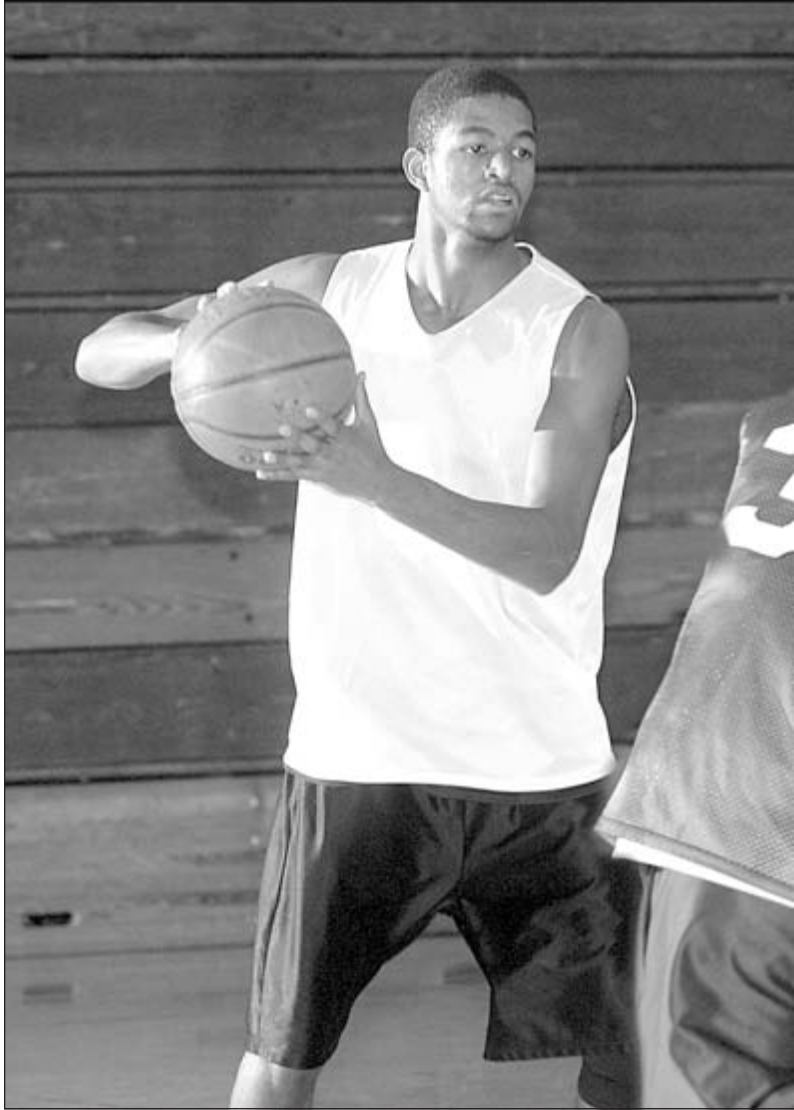


# Amherst boys hoops looking for scoring



**Viron Hale** is the only returning starter for the Amherst Central boys basketball team. The 6-foot-3 senior will play at a forward position.

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by **PATRICK J. NAGY**  
Reporter

Amherst boys basketball coach Mike Chatelle isn't worried about his team's depth heading into the 2007-08 season. He's more concerned with who is going to be scoring points.

The graduation of Cordell Freeman (ECIC II Player of the Year, averaged 25 points), Chris France (averaged 17 points) and Andre Hakeem (three-year varsity player) leaves some huge holes to fill, especially on offense.

"This year, we're going to have to be more team oriented," said Chatelle. "We're going to need six or seven guys to score eight to 10 points."

The question is whose going to step up? Chatelle thinks he can get points from 5-foot-8 senior Sam Schepart, who should start at shooting guard, 6-foot-1 senior guard Mike Yanity and 6-foot-2 junior forward Stephone Brown. But then again, he said he might depend on how his team matches up with other teams on certain nights.

