

Commentary

Hockey Hall of Fame mixes fun with history

This is the first in a series of columns on sports Halls of Fame. Others will follow throughout the summer.

Wayne Gretzky and Mark Messier share a smile and touch gloves before skating away and preparing a two-on-none breakaway that ends with Gretzky slipping a backhand shot low at the net.

No, this is not a scene from the old Edmonton Oiler days, when Gretzky and Messier horrified opposing goaltenders with slick passing, hard shots and the footwork of a professional dance troupe. It's the view you get after stepping into the crease at the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto, Canada. Yes, you too can be the next victim of two of the greatest players the NHL has ever seen when you try out the interactive game scenarios in the NHLPA Be a Player Zone.

Students and faculty from West Seneca East High School got that very chance this past weekend on their field trip with the French and Spanish Clubs. Many of the kids took turns climbing between the pipes to face a 70-mph slap shot of a weighted foam puck. Next to them, others tried the shoot out, where visitors got to try their goal-shooting skills against a computer-simulated version of Eddie "The Eagle" Belfour.

The NHLPA Be a Player Zone is just one of the attractions the Hockey Hall of Fame has instituted to make the building modern, fan friendly and fun. And that should be the goal of any Hall of Fame.

Balancing a sense of honor for the past and embracing the present with a concerted effort to entertain its visitors, the Hockey Hall of Fame offers something for every generation.

If you don't consider yourself much of a player, maybe try your hand at producing a televised game or tune up your best broadcaster voice for a turn at calling famous plays in the TSN/RDS Broadcast Zone. It's where you can turn "do you believe in miracles?" to "take that, Russia!" while watching the closing seconds of the 1980 Olympics match-up between the United States and the Soviet Union. Of course, hearing "he shoots, he scores" is inevitable.

On the other side of the building, fans can soak themselves in the rich, 100-plus year history of the game with up-close looks at some of the most famous awards in all of sports. In the MCI Great Hall,

fans can touch one of the Stanley Cups, and get a photo taken with it. You can't help but imagine yourself holding the 40-pound trophy over your head, skating around an ice rink and cheering with the thousands of fans in the stands. It's that image we get every June, when the new champion is crowned, that every child who laces up skates harbors in his dreams.

Like any other living history of a sport, the Hockey Hall of Fame uses photos, old uniforms, old equipment and lists of records to illustrate the evolution of the game. Compare the skates Gordie Howe wore during his illustrious career to what the current crop of players use and the difference is startling. Howe's looked so heavy with their padded leather skins and bulky straps its amazing he could even pick up his legs when wearing them.

The best part about the Hockey Hall of Fame for Western New Yorkers is its closeness. You can get there in less than two hours, which makes for a great day trip.



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Class

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and 53 strikeouts. At the plate, he hit .360. When he's not pitching, he can play at third, short or first.

Sophomore Matt Minervini is the team's No. 4 pitcher and can also play in the infield.

Catching all of these pitches will be senior Greg Reed, who backed up graduate Bryan Karchensky last year.

"He blocks the ball and is an

excellent defensive catcher," said Hansen.

Junior Tim Braunscheidel will back up Reed.

Other returning players are seniors Shane Hurley, Chris Couche and Nick Needham in the outfield, and Steve McDermott, who can play at first and will be a designated hitter.

Hurley, who was called up as a sophomore, hit .370 and was an

ECIC III second team selection. He replaces James DeVaughn in center field.

"He has a good jump on the ball, a real strong throwing arm and hitting wise, attacks the ball," said Hansen.

Couche and Needham were reserves last year. Junior Andrew Esposito, up from the JV, is challenging for an outfield position.

Alex Walkowski, one of the JV's

leading hitters last year, will start at second. Senior P.J. Coppola will back him up.

Senior pitcher Shawn Mooney rounds out the team.

Hansen will be assisted by Dave Delisanti, Bobby Stanko, and Hansen's son, Keith.

South opened its season with a 7-4 win over Lake Shore on Monday. Highlights will appear in the April 11 edition.

