

NFL

Lindell perfect as Bills fail

by MATT KRUEGER
Reporter

Kicker Rian Lindell had delivered as reliably as Santa Claus Sunday, but the sure-footed kicker still thought he might not have made a game-winning, 45-yard field goal into strong winds in crunch time.

After booting field goals of 21, 36, 45, 21 and 24 yards, Lindell tied his career best with five in one game. But that potential sixth

try would have taken a Christmas miracle.

Trailing the Tennessee Titans, 30-29, with 57 seconds remaining, the Bills faced a fourth-and-5 situation on the Tennessee 28-yard line. Coach Dick Jauron had two choices. Option A was have Lindell try the game-winning field goal into gusting wind from outside the kicker's comfort zone. Jauron went with option B, have quarterback J.P. Losman try to pull out some more fourth-quar-

ter magic, like he had done in previous weeks.

Losman pulled no rabbit out of his hat. Instead he tossed up a desperation heave to the Tennessee 2-yard line that fell into the waiting hands of Tennessee's Reynaldo Hill. Game and season over.

Kicking into the gusting, swirling wind, Lindell would have had to best Tennessee's Rob Bironas, who booted a 42-yarder going the same direction in the

second quarter.

"It would have been really difficult," Lindell said. "He made it from 42 and that barely squeaked over the bar and he's got a pretty big leg. It just hangs up there. If the wind dies down and you get it straight, then you have a shot. But if the wind picks up, I don't care who you are, it's just not going to go."

"You want to have all the confidence in the world, but you've got to be real about it. I'll be honest, I doubt I would have made it."

The loss dropped Buffalo to 7-8 for the season and eliminated the Bills from the AFC playoff race. A win would have bought them another week.

Before the game, Lindell and Jauron decided they wouldn't try kicking into the wind from outside 42 yards. That meant the Bills had to get the ball to the Tennessee 25-yard line for Lindell to even be an option.

After that last drive stalled inside Tennessee territory and the Bills had no timeouts to use, Jauron took a quick look at Lindell, before sending in Losman and the offense. Jauron said he saw enough in Lindell's eyes to know a kick was too risky.

"He looked at me and I kind of shrugged," Lindell said. "I'd probably make two out of 10. So, it was like, I don't want to go into a whole math problem with it. It's got to be a quick decision, so I didn't really say anything. You



Buffalo kicker Rian Lindell was a perfect 5-for-5 in field goals Sunday, but it wasn't enough to propel the Bills past the Tennessee Titans.

Photo by Patrick McPartland

Hilliker earns postseason honor

Colleen Hilliker, a sophomore forward for the Monroe Community College women's soccer team, was recently named a 2006 First Team All-American by the National Junior College Athletic Association.

Hilliker a Williamsville resident, Williamsville South High School graduate, finished the season with 11 goals and four assists for the Tribunes, who went 19-0-3 and finished third at the NJCAA Division I national tournament. She was named the Region III Player of the Year and was also an All-Northeast Region selection by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America.

Hilliker wrapped up her MCC career with 20 goals and 12 assists over two years. The Tribunes went 39-2-4 over that span, claiming a national championship in 2005. Colleen's sister, Court-



Colleen Hilliker

ney, also played for the 2006 Tribunes.

A freshman midfielder, Courtney registered three assists on the year.

Fireman's Bowling

Team	Wins	Lost
North Bailey	65.5	39.5
Harris Hill	65	40
Elliott Creek	61	44
Swormville	55	50
Main-Transit B	54	51
Main-Transit A	54	51
East Amherst	52.5	52.5
Main-Transit C	51	54
Getzville	48	57
Snyder	47	58
North Amherst	41	64
Eggertsville	36	69

200 Games/550 Sets

B. Stachowiak 246, 240, 237 — 723; AJ Shisler 249, 224, 213 — 686; M. Gaiser 248, 234 — 680; A. Yambor 245, 233 — 675; J. Gesel 244 — 612; M. Gravelle 226, 204 — 615; D. Hutchinson 256 — 599; B. McGinley 240 — 567; N. Frase 233 — 570; D. Henning 224 — 592; W. Loomis 220; J. Maine 220; R. Cumpston 218, 203 — 571; M. Spoth 216; M. Bandelian 215 — 554; C. Stephan 215 — 576; J. Rusin 222, 212 — 594; M. Premielewski 214; M. Stafford 213 — 596; A. Sorrenson 213 — 561; B. Crossley 213; S. Saxer 213 — 558; M. Lytle 210; R. Eggeston 206 — 584; S. Stroh 205 — 561; J. Saxer 204 — 584; Secret Score Winner — Jim Burandt, 173.

Boxing

Mesi's next fight a precursor?

by MATT KRUEGER
Reporter

When Town of Tonawanda heavyweight "Baby" Joe Mesi steps back into the ring Feb. 22 at the Mountaineer Race Track, Casino and Resort in Chester, West Virginia, it could be a setup for an even bigger fight down the road.

Mesi will co-headline the event with a 10-round bout against an undetermined opponent. In the other co-main event, former two-time world heavyweight champion Hasim Rahman will face an undetermined opponent. The card will air nationally on the cable channel Versus.

"This is heading toward a Mesi-Rahman fight," Mesi's manager and father Jack Mesi said in a phone interview. "Both of them want that to happen."

The Mesi-Rahman showdown is one that has been talked about for several years. When Mesi became a top-10 fighter in 2003, Rahman began telling everyone he wanted to fight Mesi and would come to Buffalo to do it. The fight would generate plenty of interest in Western New York if Mesi receives a

license from the New York State Athletic Commission. Mesi is from Buffalo and Rahman trains out of Rochester.

The two fighters also have a history together. Mesi defeated Rahman as an amateur.

This will be the fifth fight for Mesi (33-0, 26 knockouts) since the Sweet Home High School graduate made his comeback from a two-year medical suspension earlier this year. This is also the first time Mesi will fight a 10-round bout since getting injured in his unanimous-decision win over Vassily Jirov in 2004.

"This is going to make a big story for us," Jack Mesi said. "This will show people we're on our way back to the top."

Rahman (41-6-2, 33 knockouts) lost the WBC heavyweight title to Oleg Maskaev in his last fight on Aug. 12. He was given the title after he won the interim championship with a 12-round unanimous decision over Monte Barrett last year and titleholder Vitali Klitschko retired due to injuries.

e-mail: mkrueger@beenews.com



GET A GRIP — Williamsville South senior Logan Struebing headlocks Cheektowaga Central junior Adam Piscitello during a 160-pound match on Dec. 15 at Cheektowaga. Cheektowaga won 63-9. Photo by John Rusac

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