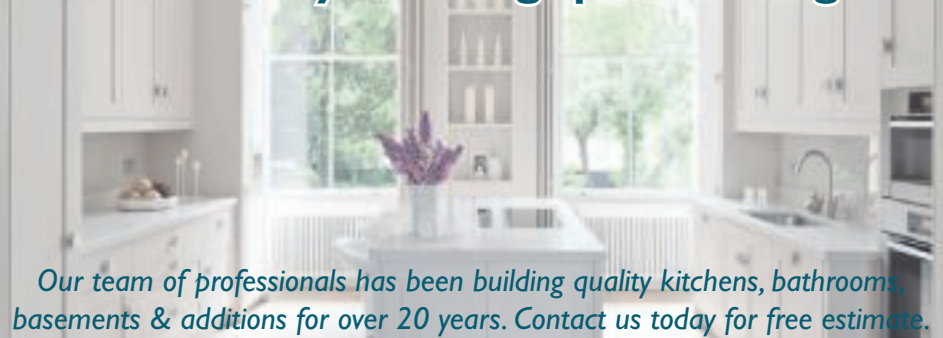
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