

# Undermanned Sweet Home posts ECIC II wins

by PATRICK J. NAGY  
Reporter

The Sweet Home boys basketball team improved to 3-0 in ECIC Division II, but it wasn't easy.

The Panthers had to overcome foul trouble and a short bench to

defeat Williamsville East, 72-66, last Tuesday and Iroquois, 63-57 in overtime, last Friday. Both were home games.

Because of an assortment of reasons, Sweet Home coach Paul Schintzius could only dress nine of his 13 players against East and

eight versus Iroquois.

Someone had to fill in for the Panthers and Jamel Werts responded. Tied 51-51 with East after three quarters, the senior guard scored 13 of his career-high 30 points in the fourth quarter (two three-pointers, one two-pointer, five of seven free throws) to surge Sweet Home past East. Werts added 20 points versus Iroquois, including four in overtime.

Two other players who stepped up for the Panthers against East were junior guard Brandon Hudson and senior forward Nick Christman. Hudson came off the bench in the second half to score eight points. Christman, who came in after senior forward Ali Ramadan fouled out, head faked East's Roy Sanders for a crucial layup late in the fourth to extend the Panthers' lead.

Schintzius said that by the time the East game ended, senior and junior forwards, Ali Ramadan and Donny Watkins, respectively, and senior point guard Brian Pappagallo had fouled out. Watkins and Pappagallo each scored 10.

"The (East) game could have gone either way when it was tied," said Sweet Home coach Paul Schintzius. "Thankfully, the clock ran out of time."

East coach Dennis Belote said 20 turnovers in the game and missed shots in the fourth quarter led to his team's downfall.

"I can't take anything away from Sweet Home," Belote added. "They shot the lights out."

Heading into the game, the Flames had the advantage inside with 6-foot-6 senior Brian Wallden and 6-foot-11 junior Mark Rutecki, and it seemed early on that both were going to kill the Panthers. Rutecki had two layups and Wallden had another as East jumped out to a 7-2 lead three minutes into the first quarter. The Flames led, 15-13, at the end of the quarter.

However, Ramadan and Watkins held Wallden and Rutecki to four points in the second quarter to help Sweet Home back into the game and the lead, 36-32, at halftime. Rutecki's two layups in the first quarter were the only baskets that he scored in the game.

Wallden did finish with 28 points, including three of five from three-point range and nine of 10 free throws, and grabbed 18 rebounds and blocked five shots. Junior Flames' guard Peter Heim

scored 21 points (four threes) and held Ramadan to four points. Junior Kevin Castine added five points, including a three.

East came into its game with the Panthers ranked seventh in Western New York large schools. Sweet Home was 10th.

Much like the East game, Schintzius said his team was lucky to have beaten Iroquois.

Ahead 54-53 with 11 seconds remaining in regulation, Pappagallo missed the back end of a one-and-one and with a second left, Iroquois sophomore Calvin Sluberski hit a driving, off-balance layup with under a second left, to tie the game at 55-55 and force overtime. Sluberski added a three in the extra session, but Sweet Home outscored Iroquois, 10-3. Six of the 10 points came from free throws.

The way the game started, you would have thought it was going to be a Sweet Home blowout.

The Panthers came out smoking, building a 16-7 advantage after the first quarter and stretched the lead to 29-11 with 3.5 minutes remaining in the

first half. But Iroquois went on a 10-0 run to close out the first half, including two three-pointers by Sluberski, to cut the Panthers' deficit to 29-21. By halftime, Ramadan, Christman and Pappagallo each had three fouls.

Sweet Home led, 46-38, after three quarters, but Iroquois played tough inside and took the lead a few times in the fourth. Six-foot-six Josh Walczyk scored 14 of his 16 points for Iroquois in the second half. All 14 points were layups, as Ramadan was in foul trouble. Walczyk also had 14 rebounds in the game.

Ramadan (24), Werts (20) and Pappagallo (10) scored in double figures for the Panthers.

East's other game last week was a hard-earned 71-63 home win over Lake Shore.

Lake Shore was ahead, 21-18, after the first quarter, but East forged ahead to take a 40-30 halftime lead and 58-52 advantage after three quarters.

Belote said he liked how his

team played in the fourth quarter.

"We worked our half-court offense well and played good defense," said Belote.

Wallden had 34 points, including four of eight threes, 22 rebounds, and six blocks. Wallden is averaging 75 percent from the free-throw line and 50 percent from three-point range.

