

## Commentary

# Pominville, Roy deserve credit for leadership roles

There's no denying Chris Drury and Daniel Briere were the heart and soul of the Buffalo Sabres the past two seasons. And seeing them walk out the door for the greener pastures of New York and Philadelphia served as a huge kick in the gut for the team.

But two more skaters have responded to the need for leadership on the ice and in the locker room. When the team is down, you can count on one of them to make an important play or score the big goal.

That's why Jason Pominville and Derek Roy should be commended for their work this season. It's not just about goals, assists, points and plus/minus ratings. Pominville and Roy are the go-to guys on the team, the ones to fill the roles left vacant by Drury and Briere. In a disappointing season, those two stars have shone brightest.

Pominville and Roy not only lead the team in points — Pominville has 78 and Roy has 77 through Sunday's win over Boston — they take the responsibility of answering all questions, hard and soft, from the media on a daily basis. They don't shy away from interviews after a troubling loss. They stand front and center and answer each question as honestly as they can, without sugar-coating anything.

Pominville and Roy, known to their teammates as Pommer and Royzie, have been such stand-up players this year, I'm making the case that one or both of them should be named the captain for next season. Pominville ratcheted up his game while serving as the team captain for the month of March with eight goals and 11 assists in 14 games. In that same stretch, when the team was playing do-or-die hockey and needed players to step up, Roy, who served as alternate captain for the month, tallied six goals and 13 assists. They played their best hockey at the end of the season, when the team needed it the most. That's the sign of leadership.

Maybe it's appropriate those two were both selected in the second round of the 2001 NHL Draft. They pair up nicely.

While we're handing out accolades for the Sabres, let's give a hearty "that a boy" to rookie defenseman Mike Weber. In 13 games, Weber has posted a plus-14 rating. He and fellow call-up Andrej Sekara (plus-five in 34 games) have been a wonderful surprise on the blue line and have played well enough to become full-time Sabres next year.

It would be easy to pile on Thomas Vanek for underachieving this year. The \$10-million man fell well short of last year's performance when he had 43 goals, 41 assists and an NHL-best plus-47. But the expectations for Vanek, who is tied with the Ranger's Scott Gomez and Briere as the highest-paid players in the league this year, were monumental. He would have had to improve greatly over last year's fantastic numbers for most fans to think he earned his paycheck. His numbers this year (32 goals, 28 assists, minus-five) don't make for a bad season. But not matching last year's output after signing such a large contract, makes him a target.

One player who deserves the criticism is Maxim Afinogenov, whose minus-14 rating is the worst on the team. Afinogenov, who holds the longest tenure in Buffalo with eight seasons, has just 10 goals and 17 points this year, a drastic fall from last year's 61-point performance.

Afinogenov will be a free agent after next season, so don't be surprised to see him traded.



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# New faces featured across North's roster

by **PATRICK J. NAGY**  
Reporter

There aren't many similarities between the 2007 and 2008 Williamsville North baseball rosters.

Thirteen players, including eight starters from last year's ECIC Division I championship team, graduated in June, leaving the majority of this spring's team coming from a JV team that went 18-3.

"I've lost six or seven (seniors) in one year but never 13," said North coach Jerry Scarcella. "I not only lost starters but also backups."

The good news is the players coming from JV should fit in nicely. Included in the newcomers are a solid group of junior pitchers - Jeff Teplitsky, Patrick O'Brien, Scott Herberger, Steve Pekarski and Matt Goraj.

Goraj has already been named the starter for North's opening game of the season, a non-league contest against Williamsville East at 4:30 p.m. on Monday, April 7 at home. He will probably see a lot of middle relief work.

Teplitsky is a left-handed pitcher. Herberger, O'Brien and Pekarski are hard-throwing right-handers.

Add in returning senior left-handed

pitchers Ben Zwierzchowski (3-1 in 2007) and Matt Fleming (1-0 in 2007) as well as middle reliever senior Mike Koch (1-0, three saves in 2007) and Scarcella has a nice problem on his hands on who will start and be a reliever.

"We're very deep at pitching," said Scarcella. "That's our strength. I have a number of arms I am comfortable with. It will keep us close in games. I don't see us getting blown out too much because I can play four pitchers if I have to."

The only returning starter is senior center fielder Austin Benschadle. Last year, Benschadle batted .484 in the leadoff spot. Benschadle has been a starter for the past three years.

"He's the catalyst," said Scarcella. "He gets things going. He hits, bunts, steals bases, runs and plays good defense."

Another returning player is junior cleanup batter Nick Fronczak, who hit .450 and totaled 22 RBIs in the designated hitter spot last year. Fronczak is penciled in at first base.

