

## NHL

# Sabres shoved into new roles

by MATT KRUEGER  
Reporter

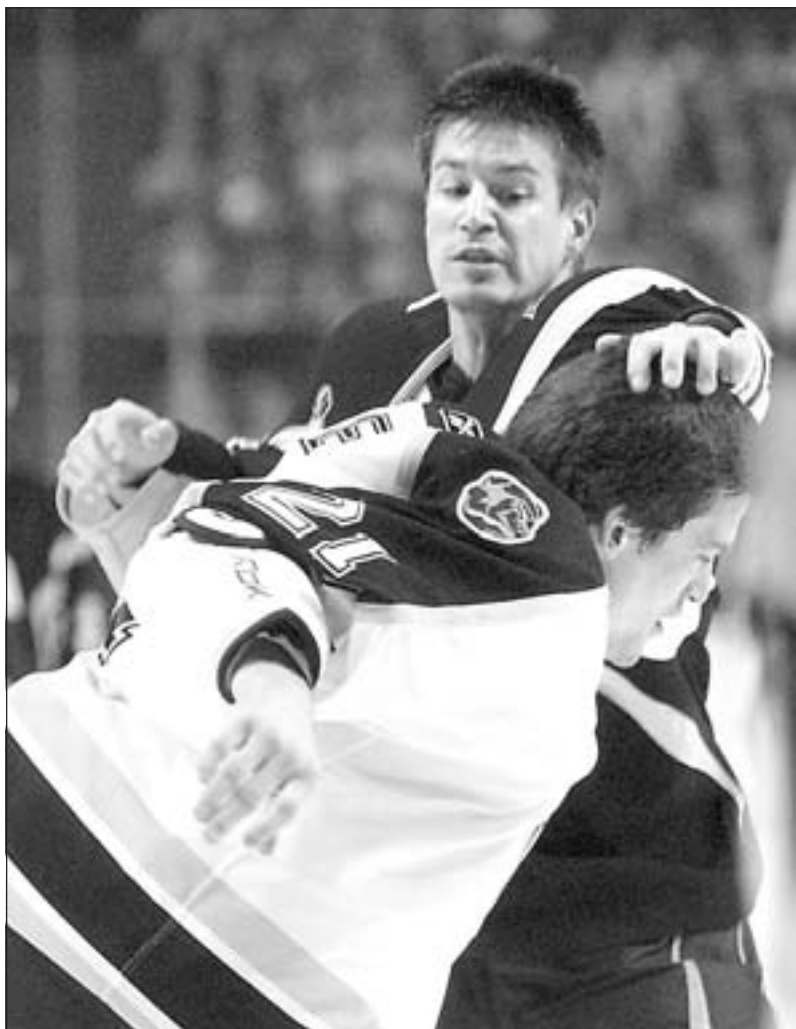
With all of the injuries the Sabres have suffered lately, you're left to wonder if the team made a deal with the devil for last year's Eastern Conference finals appearance and is now feeling the aftereffects. Maybe Lucifer is cashing in his policy with each broken bone and torn tendon.

Whatever the reason, be it bad luck, or whatever the opposite of divine intervention is, the Sabres are in trouble.

The emptiness left by Tim Connolly, Maxim Afinogenov, Paul Gaustad, Ales Kotalik, Jaroslav Spacek and Jiri Novotny, opens the door for other Eastern Conference teams to close the gap the Sabres have built for themselves. That is, of course, unless everyone else on the roster pulls a little more weight and the call-ups from Rochester, like Nathan Paetsch, Daniel Paille, Drew Stafford and Clarke MacArthur, can make a quick transition from AHL to NHL.

Stafford (power-play goal) and MacArthur played well in Saturday's 4-3, shootout loss to Boston Saturday, while Paetsch and Paille continued the strong play they began when being called up earlier.