"He practices the way he plays," said Belote. "He goes 100 percent in practice and makes the other kids on the team play hard. He's a coach's dream."

Rutecki almost posted a double-double with 11 points and nine rebounds. Senior Mark Guenther scored 11 points, hit two threes and hauled in six rebounds. Junior Kelse Lee only scored four points but provided a lot of hustle, said Belote.

Belote also lauded the defensive work of Castine and junior guard Mike Silvestri. Castine held Kyle DeNisco, one of Lake Shore's better players, to five points in the second half. DeNisco finished with 17. Silvestri held Kurby Driscoll, another of Lake

Shore's top scorers, to seven points.

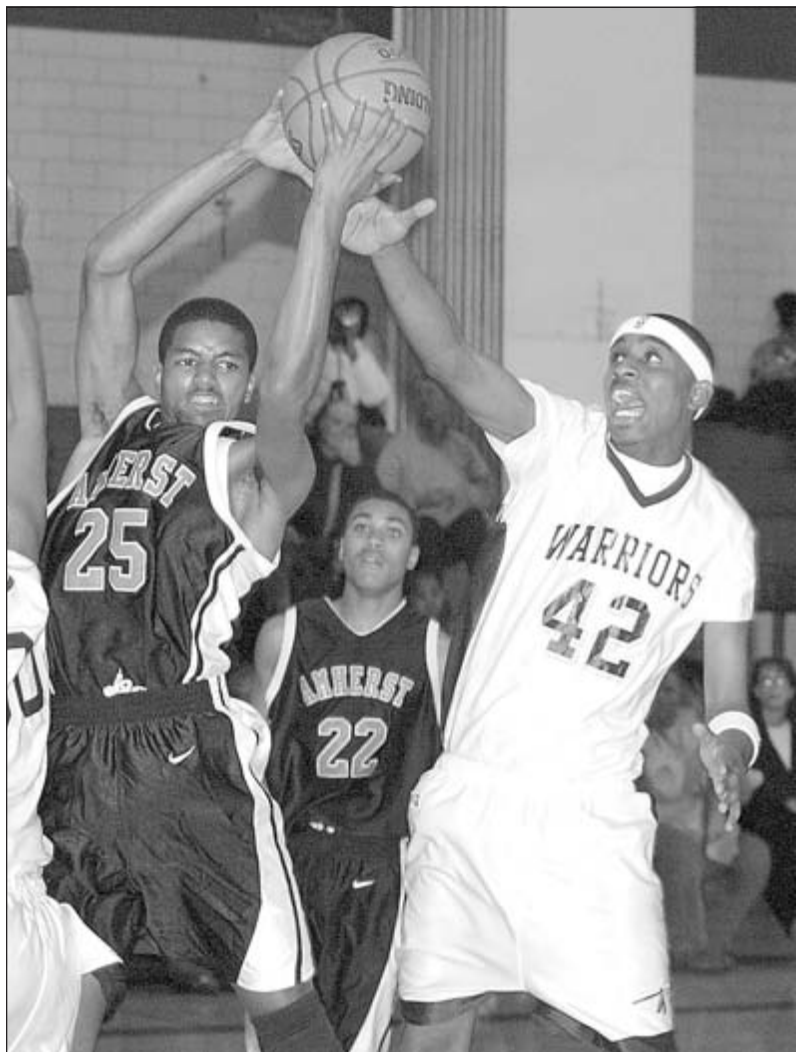
"I thought Castine and Silvestri's defensive work helped turn the game around for us," said Belote.

East and Sweet Home return to action in tournaments this week.

East (5-1, 2-1) faces Riverside at 6 p.m. on Thursday in the opening round of the Clarence Holiday Booster Tournament at Clarence High School. The winner plays Clarence or Niagara-Wheatfield at 7:30 p.m. on Friday. The consolation game is slated for a 6 p.m. tip-off on Friday.

Sweet Home (4-2) faces Kenmore West at 5 p.m. on Thursday in the opening round of the Ken-Ton Holiday Classic at Kenmore East. The winner plays Cardinal O'Hara or Kenmore East in the final at 6:30 p.m. on Friday. The consolation game is slated for a 5 p.m. tip-off.

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Amherst's Viron Hale, far left, looks for an open teammate while Cheektowaga's Marqus Remond tries for a steal during the Tigers' 60-55 loss on Dec. 18 at Cheektowaga. Also pictured is Amherst's Nico McLean (22).