Williamsville South 2007 Schedule

4-4 Cleveland Hill.....	4:30 p.m.
4-5 at Albion.....	4:30 p.m.
4-16 at Hamburg.....	4:30 p.m.
4-17 Maryvale.....	4:30 p.m.
4-18 at Iroquois.....	4:30 p.m.
4-20 W.S. East.....	5 p.m.
4-23 at Amherst.....	4:30 p.m.
4-24 at Batavia.....	4:30 p.m.
4-25 East.....	4:30 p.m.
4-26 Lake Shore.....	4:30 p.m.
4-30 Tonawanda.....	4:30 p.m.
5-2 Hamburg.....	4:45 p.m.
5-3 at Cheektowaga....	4:30 p.m.
5-4 Iroquois.....	4:30 p.m.
5-7 at W.S. East.....	4:30 p.m.
5-9 Amherst.....	4:30 p.m.
5-11 at East.....	4:30 p.m.
5-12 at Hilton Tourn.....	TBA
5-14 Sweet Home.....	4:30 p.m.
5-15 Cheektowaga.....	4:30 p.m.
5-16 at Maryvale.....	7:30 p.m.
5-21 at Newfane.....	4:30 p.m.

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Plimpton

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brick wall on defense."

Strapason, an ECIC III second team selection, has great vision at first base and is a smart, aggressive player, said Gentner.

Powers, a callup from the JV for the playoffs, will compete for a starting position, stated Gentner.

Senior Ashley Aurilio and junior Stephanie Shahin make their varsity debuts. Aurilio and Shahin will vie for starting positions in the outfield and infield, respectively.

"Ashley's strong point is her

hitting," said Gentner. "Stephanie has a strong arm with above average speed."

South finished 27-3 last year and won its ninth straight league and fourth consecutive Depew Tournament and Section VI titles. They gave up the least number of runs in a season in school history with 15 and head into this season on a 47-game win streak in league play.

South won its 48th straight after beating Hamburg, 11-0, on Monday. Highlights will appear in the April 11 edition.

The team will also have its entire coaching staff back for its ninth straight season. They are Gerry Gentner, Al Monaco, Bob Gentner and Roy Ciarmella.

Williamsville South 2007 Schedule

4-4 Amherst.....	4:30 p.m.
4-16 at Iroquois.....	4:30 p.m.
4-18 W.S. East.....	5 p.m.
4-21 at NT Tourn vs. Ken. East 4:30 p.m.....	TBA
4-23 East.....	4:30 p.m.
4-25 at Lake Shore.....	4:30 p.m.
4-28 at NT Tourn.....	TBA
5-1 at Amherst.....	4:30 p.m.

5-2 Iroquois.....	4:30 p.m.
5-4 at W.S. East.....	4:30 p.m.
5-5 at Depew Tourn. Bracket A. - vs. North 11:30 a.m. (Diamond 4, Walden Pond), winner plays Iroquois-Frontier at 3:30 p.m., loser plays at 1:30 p.m.	
5-9 at East.....	4:30 p.m.
5-11 Lake Shore.....	4:30 p.m.
5-14 at Hamburg.....	4:30 p.m.
5-17 Clarence.....	4:45 p.m.
5-19 at Morabito Tourn. vs. Susquehanna Valley (Section IV).....	1 p.m.

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Sports briefs

The Park School seventh and eighth grade boys basketball team finished with a 16-2 record. Park finished undefeated in Independent Athletic Conference competition, beating Christian Central Academy, Gow School and West Seneca Chris-

tian twice.

Lucas Eng averaged 12 points per game and Andrew Sanchez and Mark Schiferle each had 10 points per game. The Park Pioneer defense was outstanding all year, holding opponents to a 21 point average and never

allowing more than 30 points in any game.

Williamsville North sophomores Mark Balsom and twins Alex and Steven Barth won the 15-16 year old division of the University at Buffalo Shooters Roundup basketball tour-

namment held Saturday and Sunday at UB.

The three-on-three single elimination tournament had 26 entries from all over Western New York. The Barth twins started for North varsity while Balsom was MVP of the JV team.



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Friday, April 6	2:00-3:20PM
Monday, April 9	2:30-3:50PM
Tuesday, April 10	2:30-3:50PM
Thursday, April 12	3:00-4:20PM

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