

Basketball tournaments slated

Every varsity boys and girls basketball team in the Town of Amherst except the Amherst boys will be competing in holiday tournaments on Thursday and Friday. For opponents, locations and times, view the high school calendar listed on page 29.

Girl power

North senior tends goal on school's boys hockey team

by **PATRICK J. NAGY**
Reporter

Whenever the Williamsville North boys Section VI Western New York Varsity Hockey Federation team takes the ice this season, be on the lookout for the only player with a ponytail sticking out of their helmet.

It belongs to backup goalie and East Amherst resident Kim Sass.

The 5-foot-5 senior is one of only a few girls to ever play in a Federation boys hockey game, making five saves in the third period of North's 4-3 win over Sweet Home on Nov. 29 on the Amherst Pepsi Center's Feature Rink.

"It was awesome," said Sass after a practice last week on the Feature Rink. "I was used to it from JV. It wasn't the first time I had played in front of my school."

Rachel Stemerman, now a starting junior goalie for Wesleyan University, was a Federation honorable mention during the 2003-04 Federation season with Williamsville South. Senior Kelly Mendola is a backup with Kenmore East. Senior A.J. Sliwinski is a backup with Clarence.

Sass, who also plays for the Buffalo Bisons girls' 19U team, said playing on a boys team helps prepare her for girls hockey.

"The shots are a lot harder and the speed of the game is quicker so when I go back to the girls, I'm ready," she said.



Williamsville North senior goalie Kim Sass makes a save in third-period action against Sweet Home on Nov. 29 at the Amherst Pepsi Center Feature Rink. It was her first action in a Section VI Western New York Varsity Hockey Federation game. *Photo by Joe Eberle*
Purchase color photos at www.BeeNews.com

Goalie genetics

Ever since she can remember, Sass always wanted to be a goalie.

"When you save the puck, everybody in the arena goes nuts," she said.

Her inspiration for playing the position comes from NHL great Dominik Hasek, who used to live in the Sass' neighborhood, and her father, Bob, who played

goalie for North Tonawanda's varsity team and one year for the University at Buffalo. When he was in high school, Bob Sass tended goal for Buffalo Sabre practices at the Tonawanda Sports Center in North Tonawanda. He also played in a few men's leagues.

Bob Sass has been Kim's goalie coach with the Bisons since she started with the program in 1999.

"Every day in practice we dedicate 10 to 15 minutes to work with the goalies," said Bob Sass. "We drilled basic skills into her from an early age."

Kim Sass said her father has taught her everything about playing goalie but the most important philosophy she has learned from him "is to never take any reps off in practice and practice like how you would play in a game."

Honing her skills

It was on the Bisons where Sass began to excel in net.

She's played for the Bisons at every age group level since she was seven. In 2003 and 2007, Sass was the starting goaltender for the Bisons' 12U and 16U teams which finished third at the USA Girls Hockey National Championships. When nationals were in Buffalo two years ago, Sass, as a 15-year-old, won a skills competition in the 16U age group. Kelly Mendola, the Bisons' other goalie, won the skills competition last year.

Bob Sass said the last few years with the Bisons, Kim's goals against average has been under one while her save percentage has hovered around 0.95.

"Her technique is sound," said Bob Sass, who is also an assistant coach with the Bisons. "She seems to have a mindset for the position where she doesn't get too high or low. She doesn't get frustrated if she lets in a goal."

Kim Sass also helped the Western Region at the last three Empire State Games win

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Spartans defeat Canisius, win 300th game for program

by **PATRICK J. NAGY**
Reporter

The Williamsville North Federation hockey team had beaten Canisius before, but its 3-2 win on Sunday at Buffalo State Sports Arena meant a little extra for Spartan coach Bob Rosen and his staff.

It was the program's 300th win. North hockey began 18 years ago.

"It's hard to believe it's been 18 years," said Rosen, who said with the win moved him into the state's top 10 ranking for coaching victories. "Where we have been the last 10 to 12 years (three New York State title, six state finals appearances, four Federation titles) has been great to be a part of."

Rosen said the Canisius win was bittersweet.

"Canisius historically has played us well," said Rosen. "In the past, we've had more talent than them. To beat them when the shoe is on the other foot is bittersweet for us."

Canisius scored the only goal in the first two periods, Max Christ from Peter Creighton on the pow-

er play, at 7:17 of the first period.

North responded with three goals in the third period before Creighton scored with 58 seconds left in the game.

Spartan junior forward Marc Kadish got the scoring started at the 7:30 mark of the third from Josh Liddle and Nick Fronczak. Kadish rushed down the right side of the boards, cut to the middle of the ice, used a defender as a screen and beat Canisius' goalie with a snap shot from the top of the circle.

Junior forward Nick Angelo buried a goal in the top corner of the net at 5:44 off assists from Jake Newton and Cam Sroda.

Sroda made it 3-1 on the power play, with 1:42 remaining, from Angelo and Fronczak. Fronczak's shot initially missed the net and bounced off the backboard, and Sroda picked it up and tapped it into the left side of the net.

"It was a real heads-up play by Cam," said Rosen.

Senior goalie Branden Komm played great as North was outshot 8-4 in the first period and 9-7 in the second period.

"We didn't play well in the first two periods," said Rosen. "We

didn't forecheck well and weren't doing enough to grind out a win. In the third period, we competed well and really took it to them. We outshot them 10-6."

The Canisius win capped off a great week for North. The Spartans beat Frontier, 2-0, last Thursday on the Amherst Pepsi Center Olympic Rink and Lancaster, 4-1, last Saturday on the Pepsi Center Feature Rink. All three wins gave North qualifying points for the

Division I state playoffs.

"All three games certainly could have gone either way," said Rosen. "In close games, we found ways to win."

The Frontier game was scoreless until Kadish scored at 12:37 of the third on the power play on a deflection from Matt Austin and Mark Smith.

With two seconds remaining, sophomore Chris Marsack blocked a point-blank shot from a

Frontier player and outraced a Frontier defender for the puck in the neutral zone and scored an empty-net goal.

North outshot Frontier, 28-12, but Rosen felt his team did not take many quality shots and the quality shots they did take, Frontier's goalie made the saves.

The Lancaster score was not indicative of the type of game that was played.

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Publish sports scores in The Bee

Anyone wishing to have their teams' hockey, indoor soccer or other winter sports results published in The Bee, whether it is a house, travel, town, recreational or other team, can submit articles in a variety of ways.

Forms for some of the sports can be filled out on our Web site, www.beenews.com. This is the preferred method for sending reports to The Bee.

Articles can also be emailed directly to sports reporter Patrick J. Nagy at pnagy@beenews.com. However, anyone wishing to obtain forms to fill out manually can come to our office at 5564 Main Street in Williamsville and pick forms up there. Once filled out, they can be either faxed to our office at 633-8601 or mailed to P.O.

Box 150, Buffalo NY, 14231-0150.

Summaries of individual games — *whether it is a season opener, a league/playoff championship or any other contest in between those extremes* — are limited to a maximum of 100 words each. For stories on tournaments that include multiple games, reports are limited to a total of 300 words.

The deadline for stories to be turned in to run in Wednesday's paper is still 9 a.m. the Monday before that paper is published.

The Bee will make every effort to publish youth sports results the week they are received, but makes no guarantee as to the publication date.

If you wish to have forms mailed to you or have any other questions, contact Nagy at 204-4903.