

## Commentary

### Who can blame Sabres' co-captains for leaving?

For many teams, the beginning of the free agency signing period is a time to retool and revamp the roster in an effort to put the best possible squad on the playing field, no matter what the sport. However, when it comes to Buffalo Sabres fans, free agency has recently been about as appealing as contracting bubonic plague — and about as deadly.

The fans may not like it, but can you blame previous Sabres like Jay McKee and Mike Grier, and now former co-captains Daniel Briere and Chris Drury, for leaving for greener pastures? If all the NHL is a business, which appears to be the case with Sabres owner B. Thomas Golisano, then he can't be surprised when players are more loyal to the almighty dollar and not the team, when that team essentially takes more than it gives?

For instance, Briere rejected the Sabres' only offer of a contract extension, worth reportedly \$25 million over five years. It was a smart move on Briere's part, considering it took the Philadelphia Flyers a mere four hours to lock Briere up for the next eight seasons. Briere and his agent knew what they were doing testing the open market, hauling in more than double what the Sabres were willing to spare (\$52 million, including a whopping \$10 million next season alone).

It doesn't help matters that the team's offer came just over three days before free agency officially began, but did the Sabres' top brass really think Briere would forego a pay raise after recording nearly 100 points last season? It's like Sabres management was saying, "Hey Danny, thanks for posting a career-high 95 points for us last year. Thanks for getting us some recognition by earning the All-Star Game MVP honors. Would you so kindly perform at least at the same level, if not even higher, for the next few years without getting a raise?"

Hometown discounts are one thing, but that's not the kind of offer that would make Briere want to walk away from what is now essentially his last very expensive multi-year contract. If that was how little the Sabres thought of him, of his contributions on and off the ice, Briere would have been crazy not to wait the few extra days until teams fell all over themselves trying to secure his services.

The same goes for Drury, who also recorded a career-best points total (69) last season. While the Sabres did offer Drury a raise in their lone offer, he received a better offer from the New York Rangers (five years, \$35.25 million) before the end of free agency's first day.

How can any of us blame these players — and not just Sabres free agents — for choosing financial security for their families when another team with deeper pockets, or at least a greater willingness to spend up to the salary cap, comes along with a better offer? It's the noble thing to say we'd all stick with the home team, but in the moment of truth, I don't think any of us would be dumb enough to turn down more money to do the same job in a different location.

I understand Golisano's argument of not wanting to dump money into an unprofitable venture, but that's not what he has with the Sabres — at least not if he and the rest of the team's management can use the losses of Briere and Drury to revamp the way they conduct business. If the Flyers and/or Rangers have the success the Sabres could've had if they'd retained Briere and Drury's services, perhaps management will then realize that sometimes you have to spend money to make money.



**JASON NADOLINSKI**  
Sports Reporter

### Golf tourney allows preview of new course

The West Seneca Hockey Booster Club will be holding a four-man scramble golf tournament at the Harvest Hills Golf Course, 3052 Old Transit Road in Orchard Park, beginning at noon Monday, July 23 — one day before the new course's official opening. The cost is \$100 per person or \$400 per foursome and includes golf with cart, lunch and dinner, and prizes. For more information, call Rick at 825-4265 or visit [www.westsenecayouthhockey.com](http://www.westsenecayouthhockey.com).

## Bowling

# Buffalo gets shot to host international youth events

by PATRICK J. NAGY  
Reporter

Buffalo is known for having a strong bowling community and for two weeks this month they'll get to show it off to the world.

For the first time, Buffalo will host the tenth annual United States Bowling Congress Junior Gold Championships. The event, featuring a record-number 1,728 entrants, including participants age 10 to 21 from the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, and U.S. military zones in Europe and the Far East, will take place July 7-13 at AMF Thruway Lanes and AMF Airport Lanes in Cheektowaga, and AMF Transit Lanes in Williamsville. The Junior Gold Championships is the largest individual youth bowling tournament in the country.

Buffalo will also host the inaugural USBC Youth Open Championships July 13-21 at Thruway Lanes and the Pepsi USBC Youth Championships July 16-18 at Transit Lanes. An adult-youth national tournament is scheduled July 9-12 at Lancaster Lanes during the Junior Gold Championships.

Greater Buffalo USBC President Nancy L. Walczyk said Buffalo put in a bid for the Junior Gold Championships in 2003 and won the rights in 2005. One reason she wanted to bring it to Buffalo was the closeness of the bowling centers. Thruway Lanes is a 60-lane center and Airport Lanes and Transit Lanes have 66 and 52 lanes, respectively. To be considered as a host site, an area needs to have three bowling centers with at least 48 lanes or more and located within a 30-mile radius.

"I think there are no other centers in the nation that are as big in that small of an area," said Walczyk. "The centers are only 15 minutes apart."

The centers also needed to be members of the Bowling Proprietors' Association of America and participants of the BPAA's national Pepsi contract.

