

Commentary

Week's sports ledger full of must sees

As winter weather continues to sock Western New York with nerve-numbing temperatures, snow and ice, things will heat up this week with the approaching end to the winter sports season.

The high school basketball and hockey playoffs will take shape as the regular season comes to an end, and the athletes in individual sports will test themselves in the largest meets of the year.

Here's a look at what's on tap:

- When the Section VI wrestling class meets take to the mats this weekend, keep an eye on those 119-pound grapplers. That's where you'll find the best competition in Western New York.

From the Northtowns to the Southern Tier, it seems like nearly every school has a superstar at 119, making it probably the hottest-contested weight class in the area. Heading into the class meets, Fredonia senior Chris Conti is the king of the hill, ranked first in Western New York, but he'll be in the Class AA meet. Niagara Wheatfield senior Jehad Ali is ranked second and won't have to look far for a strong opponent in the Class AAAA meet. He'll have St. Joe's senior Taylor Golba, ranked third, and Lancaster senior David Miller in the mix, trying to take the title.

In the Class AAA meet, Maryvale senior Alex Bagne

and West Seneca East senior Nick Vitale should battle it out for the title along with Cheektowaga senior Keann Loman, Depew junior Ryan Baer, Medina sophomore Dominic Montesanti and Williamsville East senior Ryan Cravatta.

- Erie Community College's Bert Flickinger Center will host the Section VI Boys Swimming Championships this week, and the team to watch is Orchard Park.

The Quakers have regained the top spot in ECIC Division I and will send a platoon of star athletes such as Mike Danza, Phil Aronica, Dave Janca, Brett Doster and Barrett Erbe. The Quakers have posted the fastest times of the season, including two of the three relay races.

Iroquois and Canisius should also have strong contingents, while North Tonawanda diver Shawn Hoffman should finally win his first Section VI title after finishing third the past two years behind clubmates Ian O'Rourke (Grand Island) and Nathan Geary (Lancaster). Hoffman's high score of 361.5 this year is more than 140 points better than his nearest competition.

- Alden is the favorite to defend its title at the Section VI Rifle Championships Saturday at Alden High School.

The Bulldogs, led by Josh Gorski, went undefeated in ECIC and have the highest team total of the year at 1,331. Gorski has the season high score for prone (99).

- St. Joe's is the odds-on favorite to win the Large School Division in the Western New York Hockey Federation after compiling a 10-1-3 record. The Marauders will face eighth-seed Frontier (0-14-0) in the quarter-finals Thursday.

St. Joe's has the perfect balance of offense and defense, which has made the Marauders so difficult to beat this year. With league-leading scorers Cole Schneider (26 goals, 17 assists, 43 points) and Jeff Amico (18 points, 19 assists, 37 points) and league-leading goalie Mark Goulding (.958 save percentage, 1.07 goals against average), the Marauders will give challengers such as Lancaster, Williamsville North and Canisius several problems.



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Depth carries Sharks to club All-Catholic crown

by PATRICK J. NAGY
Reporter

Sacred Heart hasn't lost a girls' indoor track meet since the league began five years ago and its depth helped the team continue its unblemished record.

The Sharks won only two events at last Saturday's club All-Catholics at Lancaster's Field House but scored 103 points to win the five-team meet. Holy Angels was second with 78 points.

"Our depth pulled it out for us," said Sacred Heart coach Rod Sarkovics, who is also league chairman.

The Sharks placed in every event except shot put. Brittany Gibbons won the 600 in 1:50.4 and Emily Tutak, Natalie Wasilewski and Natalie Cappellazzo went second (2:02.7), fourth (2:07.7) and sixth (2:12.4), respectively.

Melissa Naab took home top honors in the long jump with a leap of 12-3.5. Gibbons placed fourth with an 11-10.

In the 50, Naab took second (7.2) and Christine Loftus placed fourth (7.5).

