

Commentary

Levy sending message to Bills personnel

One of the most dangerous titles to have around Western New York is veteran football player. If you take a look at what Buffalo Bills General Manager Marv Levy is doing with the team, the youth movement he has engaged, you'll see a complete purging in the works.

Yes, if you're a holdover from the Tom Donahoe era — you know, the dark times — then your job safety with the Bills is about as sturdy as a cooked-spaghetti bridge.

The clear cutting going on at 1 Bills Drive demonstrates the current administration's goals for building the team back into a NFL powerhouse.

And the first goal seems to be Levy's plan to eliminate most, if not all, of the players he didn't bring into the organization.

In the past week, we saw the expected exits of linebacker London Fletcher and cornerback Nate Clements, both of whom signed huge free-agent contracts. The Bills made no effort to lure them back, nor should they have. The San Francisco 49ers paid way too much for Clements, who isn't quite the shut-down corner many people say he is. Fletcher is a quality linebacker, but his price tag of \$25 million, which he got from the Washington Redskins, was just too much

for the Bills to counter.

Of the 58 players on the Bills' current roster, only 26 remain from the 2005 season. Of the 54 players who saw action in 2005, 23 are no longer with the team. And those numbers could change soon, if the expected trades of Willis McGahee and Takeo Spikes go through.

And then there's the upcoming draft, where Levy and head coach Dick Jauron will surely find replacements for certain other players.

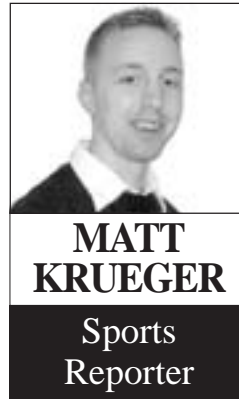
McGahee could be a Hall of Fame running back if he played against the New York Jets every week. In his two games against the J-E-T-S last year, he averaged 137.5 yards. In the other 12 games, he turned in ho-hum performances with a 59-yard average. And he says he's one of the best backs in the NFL? Sorry Willis, but you have played your way out of town and not even your super agent, Drew Rosenhaus, can save your job.

Spikes is an entirely different matter. You have to love his work ethic and desire, but injuries have

sapped away much of this superman's power. He might regain his bone-crushing tackling ability and once again lead the defense, but that is an expensive risk for Levy to take.

With the recent signings of free agent offensive linemen Derrick Dockery, Langston Walker and Jason Whittle, you can certainly expect more cuts coming in the near future. Dockery started 61 games for the Washington Redskins and is now the top left guard on the depth chart. Walker could take over the right tackle position from Terrence Pennington. Whittle is a veteran and will challenge for the right guard slot. If they all start or slide in as the primary backup, that's three more players who must walk the line.

Some of those holdovers are clearly safe from the Levy plan. Brian Moorman is coming off two consecutive Pro Bowl appearances and is among the elite punters in the league. Kicker Rian Lindell had one of the most consistent feet in the league last year and signed an extension to his contract. But others may not be so safe.



MATT KRUEGER

Sports Reporter



Sweet Home's Glenroy Carr dominated Orchard Park's Greg Michael in the Panthers' 56-34 Section VI Class AA semifinal victory last Thursday at Buffalo State Sports Arena. Carr finished the game with 20 points and 12 rebounds and held Michael scoreless.

Photo by John Normile
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Girls gymnastics

Arcury shares beam state title

by **PATRICK J. NAGY**
Reporter

Kristina Arcury had been competing at the New York State Championships since seventh grade and had never won a championship. Not anymore.

The Williamsville South junior tied with teammate Christine DelPrince of Lancaster for the balance beam crown with a 9.375 at the state competition on Saturday at Rush-Henrietta High School.

"I was really surprised and not expecting it," said Arcury. "I had a couple of wobbles, but it's pretty exciting."

The beam was not kind to Section VI gymnasts. The team had six fouls on beam which led to a

three-point deduction off the overall score, costing the section the overall title, 182.575-181.250.

Arcury finished third all-around with a 36.825. She was third on floor exercise (9.525) and fifth on vault (9.025).

Kristina's sister, seventh grader Kailyn, scored an 8.45 on bars and did not place.

Hamburg's Danielle Hover was fifth all-around, second on vault and fifth on bars. Lew-Port's Deanna Favero was fifth on floor and sixth on bars. DelPrince came in ninth on floor. Lancaster's Amanda Recor came in third on vault. Frontier's Kelly Young was seventh on bars.

