

## Registration for Mel Ott coming

Registration for Mel Ott Little League Baseball and Softball will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 27 at Outback Steakhouse, 1551 Niagara Falls Blvd., Buffalo and from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 1 at Dick's Sporting Goods, 281 Meyer Road, Amherst. For more information, visit [melottlittleleague.org](http://melottlittleleague.org).

# North hockey ties St. Joe's for Cavagnaro

by PATRICK J. NAGY  
Reporter

John Cavagnaro would have liked how Williamsville North finished against its heated rival.

Tom Goehrig scored with 27 seconds left to lift North to a 4-4 tie with St. Joe's in a key Division I Section VI Western New York Varsity Hockey Federation game last Thursday before an estimated crowd of 1,500 at the Amherst Pepsi Center's Feature Rink.

Cavagnaro, North's all-time leading scorer for defensemen who was on two winning state title and another two Federation championship teams, died in his sleep on Jan. 13 and was buried last Thursday morning. North cancelled its game with Kenmore West the day of his death but coach Bob Rosen, who coached the Amherst Bantam Minor "AAA" with Cavagnaro, was unsure how his team would react against St. Joe's.

"(Tying) meant a lot," said Rosen after the game. "It was a tough week emotion wise. On Saturday when we cancelled the game, there must have been 45 to 50 kids at the house. We talked about the game at Troy LeSalle when he was injured and we had three defensemen on the trip. He never came off the ice in the third period. He scored the tying goal, limped down and scored the game-winner in overtime. Tonight was one of those nights. It was a John Cavagnaro night for us. We weren't pretty, he was never pretty, but somehow, we found a way to tie."

"I don't think anyone should have had to experience what we experienced today," said Ryan Geary, one of 12 seniors who



Williamsville North's James VonHendy battles with St. Joe's Ryan White for control of the puck in a Section VI Western New York Varsity Hockey Federation Division I game last Thursday on the Amherst Pepsi Center Feature Rink. The teams skated to a 4-4 tie.

Photo by Patrick McPartland  
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played on the same North teams with Cavagnaro. "For us to come out as a team and tie it up at the end was amazing. Honestly, I think John gave us some help. Even if he didn't do it himself, he instilled it inside of us. It was all heart. We never gave up."

North pulled goalie Branden Komm with under a minute to play in regulation to set up the Spartans' late heroics. Jake Newton slapped a shot from the point which bounced behind the boards of St. Joe's goalie Erik Hartrich and Goehrig stuffed it in the left side of the net. Pat Mulvihill also earned an assist on the play.

"After they scored their fourth goal, I went over to Komm and I promised we would tie it up," said Goehrig. "Luckily we got the bounce and were able to finish... Today brought everyone so close. We were doing everything we could for each other."

"We have to make the simple plays and in the last minute, we didn't make them," said St. Joe's coach Pete Schneider.

North had leads of 1-0 and 2-1 before St. Joe's captain Ronnie Femia tied it up with 1:09 left in the second period from Kris Raepple (goal, two assists) and Marc Benzino. Femia finished

with a hat trick.

St. Joe's could have put in two or three more goals in the second had it not been for the outstanding goaltending of Komm. The junior stopped 13 shots in the second, including 3-on-none and 4-on-1 breakaways on a St. Joe's two-man advantage late in the period. St. Joe's outshot North, 15-6, in the second and 34-25 overall.

"Branden played excellent," said Schneider. "The second period was the key. If we score on one of those plays, the game is over."

Fronczak, Geary and John Walter also scored for the Spartans. Nick Angelo had two assists. An-

drew Saint, Kyle Agius, Newton and Fronczak had one assist each.

Defenseman Bob Schreck had two assists for St. Joe's. In a pre-game ceremony, Schreck gave Cavagnaro's father, Tom, a gift on behalf of St. Joe's while the Amherst Bantam "AAA" and Casey Middle School hockey teams that Cavagnaro coached were at center ice.

Whatever the scoreboard read, this game was all about remembering Cavagnaro.

"I was always good friends with him," said Geary. "I'll miss him the most at the rink and his face."

"John was our captain, teammate, brother, son and friend to all," added North Athletics Director Steve Ferenczy. "He will always be remembered for the love for his family, friends, teammates, and hockey."

Whether it was the emotion from Thursday or because Canisius always plays North tough but the Spartans could not bury many chances in a 1-1 tie with the Crusaders on the Feature Rink Saturday.

North outshot Canisius, 31-16, and only Saint could beat Andy Olson. Saint scored a first period power-play goal from Newton.

Canisius' Brian Wurster tied it 1-1 unassisted later in the period. Komm made 15 saves.

The tie also blew a perfect opportunity for the Spartans to clinch the top seed from Section VI for the Division I playoffs. North (15-1-2, 7-1-2) has to either beat Lancaster, who they face at 7 p.m. Thursday on the Olympic Rink, or Kenmore West at a later time and date yet to be determined, to qualify.

e-mail: [pnagy@beenews.com](mailto:pnagy@beenews.com)

# Sweet Home defeats rival to advance into first regional

by PATRICK J. NAGY  
Reporter

Dave Gerspach has seen the very lows of Sweet Home hockey in his five years as head coach and after last Thursday, the highs.

Sweet Home defeated Williamsville East, 3-2, on the Amherst Pepsi Center's Feature Rink, to advance to a Division II regional game for the first time in school history. Sweet Home will play a Section IX team at 7:45 p.m., Saturday, March 3, at the Pepsi Center.

"It's an unbelievable feeling," said Gerspach. "Everything I've gone through with this program over the last five years - one win, three wins, losing by ten or 20 goals, and to say 'hey, we're the only undefeated team in the Fed, we swept through our division and are going to states', is great."

"I never thought this would ever happen," added junior Ryan Marko, who scored two goals. "My freshman year, we were lucky to win two games."

In 2002-03, Sweet Home went 0-23-1. They were 3-21-1 in 03-04, 10-15-1 in 04-05, and 16-8-2 in 05-06. The program's first year was in 1998-99.

Sweet Home, like in almost every game this season, was led by Marko. He opened the scoring with a short-handed goal with 10 seconds left in the first period. Marko stole the puck from an East defenseman who was pinching and beat East goalie Jay Hall (22 saves) in the five-hole. The goal was Marko's 100th point of his career and the fourth straight game he scored short-handed.

"I saw the puck get passed and I put my head down and went as fast as I could to get to it," said Marko. "I wasn't thinking about 100 career points, I was thinking goal."

Marko added the game-winning goal from linemate Alex Esposito with 2:51 remaining in the third. It was the same exact play that won the Panthers' earlier meeting this season over the Flames, 4-2.

"He saw me over his shoulder and knew I was going to be there,"

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Sweet Home's Ryan Marko splits three Williamsville East defenders during the Panthers' 3-2 win last Thursday on the Amherst Pepsi Center Feature Rink. Marko scored two goals to pick up his 100th and 101st career points. The win also qualified Sweet Home for the Division II New York State regionals.

Photo by Patrick McPartland  
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