"As the season goes on, hopefully somebody will step up," said Chatelle. "If different guys step up that's fine with me because teams won't know who to concentrate on."

Chatelle only returns one starter from last year's ECIC Division II championship team, 6-foot-3 senior Viron Hale. Hale can be used as a power forward or center although Chatelle said his team doesn't have a true center.

Other forwards who will see minutes at the four or five spot are Brown, juniors Joe Kubek (6-foot-1), Jake Hoak (6-foot-1) and Roland Cook (6-foot-2) and senior Geoff Gallson (6-foot-1).

Brown, Kubek and Hoak played JV last year; Gallson was a reserve on varsity.

"Overall, they're real good passers," said Chatelle. "When we get the ball in the post, we can hit the guard cutting. They do a nice job handling the ball and are working on their short range jumpers. They're not overly big but get into good position to get rebounds."

Chatelle thinks his guards are athletic, led by 5-foot-11 sophomore Nico MacLean, 5-foot-8 junior Bert Smith, Schepart and 5-foot-10 junior Kevin Ford. Smith and Schepart are returning varsity players, Ford was on JV; MacLean was on modified.

MacLean and Smith will run the point. Chatelle loves Schepart's shooting ability from the outside and his hustle on the court.

Yanity or 6-foot-1 senior Kurt Ebsary will each see playing time at small forward. Both are returning varsity players who saw some minutes as juniors.

"If our guards set their mind to it defensively, those guys (MacLean, Smith, Schepart, Ebsary, and Yanity) are going to be the ones making things happen for us," said Chatelle.

Juniors James Gould and Scott Krajna, guard and forward, respectively, round out the team.

After a successful two-year run in ECIC II, Amherst moves down to ECIC III. Chatelle thinks every game in the division is going to be competitive.

"If a team goes 10-2 or 12-0, I don't think they're blowing people out," said Chatelle.

Chatelle opens its season against Medina at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 5.

"I don't know where we will finish," said Chatelle.

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**“This year, we’re going to have to be more team oriented. We’re going to need six or seven guys to score eight to 10 points.”**

— **Mike Chatelle, Amherst coach**

## North's speed could pose matchup problems

by **PATRICK J. NAGY**  
Reporter

If there's one word to describe the Williamsville North boys basketball team, it is fast.

The Spartans have a lot of speed on their roster. Just ask North coach Chuck Swierski.

"We're super fast," said Swierski. "And we're very athletic. It's probably the most athletic team I've had in my five years. I think our quickness could pose some matchup problems for other teams."

Swierski's starting five is especially quick. They include 5-foot-10 senior point guard John Piaggione, 6-foot-1 senior shooting guard Josh Barrett, 6-foot-2 junior identical twin forwards Alex and Steve Barth and 6-foot-4 center Alex Ullrich. Piaggione and the Barth twins are returning full-time starters; Ullrich was a part-time starter. Barrett played basketball

in Saskatchewan. His father, Danny, is the University at Buffalo football team's assistant head coach and quarterbacks coach.

"They work pretty well as a group," said Swierski.

Piaggione was chosen unanimously by his teammates as a captain. He is a returning ECIC Division I First Team all-star.

"He's our leader on the floor," said Swierski. "He knows what I want from him when he's running the offense. He doesn't shoot as much as I would like him to but he gets everyone involved. I don't think he was a natural point guard but he's turned into a pretty good one."

Barrett has been the most consistent player in the team's three scrimmages, Swierski said.

"Josh has been the perfect fit," said Swierski. "Where he came from he was very well coached. He's a natural athlete and a real coachable kid. No matter where

we put him he flourishes."

Swierski likes Barrett's versatility.

"He can shoot the ball, handle it, play great defense and he's smart and unselfish. I can't say enough good things about him. We're thrilled to have him."

Swierski said the Barth twins have been lifting weights during the offseason and have each added 10 to 15 pounds to their now 185-pound frames.

Alex Barth was the team's second leading scorer last year and will be the team's No. 1 scoring option this year.