"It's tough," coach Lindy Ruff said after Saturday's game, in which Kotalik went down with a knee injury. "I thought both of the young guys handled the game fine. We battled hard to get back in it. I like that part. We came back from two goals down, and we had some opportunities to win it. We battled hard to kill off those



Buffalo Sabres center Jochen Hecht prepares to unload on Boston Bruins defenseman Andrew Ference during a first-period fight in this past Saturday's game at HSBC Arena.

Photo by Patrick McPartland

late penalties and put us into a situation to try to win the game. But you're looking at six guys that are out of the lineup. That's a sizeable amount."

Connolly hasn't been as big a concern as the others, since he has barely played in the past two

seasons. The Sabres were hoping to get him back in March, but a leg injury has postponed his return from concussion problems.

Afinogenov was on pace to set a new career high in points this year and has been one of the key components in the offense.

Afinogenov, Derek Roy and Thomas Vanek have proven to be one of the top lines in the league and have boosted the Sabres to the highest goal total in the league.

Kotalik has been a shootout thriller for the Sabres, using his patented backhand wrist shot to score five goals on shootouts in seven tries. In fact, the Sabres could have used him Saturday. Had he been healthy, Kotalik would have joined Daniel Briere and Vanek in the shootout, instead of Stafford.

"If he doesn't come back, that's another guy that's a big part of the team," winger Jason Pominville said. "And somebody else will have to step in and do a good job."

"He's been good in the shootouts. He seems to have his pattern move that he does. Obviously, we would have liked to have it (Saturday)."

Losing Novotny also hurts the offense, while Spacek leaves a hole on the defense.

With Gaustad out for the season, the Sabres are in dire need of some more physical play along the boards. That absence of someone to bang against opposing defenders and dig out the puck means the others on the team are going to have to be more physical and be willing to throw around their weight. And some of them already have.

Just take a look at Jochen Hecht. The German winger hasn't gotten into a fight since a preseason scrap with Tampa's Andre Deveaux in September 2005, but he was more than willing to throw down with Boston's Andrew Ference Saturday after getting

slashed in front of the net. And that was when the Sabres were on the power play.

"I got speared in front of the net, so that kind of got me going a little bit, got me a little (angry)," Hecht said. "He said let's go, so I dropped the gloves."

"We stick up for one another and we've got some guys who can scrap and are tough. If somebody gets in trouble, there's another guy there to help him out. Now with Goose up, some other guys have to step up and step into his role a little bit. That's going to happen once in a while."

The message that fight sent to the other players that some of the more goal-oriented offense men might have to get down and dirty came through loud and clear on the bench.

"You think somebody must have done something to him," Pominville said. "He doesn't fight for no reason. He's a tough guy though. He stayed in there and did well and kind of got the other guys going."

As the Sabres prepare for the rest of the season and look to hold onto their top position in the Eastern Conference with an even younger team than the one that started the year, they all know how much more it is going to take.

"We have to be physical as a team," Pominville said. "I think overall we did a pretty good job at that. It's a team effort and guys are stepping in. Clarke and Drew came in and did a great job. Hopefully, we can keep those guys and keep it going."

e-mail: mkrueger@beenews.com

## South preparing for indoor track sectionals

by PATRICK J. NAGY  
Reporter

Williamsville South indoor track coach Sam Hasan has high hopes for his girls' team at Saturday's Section VI Championships at Fredonia State College, and why shouldn't he?

Six Lady Billies are ranked in the top ten in events and half are freshmen — Allie Van Buren (second in hurdles, fifth in 300), Jenny Mooney (eighth in racewalk),

Amanda Breyemeier (ninth in 600). Breyemeier will also high jump. Senior Jenna Hasan is ranked second in the triple jump and classmate Jennifer Lopez is fourth in the shot put. Jenna Hasan will also compete in the hurdles. Sophomore Ashley Ferenczy is sixth-best in the section in the 600.

Coach Hasan also said there is a good possibility Breyemeier, Ferenczy, Colleen Hurtubise and Mooney will run the 4x800 relay.