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Sweet Home (Continued from page 17)

The Wolverines grabbed the rebound and found Tabb, who dribbled down the left wing and instead of knifing to the basket for a layup the junior went to the deep left corner and launched a three that rattled out.

Schintzius said the difference for his team in the fourth quarter was that all six of his players who saw action — Carr, Ramadan, Rankin, Schnirel, Roberts and Parker — scored.

Four were in double figures for the game — Carr, Parker, Rankin and Roberts (10). Schnirel added five and Ramadan had four. All six players were on last year's state finalist team. Schintzius

said that experience was a big factor towards why his team won.

"You can never put a price tag on experience," said Schintzius. "The kids were not spooked by the big game environment."

To advance to the finals, Sweet Home avenged two regular losses to Orchard Park with a tremendous defensive effort, winning 56-34. OP won 58-53 on Dec. 19 and 68-63 in overtime on Feb. 1.

"Revenge was a motivating factor," said Schintzius. "The kids were really focused. To hold them to 34 points was the difference."

Sweet Home used a man to man e-mail: pnagy@beenews.com

defense and clamped down the Quakers in the second (five points) and third (nine points) quarters to open a 42-22 lead after the third.

Rankin, who was in foul trouble in earlier meetings, was whistled for one foul this time and finished with 20 points. Carr added a double-double (20 points, 12 rebounds) and used good positioning to hold Orchard Park's Greg Michael scoreless.

Ramadan added eight points and did a nice job on the boards, Schintzius said. Schnirel and Roberts scored four points each.

Amherst loses battle with McKinley in A-1 semifinals

by **PATRICK J. NAGY**
Reporter

Top-seeded Amherst put up a fight against fourth-seed McKinley but turnovers and missed shots at the end ultimately did in the Tigers, losing a 64-60 overtime thriller in last Wednesday's Section VI Class A-1 semifinal at Buffalo State Sports Arena.

McKinley went on to beat Williamsville South, 70-55, on Saturday at Buffalo State for the A-1 title.

Amherst, who trailed by as many as 12 at the beginning of the third quarter, tied the game at 53-53 with 23.1 seconds left in regulation after senior point guard Andre Hakeem knocked down 1 of 2 free throws. Cordell Freeman (22 points, eight rebounds) blocked a jumper from McKinley's Mark Overall (14 points) at the regulation buzzer.

With the game tied at 55-55 in overtime, McKinley's Mansa Habeeb gave the Macks the lead for good, stealing the ball from Amherst's Chris France (12 points, six rebounds) and laying it in. Habeeb (19 points) added 2 of 4 free throws, his last the game-clincher with less than 10 seconds left.

Amherst had the lead once in overtime. An offensive putback from Viron Hale off a missed France layup gave Amherst a 55-54 advantage but the Tigers threw the ball out of bounds twice and had it stolen once down the stretch. Amherst finished overall with 29 turnovers. They shot 19 of 59 from the floor.

The closest Amherst could cut the deficit in overtime was 61-60.

"We never gave up," said Amherst coach Mike Chatelle. "We were down by 12 and could have packed in it. We regrouped from a timeout and gave a great effort. It just didn't work out. We missed a

couple of opportunities at the end and they didn't. I'm not disappointed with the effort, just the result."

Momentum switched several times. McKinley scored the first six points of the game and led, 21-14, after the first quarter, and 27-22, at halftime. After McKinley built a 34-22 advantage, Amherst turned up the defensive intensity to outscore the Macks, 14-2, to tie the game at 36-36, by the end of the quarter. France started the Tigers' rally with a steal and end-to-end layup. McKinley also went ice cold from the floor, missing seven straight shots to end the quarter.

A steal and right-handed dunk from Freeman on Amherst's second shot of the fourth quarter gave the Tigers its first lead of the game, 38-36, and a three-pointer from France followed by a pass to Freeman inside lifted Amherst to a 43-36 advantage with 5:33 remaining.

"For about 6½ minutes between the end of the third quarter and the beginning of the fourth quarter, we could not score," said McKinley coach James Daye. "That gave them a lot of momentum. They did a lot of things that forced us to not play smart. They extended the zone and our guards did not want to penetrate. Our one guard who can penetrate (William Robinson) has a bad knee."

The Tigers were ahead, 51-44, with just under three minutes to play, but a running layup from Overall, a floater from Robinson, and a Habeeb steal to Overall cut the Macks' deficit to 51-50 with 1:52 remaining.

The last minute of regulation, like the rest of the game, was end to end action. With the game tied at 52-52, Overall seemed to put McKinley ahead with a layup with 34.1 seconds remaining but the shot was called off because of a shot clock violation. Freeman followed with a long full-court inbound

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