In the 750, Patterson came in second (2:29.1), Patterson was fourth (2:38.7) and Erin Wattengel finished sixth (2:51.6).

In the 1200, Patterson took second (4:20.1), Mary Russell was fourth (4:41) and Wattengel came in sixth (4:47.8).

The 4x150 relay of Loftus, Alyse Madison, Lindsay DelGrosso and Naab took second in 1:34. The 4x300 of Madison, Angelica Tan, DelGrosso and Naab finished third in 3:32.

Ginamarie Mule and Gibbons went 2-3 in the triple jump with leaps of 27-8.25 and 27-5.5, respectively.

"To their credit, everybody did what was expected," said Sarkovics. "It worked out really well."

Sarkovics doesn't know if the league will rejoin the Mon-Signor Martin Association next year. It has been a club league the last two years.

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Buffalo Wings forming youth roller hockey leagues

Youth leagues are forming for the spring/summer for Buffalo Wings Roller Hockey.

The league will play on Sunday mornings at the Amherst Pepsi Center, 1615 Amherst Manor Drive, Amherst, throughout the spring/summer months beginning in early May. You can form your own team of 8-14 players or enter as an individual sign-up.

The league strives for a highly professional vertically integrated in-line hockey entity with a complete line of roller hockey offerings for participants and spectators of all ages and both genders.

The Buffalo Wings' programs include camps and clinics to help improve the roller hockey skills of the youth. Camps and clinics will be run by Buffalo Wings Roller Hockey Organization president Eric Haak and some of the other pro players in the organization.

Fully coordinated house leagues, Nike-sponsored elite programs, as well as high school, college, junior, and pro teams will also be held.

The Buffalo Wings are also the official host of the 2008 Torhs National Championships (Tournament of Roller Hockey Series) to be held from July 4 to 13 and take up three rinks. They will also have tournament teams for players to try out for.

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East's

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entire fourth quarter and every time his team cut its deficit to three or four, Hamburg got the lead up to eight or nine.

Hamburg big man Blake McLimans scored nine of his 15 points in the fourth quarter and blocked six shots. McLimans scored two points in the first half.

"We played him tough for the first three quarters but he got some points in the fourth when Wallden left him to try to double team another player," said Belote.

Wallden finished with 20 points, 16 rebounds and two blocks. He hit two threes. No other East player was in double figures. Heim scored nine. Rutecki and Silvestri each had seven. Castine recorded three.

East only committed 10 turnovers.

South stunk against Orchard Park, dropping a 74-48, non-leaguer last Wednesday at OP.

"We could not have been any flatter or uninspired if we tried," said Monaco.

OP scored the first six points of the game and went ahead, 27-15, after the first quarter. South cut into OP's lead in the last four minutes of the second quarter, trapping the Quakers all over the place and outscoring them 17-4 to trail 38-33 by halftime.

Monaco thought the late first half surge would carry over into the second half and it didn't. OP scored the first 10 points of the third quarter.

South cut it to five but OP bumped the lead up to 15. They were up, 58-42, after the third

quarter.

"OP beat us but we let them beat us," said Monaco. "We did not fight back."

South shot 7 of 20 threes but 7 of 35 twos. In addition, they only made 13 of 26 free throws.

Coppola led South with 14 points and five assists. Licata added 12 points on 4 of 8 shooting from threes. Stasiak had nine points and six rebounds.

South had won 10 of its last 12 games coming into the Orchard Park game.

East and South returned to action on Tuesday in non-league games against great teams. East hosted Williamsville North (second in ECIC I) and South hosted Depew (ECIC III champions). Results of both games were unavailable before The Bee went to press. Each closes out the regular season portion of its schedule on the road on Thursday. East plays at Iroquois and South plays at Lake Shore. Both are 7:30 p.m. tip-offs.

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Williamsville South's Mark Coppola, far right, looks for an open teammate as Williamsville East players defend.

Photo by Joe Eberle
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