"They're both tough," said Swierski. "They've been working on their three-point shooting but their strength is getting inside and going to the rim. Plus, each is flat out fast. When they get out and run, they just fly."

At 180 pounds, Ullrich will be matched up against much bigger players but what makes him stand out is his basketball IQ.

"He plays a steady, smart game," said Swierski. "He works hard defensively by using proper technique to get into the right position. He's not real strong but he battles and gives everything he's got. He's got an outside jump shot too but can also score inside."

Ullrich is another North captain as is reserve streaky shooting 6-foot senior guard Joe Greenwald. Six-foot junior Mark Balsom, last year's starting point guard on JV, will also be a reserve guard.

Other reserves are sophomore Jim Gaines (guard/forward), juniors Jerome Fields and Mike Herberger (backup centers), Mike Mayers (forward) and Colin Potter (guard) and seniors Jack Jagodzinski (forward) and Matt Antalek (guard). Fields, Herberger, Mayers and Potter move up from JV. Jagodzinski is a returning reserve on varsity.

Gaines is a rock solid 6-foot-2, 175

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## Sweet Home returns only one starter, four players

by **PATRICK J. NAGY**  
Reporter

If you've attended a Sweet Home boys basketball game the last couple of years, you would be familiar with names like Terrell Rankin, Glenroy Carr, Steven Roberts and Eric Schnirel.

If you go to a Panthers' game this year, you'll be wondering, who are these guys?

The 2007-08 version of Sweet Home basketball does not at all resemble the rosters which went 40-10 and won back-to-back Section VI Class A and AA championships.

Eight seniors and every starter except senior 6-foot-3 forward Ali Ramadan graduated. The other three returning seniors, Marcus Johnson, Brian Pappagallo and Richard Rush, saw limited time, if any. The rest of the team is JV call-ups, another played modified and another didn't try out for varsity last year.

The team has already gotten off to a late start as nine of the 13 players were on the Panthers' football team which won a Section VI Class A title win and appeared in the Far West Regionals in Rochester. Where other

teams had tryouts on Nov. 1, coach Paul Schintzius didn't have his tryouts until Nov. 14, 15 and 16.

Schintzius said his starting five are a work in progress but he does expect Ramadan to be the team's best inside presence. Johnson, the starting running back from football, could start at small forward.

Senior Brian Pappagallo, who backed up Roberts at point guard, should start this year. However, sophomore Keon Williams, who played JV last year, should push Pappagallo for playing time.

Senior 5-foot-11 guard Jamel Werts, another returning guard, has the inside track to start at shooting guard. Schintzius said the fifth starting spot is up for grabs.

Others on the team are senior guard Richard Rush (was on varsity last year), senior 6-foot-1, 270 pound forward Nick Christman (played JV as sophomore, did not tryout as a junior) and JV call-ups, junior guards Casey Kacz, Brandon Hudson, Will Reese and Bryan Price, and junior forward Donald Watkins.

Kacz is still feeling the effect of a lingering knee injury he suffered during the football sectionals but should not miss any games, Schintzius said. Watkins was the JV's leading scorer, averaging 10 points.

Rounding out the team is senior forward Hanif Russell.

Schintzius said his players aren't the greatest shooters or ball handlers yet but are extremely athletic.

"They are good athletes so I hope they will be able to use their athleticism to generate some offense," said Schintzius.

He also hopes his team can play good defense.

"We've taken a lot of pride in our defense in the past so hopefully we can pressure other teams and score in transition," said Schintzius.

After a two-year hiatus, Sweet Home moves down from ECIC I to II but will still compete in the Section VI Class AA sectionals. Schintzius sees Hamburg and Williamsville East as favorites in ECIC II.

Schintzius knows his team could have some ups and downs early but is hoping they peak for sectionals.

"I don't want to rush things," said Schintzius. "It's a marathon, not a sprint. We're going to have to be better teachers and go slower so the kids understand what to do."

Sweet Home, 19-5 last year, hosts Niagara-Wheatfield in

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