The only other returning player is senior Garrett Crage, who saw limited action last year. Crage and junior Matt Wagner are battling for the starting second base duties. Other starting positions have been locked up by juniors Marc Kadish (short-

stop), Alex Barth (third baseman), Steve Barth (right field), Anthony Longarzo (catcher) and sophomore James Nowicki (left field).

In addition to pitching, Scarcella sees team speed, something his teams haven't had in recent years, as a potential team strength. Scarcella cites Benschadle, Kadish, Nowicki, Alex and Steve Barth, Crage and senior outfielder Mike Bova as players who provide quickness.

Scarcella said his team has the potential to be good hitters but it remains to be seen because they have yet to go outside to practice.

Scarcella thinks the favorite in ECIC I is Jamestown but said every team in the League has a stud pitcher.

"There's a lot of talent here but it's hard to gauge where we are going to be," said Scarcella. "Any team can beat anybody but I think we can be in the middle of it. We can't make a lot of mistakes or give up free runs, especially against good teams like Jamestown."

"We have to play like a team," he continued. "I don't think we have one stud that will carry us through but we have a solid lineup. We have no glaring weaknesses. I think we will be very competitive and once playoffs come around, who knows. If our

pitching comes through, we should be very tough in the playoffs."

The team manager is Stephan Kothe. North finished 17-6 last year and lost to Orchard Park in the Section VI Class AA quarterfinals.

**Williamsville North 2008 Schedule**

4-7 East .....	4:30 p.m.
4-8 at St. Francis .....	4:30 p.m.
4-9 Orchard Park .....	4:30 p.m.
4-10 at Frontier .....	5 p.m.
4-19 ECIC-MMA Challenge at Dunn Tire Park .....	2 p.m.
4-20 ECIC-MMA Challenge at Dunn Tire Park .....	TBA
4-21 W.S. West .....	4:45 p.m.
4-23 Lancaster .....	4:45 p.m.
4-25 at Clarence .....	4:45 p.m.
4-29 Canisius .....	4:30 p.m.
4-30 at Jamestown .....	5:15 p.m.
5-2 at Orchard Park .....	5 p.m.
5-5 Frontier .....	4:30 p.m.
5-6 South .....	4:30 p.m.
5-7 at W.S. West .....	4:45 p.m.
5-9 at Lancaster .....	4:45 p.m.
5-10 at McQuaid (double header) 1 and 3 p.m.	
5-12 Clarence .....	4:45 p.m.
5-16 Jamestown .....	5:15 p.m.
5-22 at East .....	4:30 p.m.

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# Action continues in Buffalo In-Line Hockey Group

Buffalo In-Line Hockey Group action heated up in the major and junior divisions last Saturday at the EPIC Center.

## Major division

**Snipers 11, Firestorm 10**  
Eric Wright continued his outstanding play with a double hat trick for the Snipers.

Derrick LaViolette (Cheektowaga) and Brad Owens posted hat tricks for the Storm.

**Vikings 10, Stealth 5**  
David Campuzano's six goals and Amherst's Phil Mayer's strength were all the Vikings needed.

**Crush 12, Mulecats 4**  
Ryan Okon (Lancaster) was

like a bothersome fly all over the rink causing havoc. Rob Russell (Tonawanda) tallied six times as the Crush won two in a row.

**Blackhawks 9, Killer Pandas 6**  
The No. 1 team in the division stayed on top with this win.

Justin Swan (Tonawanda) had four goals and Kristian Knoell tallied three assists to lead the way.

**Reds 12, Warriors 9**  
Taylor Setlock (Tonawanda) outdueled Pat Smith (Amherst) with the goalies being a non-factor early on.

**Junior division**  
**Orangemen 7, Devils 6**  
Tyler Arno scored the game

winner in the fifth round of a shootout to give the Orangemen the win.

**Sharks 5, Maroons 1**  
The Sharks have been playing as well as any team in this division and this game was no exception.

Adam Terragnoli (Amherst) and Matt Dickinson and Matt Grichen led the Sharks' attack. Casey Brock was stellar in net.

**Knights 6, Penguins 3**  
The Knights stayed on top of the division with this win. Kevin Krawczyk scored five times.

**Gladiators 6, Capitals 4**  
Nick Antoniadis and Ben Spey-


er have led the Gladiators since Game One and did so again in this game by scoring all of the team's goals. Justin Smith played well in goal.

Tryouts for the BIHG 14 and under (1993) tournament team will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, April 6 at the Epic Center, 2793 Wehrle Drive, Williamsville. Tryouts for the 16 and under

(1991) tournament team will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, April 13 also at the Epic Center. You do not need to play BIHG house in order to tryout.

Also, prestigious regional tournaments and the largest youth in-line hockey tournament in North America are coming.

For more information, call Rich at 689-4090 or 773-1188.

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