

# Sports

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12

## Commentary

### Sorry Bills, there's someone else

Like many of the Buffalo faithful, I've always seen the Queen City as a football town, and like this town, the team has always existed at the heart of my sporting world, evidenced by the more than \$400 I drop on the Bills every year for season tickets.

However, the recent historic run by the Buffalo Sabres has helped to bridge that gap between football, my favorite sport, and hockey, formerly a distant second.

While the city literally came alive during the last few weeks of the Sabres season — the spring thaw correlating with the warm and hearty spirits of Sabres fans and Buffalonians alike — my experience with the Sabres was different than most.

Yes, I was in the corner bars, raising my glass and high-fiving my friends with every heart-stopping win. And yes, I also felt that sinking feeling in my stomach with every disheartening loss. But

I was also extremely lucky to be able to cover the Sabres during their triumphant season, actually talking to them in the locker room, watching a game from the press box, as well as being present during their locker clean-out at the end of the year.

Being around the Sabres was refreshing, given my knowledge of professional football and the constant, infantile whining of overpaid, immature athletes who seem to chase money in lieu of the spirit of sports and team success.

It's reassuring to hear comments like, "we fought for each other," and "this is the best group of players I've ever had the pleasure of working with," especially when, one league over, a player like Dallas Cowboys wide receiver Terrell Owens is griping about how \$20 million isn't enough to "feed his family."

The Sabres were real, down-to-earth guys, humble and low-key. You rarely got the sense that they were above you. And it almost always seemed like they weren't just playing to win for themselves, but playing to win this struggling area's first major sports championship.

They wanted to deliver a shimmering beacon of light to a region that has been financially and politically decimated in so many ways.

The Sabres were a true manifestation of grit and toughness, a team that pulled together to overcome the most daunting odds as injury after injury threatened to end their season. Yet through it all they trudged on, demonstrating the type of resolve that so many Buffalonians exhibit on a daily basis. Serving as representatives for a city that is constantly considered down and out, the Sabres were true underdogs in every sense of the word.

That's the difference between hockey and football. I've always felt that in hockey, with the struggles the league has endured over the past decade, the rewards were not as great as the sacrifice, certainly not when compared to the NFL's billion dollar, superstar-making machine. However, there's personal pride in hockey that goes well beyond big contracts and national recognition.

So while the Bills will always be number one in my heart, for better or, more recently, worse, the Sabres commitment to this city and its fans is definitely a close second.

e-mail: kenb@beenews.com



**KEN BARTOLOTTA**  
Reporter

## Horizon Martial Arts students earn 25 national titles at tourney

by BREANN HOWELL  
Editor

Students of Horizon Martial Arts in West Seneca took home 25 titles from the North American Federation of Martial Arts National Championships held May 25-27 in Philadelphia.

After competing in a New York State qualifying tournament this past October, 20 students from Horizon were selected to go to the national championships, according to Tim Hartman, the owner of the martial arts school.

"We had 20 competing from our school," he said. "The youngest was 6, and the oldest was 54."

Prior to the championship, Horizon held fund-raisers that earned \$3,600 to help cover the cost of competition fees and travel expenses.

Hartman explained that there were four basic divisions at the championship — beginner, intermediate, advanced and black belt. Competitors were then divided by age and sometimes by gender.

"It was our first time going to nationals, and we were the most supported group," Hartman said. "We were one of the most winning groups."

The head instructor attributes his team's success to good morale and diligent training.

"It comes back to training, but they (the students) have to do their homework," he said. "It's a partnership."

All of the 20 students who competed in nationals placed first, second or third in their divisions.

Scott Caffrey, Hartman, Ryan Monopolopolus, Zachary Patti, Alexander Watson and Justin Williams took first place in their divisions at hand form arnis, a system of Filipino martial arts.



**Horizon Martial Arts** students took home 25 national titles from the NAFMA championships held in Philadelphia May 25-27. Competitors pictured from top left are: Ryan Monopolopolus, Scott Caffrey, Michael Giaccotto, Craig Balcer, Michael McDonough Sr., Tim Hartman and Fern Monti. Pictured from bottom left are: Jacob Trzepkowski, Alex Watson, Sara Trzepkowski, Michael McDonough Jr., Rianna Correll, Patrick Miller, Alex Williams and Justin Williams.

Caffrey, Hartman, Monopolopolus, Watson, Williams and Dennis Jenner placed first in their division at weapon forms arnis.

Patrick Miller, Michael Giaccotto, Nicholas Hawley, Sarah Trzepkowski, and Watson placed first in their divisions at weapon sparring.

Rianna Correll, Michael McDonough Sr., Monopolopolus and Williams won first place in their divisions at hand sparring.

Hartman, who began training at martial arts as a teenager, also runs an international martial arts organization called the World Modern Arnis Alliance.

Horizon Martial Arts has been located at 252 Center Road for four years. For more information on Horizon, visit [www.horizonma.com](http://www.horizonma.com) or call 675-0899.

e-mail: bhowell@beenews.com

## Lady Indian seniors earn scholarships

Four female athletes from West Seneca West Senior High School were recently awarded athletic scholarships.

Lauren Kazmierczak and Kristie Ryan received \$250 scholarships from the Athletic Department's Wall of Fame Organization, while Nicole Williams and Courtney Ryan were given \$250 Blue and Gold Scholarships by the WSW Sports Boosters.

Kazmierczak played volleyball (9-12), basketball (9,10), and softball (9-12). She is a two-time MVP for volleyball and a three-time

Month for softball. She also received the Kiwanis Leadership Award for volleyball and is a Student of Excellence.

Kristie Ryan's academic average placed her 29th in the senior class. She is planning to attend Canisius College.

(Please turn to page 15)



Williams



C. Ryan



Kazmierczak



K. Ryan

## East, West excel at state track championships

Though neither team claimed a title, both West Seneca East and West Seneca West's girls track teams' representatives turned in solid performances at last weekend's state championships in Canton.

East junior Natalie Fildes placed fifth in the Federation

meet and sixth in Division I with her time of 12.37 seconds in the 100 meter dash, while sophomore Amanda Solly reset her own school record in the 3,000 by placing sixth in Division I and seventh in the Federation with her time of 10:05. It was the first outdoor track championships for both girls.

"All the work they did this year paid off for them," coach Paul Gregoire said. "They peaked at the right time. Once their race began, they were focused. They knew what they had to do."

West women's track and field team, meanwhile, completed its best season in

school history with two solid efforts on the campus of St. Lawrence University.

The 4x800 relay team of Emily Sullivan, Jill Caruana, Jordan Gibbons, and Kailey Sullivan broke the school record by over four seconds, finishing in 9:51.42. They are the first 4x800 relay, boys or

(Please turn to page 15)