Photo by Joe Eberle

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## Tigers drop two on the road

by PATRICK J. NAGY  
Reporter

The Amherst Central boys basketball team came into last week tied for the division lead in ECIC III. But after the week ended, the Tigers found themselves in the middle of the pack.

Amherst lost road games at Cheektowaga, 60-55, last Tuesday, and at Depew, 44-28, last Thursday.

The Tigers trailed Cheektowaga after the first (12-10), second (38-31) and third (52-46) quarters until junior guard Bert Smith nailed a three-pointer late in the fourth to give Amherst its first lead of the game, 53-52.

A short jumper from sophomore guard Nico McLean extended the Tigers' advantage to 55-52 until Cheektowaga's Dante Parker (21 points) hit a three with 40 seconds remaining to tie the score at 55. After an Amherst miss, the Warriors' Terrance McCollough (nine points) sank a three and after another Amherst miss, hit a two for the remaining five points of the contest.

McLean led the Tigers with 13 points. Senior forward Kurt Ebsary scored all 10 of his points in the third quarter, including seven straight, to bring Amherst back from a nine-point deficit. Many of Ebsary's points came off of hard work on the defensive side from Smith and junior guard Kevin Ford (two points), who disrupted

Cheektowaga's offense with defensive pressure.

"They deflected passes, forced bad shots and got steals in our half-court defense that disrupted their half-court offense," said Amherst coach Mike Chatelle.

Senior forward Viron Hale added eight points and grabbed 10 rebounds.

Cheektowaga's second-leading scorer was junior Niko Carter (11 points).

The Tigers' offense struggled at Depew. The Wildcats opened the game on a 14-0 run and led 16-3 after the first quarter. They extended the lead to 21-14 at halftime and 40-18 after three quarters.

"I'll take my chances in any game if we can hold a team to 44 points," said Chatelle. "We just couldn't get it done on the offensive end. They made us work for some shots, but we also missed some shots that we had good looks on."

No Amherst player scored in double figures and was led by Fisher's nine. Ebsary added seven.

Depew point guard Greg Osika led all scorers with 12 points.

Amherst (1-2, 2-4) returns to action at home against Pioneer at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 3. The Tigers' defense has been holding teams to 43.6 points. The offense is averaging 49.5 points.

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## Sweet Home hockey ties, loses to Timon

by PATRICK J. NAGY  
Reporter

The Sweet Home hockey team found out last week what they are made of against the top dog in the Section VI Western New York Varsity Hockey Federation Division II.

The Panthers tied Bishop Timon-St. Jude, 5-5, last Friday on the Amherst Pepsi Center Feature Rink then were defeated by Timon, 4-1, last Saturday at Niagara University's Dwyer Arena.

You would think a coach would be happier with a 5-5 tie rather than a 4-1 loss, but not Panthers coach Dave Gerspach.

"I was happier (with the loss) because of the way we ended the game," said Gerspach.

Timon scored three times in the first period on Saturday, scoring at 13:45, Phillip O'Connor (Ben Heitanan), 10:54, Gage Carrig (John Lesenhuber, Michael Cassidy, power-play goal) and 4:56, Jesse Kaiser (Michael Carrig, Gage Carrig, power-play goal) before Sweet Home's Chris Covell (Ryan Marko, Rich Beaudet) scored on the power play to make the score 3-1 at the end of the first.

Gage Carrig scored unassisted at 9:57 of the third to close out the scoring.

"After a shaky first 10 minutes, I thought we were the better team in the second and third period," said Gerspach. "We had a ton of chances and could not put it by their goalie."

In Thursday's meeting, the Panthers were the ones coming out of the gate the aggressor, getting goals from Covell (Marko, Richard Brooks), Marko (Dominic Puntillo, Brett Guynn) and Mike Campise (Adam Titanic) to build a 3-0 first period lead and increasing it to 4-0 after a goal by Marko (Covell) 17 seconds into the second period.

"The first period was probably our best period of hockey we've played this season," said Gerspach. "It shows what we're capable of doing. We did a lot of the things we practiced. Everything looked good."

But, as Gerspach, put it, his team "took the foot off the gas and took silly penalties to let Timon back in the game."

Two goals by Michael Cassidy (first one assisted by Michael Craig and Zach Williams; second assisted by Michael Craig) closed Timon's deficit to 4-2 after two periods. In the third, Mike McCarthy (Cassidy, Michael Craig) scored at 10:22 on the power play and Cassidy (Gage Carrig) scored at

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