

Battle of York, Pink in the Rink to benefit Southlake cancer unit



By Jake Courtepatte

It's a rivalry that burns deep, but the Aurora Tigers and Newmarket Hurricanes are putting it aside for one night to come together for a righteous cause.

Next Thursday's 'Battle of York', the name befitting games between the two Yonge Street rivals, marks the annual benefit in honour of three young men who left their impression on junior hockey.

All proceeds from the game will go to the cancer care unit at Southlake Regional Health Centre, with prizes up for grabs and a live silent auction during the game at the Ray Twinney Complex in Newmarket. A special guest appearance by Rick and Cindy from 'Storage Wars Canada' will have them on hand for autograph signing, as well as the ceremonial puck drop.

The Hurricanes have been honouring the name of past player, Kevin Lord, during the game since 2006, when he lost a year-long battle with brain cancer. Lord was voted Hurricanes most popular player in the 2003-04 season. He played the previous season with the Stouffville Spirit, also in the OJHL. Lord played 36 games with the Hurricanes in 2003-04 and 2004-05. He began the 2004-05 season with the Hurricanes before being diagnosed with his illness in Jan. 2005. His number 16 was retired after he passed away in Apr. 2006 by the Hurricanes and is proudly displayed in the Ray Twinney Complex.

A year and a half later, tragedy struck the organization and the community once again, when Canes veteran K.J. Ramolla was killed in a car accident on the way home from the family cottage. With his number 19 retired by the Canes later that season, Ramolla's parents, Karl and Sonia, have been attending the charity game ever since.

'It's nice to have people come out and remember,' said Karl, who admitted to it being a tough time of the year. 'It shows people care, and our hockey family is a very big family.'

Ramolla, who began his junior hockey career with the Couchiching Terriers in 2003, spent two seasons with Newmarket and was a draftee of the OHL's Kingston Frontenacs.

He was set to become the Hurricanes captain the following season.

'All these guys were kids that K. J. played with for his whole life,' said Karl. 'They're pretty emotional about it and they miss him, it's not only us. We lost a great human being, and I didn't know how good until after he was gone.'

Shortly after his passing, the community was hit again with the passing of 14-year old Josh Sedore.

Though never a player, Sedore's impact in junior hockey was felt off the ice. He was described as the "heart and soul" of the Georgina Ice, the Junior C affiliate of the Hurricanes.

Sedore had just finished grade 8 when he lost his battle to muscular dystrophy. His father, Steve, has worked as the assistant coach of the Hurricanes.

All three families will be present for the game on January 21, set for a puck drop of 7.30 p.m. Adult tickets are on sale for \$10, students for \$6, and children ten and under for \$4.

The game will be the second-last meeting of the year between the rival squads, and the last played at the Twinney between the two teams this season. The Canes visit the Aurora Community Centre in mid-February.

For tickets, visit www.newmarkethurricanes.com.