Elisa Frazier is an alternate. Leah Neumann has also qualified for sectionals in the high jump.

"I have high hopes," said coach Hasan. "It seems like every week they surprise me. They do a little more work than what you're thinking."

Coach Hasan's girls have stepped up in recent meets. At the Rochester Institute of Technology Invitational the first weekend in February, Mooney broke the school record in the racewalk with a time of 8:49.63. The old record was 8:52.61, set last year by Trish Esposito.

Ferenczy (1:46.08, seventh) and Breyemeier (1:46.54, 10th) ran personal best times in the 600. Van Buren was third in the hurdles (8.95), eighth in the 55 dash (7.69)

and fourth in the 300 (personal best 43.23).

Lopez threw the shot 32-11¼, good enough for third. Jenna Hasan triple jumped 32-11¼ for sixth. Ellie Falletta ran a personal best in the 300 (49.32) and 55 dash (8.23).

South's 4x400 relay of Ferenczy, Breyemeier, Van Buren and Jenna Hasan combined for fifth place (4:27.52).

Mooney and Hurtubise also ran well in the 1000, coach Hasan said.

On the boys side, Sean Mooney (300), Max Mangold (300, long jump) and Peter Galbo (600) all hit personal-best marks.

South's success continued at the team championships on Feb. 10 at Fredonia.

Van Buren ran in seven races —

55 trials, semis, finals, 55 dash trials, semis, finals, 300 finals. She finished second in the hurdles (8.98), fourth in the 300 (43.26) and sixth in the 55 dash (7.69).

Mooney was fourth in the triple jump (32-9½) and eighth in hurdles (9.83).

The 4x8 team of Hurtubise, Mooney, Ferenczy and Breyemeier ran a season-best 11:13.1.

Ferenczy was fourth in the 600, Breyemeier was seventh. Lopez threw the shot 32-9 for third. Mooney racewalked to a seventh place. Breyemeier high-jumped 4-6 for sixth place.

Mangold long jumped a personal-best 16-1½.

Sectionals begin at 9 a.m.

e-mail: pnagy@beenews.com



**CHAMPS** — The Williamsville South JV cheerleaders took first place in the ECIC Cheerleading Tournament on Feb. 10. Members of the team, pictured from left, are: front row, captain Katie Wagner, Sarah Prior, coach Tracey Homberger, and captains Kelly Smith and Kelly Engels; middle row - Ashley Dirschedl, Kelly Weisensal, Krista Pomeroy, Meagan Monroe, Emily Wahlgren, Rachel Kane, Catherine Pask; back row - Kaleena Paluszynski, Austyn Galmarini, Amanda Wise, Genna Schulz, Julia West, and Skye McClellan; missing from picture - Alisa Tiburzi, Anmarie LaDuca and Aviva Reich.

## ECC to conduct baseball clinics

Erie Community College and head baseball coach Joe Bauth will run their annual baseball clinics at Erie Community College, North Campus, 6205 Main Street, Williamsville.

A baseball hitting clinic will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 25. Players will be placed in groups based on age and skill level to improve their hitting skill through demonstration, instruction and participation in hitting drills designed to improve hitting skills of any skill level.

The fee is \$40 (group rate - five or more - \$30 each). A baseball miniclinic will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday, March 11. A lunch break from noon to 1 p.m. is not included.

The minicamp is designed to improve players' skills in all phases of the game. The morning session will be set up for players to participate in all drills

designed to improve hitting mechanics and technique. The afternoon session will involve the players in the four defensive positions and will include fundamentals in throwing mechanics, infield play, outfield play and catching.

The cost is \$50 (group rate - five or more, \$40 each). In both sessions, players will be placed in groups based on age and skill level.

Players will learn the fundamentals of the game and see skill development through many different drills designed to develop skill and hand-eye coordination.

Coach Bauth has amassed over 550 career victories during his tenure at ECC and has been named Region III and District A Coach of the Year several times.

For more information, call 851-1290 or e-mail Bauth@ecc.edu.