USBC Youth Tournament Manager Maureen Vicena said Buffalo also has the hotel room availability (700 rooms needed) to accommodate all bowlers

and their families.

Bowlers participating in the Junior Gold Championships will bowl three rounds of six games over the first four days of competition, July 9-12. The top 96 males and 48 females who advance to the semifinals will return to Airport Lanes on Friday morning for a six-game block. The top 32 males and 32 females will continue on Friday afternoon for another six-game block to determine male and female U.S. Junior Amateur champions. Winners will be determined by total pinfall.

The top five finishers are automatically placed on USBC Junior Team USA, which will serve as representatives in international competition in 2008. The National Selection Committee will choose an additional three boy and three girl Junior Gold Championships bowlers to join the team.

To qualify for the Junior Gold Championships, bowlers must have an average of 165 (girls) or 175 (boys). More than \$100,000 in scholarships will be awarded. The only Buffalo area competitors are Depew's Charles Zmozynski, Hamburg's Dan Darnley, Lockport's Marion Michelle Singleton, and Youngstown's Zane Tester. All bowlers entered in the Junior Gold Championships will also attend a Buffalo Bisons baseball game on July 8.

The Junior Gold Championships are conducted on Sport Bowling lane patterns. Sport Bowling is when lane conditions are more challenging than normal league competition and makes the bowler place more emphasis on hitting accurate shots.

Bowlers participating in the Youth Open Championships will take part in non-qualifying singles, doubles, and four-player team competition.

"You pay an entry fee and bowl," said Vicena. "You can bowl with any other USBC bowler."

More than 1,400 competitors have applied for the Youth Open Champi-

onships. The tournament has four divisions (129 and below; 130-159; 160-189; and 190 and above) and will be based on actual pinfall. One out of every four entrants in singles, doubles, or team will receive scholarships and one out of six will receive scholarships in all events.

Two hundred athletes from all 50 United States, U.S. military zones, Puerto Rico, and Canada are scheduled to compete in the Pepsi Championships. It is a handicap tournament with bowling averages ranging from 80



to 200. Bowl.com, the official Web site of the USBC, said athletes participating in the Pepsi Championships will roll two four-game qualifying blocks before the field is

cut to the top 16 in each division. The semifinalists will then compete in a single-game, double-elimination format. The top four finishers in each division will receive scholarships.

The adult-youth tournament at Lancaster Lanes, a 36-lane house, can accommodate over 300 teams and will allow parents a chance to bowl with their kids, said Vicena.

Many bowling administrators have volunteered their time to help, including New York State USBC Youth Directors Pat Zonneville and Frank Wilkinson and Association Manager Penny Clinton-Jensen. Wilkinson was recently named national youth leader of the year.

The two-week bowling event concludes with a New York State Bowling Family Workshop at the Adam's Mark Hotel on July 21. The main speaker is USBC Chief Executive Officer Roger Dalkin.

All four tournaments should generate a boost the economy. Chuck Giglia, national sales manager for the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, expects the events to generate over \$2 million for Erie County.

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## Baseball

# Zimmerman, Ticco named All-WNY

Max Zimmerman and John Ticco of Williamsville North were each named to the All-Western New York baseball team.

Zimmerman, a senior catcher, made the All-WNY second team. Ticco, a senior shortstop, earned honorable mention.

Zimmerman, Ticco, outfielder Alex Calderon, and designated hitter Taylor Gahagen were ECIC Division I selections. Seniors Brad Stellrecht, Jared Fabian, and Zach Boron, and junior Austin Benschadle made the second team. Senior Pat Dwyer and sophomore Nick Fronczak were honorable mentions.

Here's a list of how the rest of teams in the Town of Amherst fared.

### Williamsville East

Senior outfielder Mike Zeoli was an All-WNY second team selection.

Senior pitcher/third baseman Zach Miller, senior second baseman Nick Kanutsu, and junior outfielder/pitcher Mark Guenther were honorable mentions. Divisional honors for East appeared in the June 20 Bee.

### Williamsville South

Senior pitcher Dan Lynch and senior designated hitter

Shane Hurley picked up ECIC II first team accolades. Seniors Frank Pieri and Greg Reed made the second team. Seniors Nick Needham and Scott Steimer and junior Alex Walkowski were honorable mentions.

### Sweet Home

Senior Ryan Maxwell was an ECIC I second team selection. Juniors John Graziano and Travis Denman were honorable mentions.

### Amherst Central

Senior outfielder Will Gowen earned ECIC I first team honors. Junior Alex Dusenberry and sophomore Tom Ponticelli made the second team. Junior Derek Duke was an honorable mention.

### Softball

#### Williamsville East

Senior outfielder Courtney Rung, junior outfielder Bridget Steele, and sophomore catcher Taylor Klun earned ECIC II first team honors. Juniors Chelsea Horne and Rachele Arenos were second team selections.

#### Amherst Central

Senior outfielder Liz Reid was an ECIC II first team pick.

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