

Niagara's Jones best among Little Three

HANKS TO a kindly editor, this reporter had the good fortune - or the fortune, anyway — to see the Little Three basketball teams play last week.

It was not a pretty sight.

St. Bonaventure got creamed by St. Joseph's. Niagara lost to Siena and Northeastern. And Canisius squeaked by an Army team that couldn't shoot straight.

The swallows come back to San Juan Capistrano and the buzzards return to Hinckley, Ohio. But those would be considered minor quirks of nature compared to a sighting of any of the Little Three in advanced post-season

But every game has its moments. Every team has its flashes of brilliance. And every reporter has an opinion. Here, based on limited viewing, is one watcher's lineup for this year's All-Little Three Team.

Patrick Jones, forward, Niagara. This was the easiest decision to make other than whether to park on Fifth Street for nothing or behind Niagara Falls Convention Center for \$2. Jones clearly is the best player in the Little Three. If there was any doubt, it was put to rest Monday when the 6-foot-6 senior put on a show that will be claimed to have been witnessed by many more than the 680 fans actually there.

Jones hit outside jumpers, inside trafficclearers, whatever he wanted, as he scored a career-high 41 points against Northeastern. He threw a pass between his legs you haven't seen since the Globetrotters were in town.

During the game, he climbed from 16th to 12th on the Purple Eagles' all-time scoring list, passing Manny Leaks, Joe Alexander, Charlie Hoxie and Larry Costello. And if you look in the Niagara record book to find out who else has scored 41 or more a game, you see only two names: Al Butler and Calvin Murphy.

Jeff Priah, forward, Canisius. The 6-5 senior seems to be more aggressive, offensively and defensively, than the other two candidates, Nixon Dyall of Canisius and Kenrick Hamilton of St. Bona. Priah electrified the crowd, and helped his cause in this corner, with two consecutive second-half dunks against Army. Dyall, a 6-7 sophomore, has a future. Hamilton, a 6-8 sophomore, looks more like a player than anybody on the sad Bona squad. But that's not saying too much.

Darren Brown, center, Niagara. Picking this group's center is not exactly like settling a Wilt Chamberlain-Bill Russell debate. Canisius' injured Ed Book has been replaced by green Mike O'Sullivan. Bona's Lovell "Tree" Doyle had two points and three rebounds all night. Brown, a 6-7 junior, played particularly well during a streak against Northeastern as he looked like a take-charge guy while scoring

four first-half buckets. Gregg Smith, guard, Canisius. Picking the guards on this team is difficult because there are so many good ones. You could make an argument that the team should just be Jones and four Canisius and/or Niagara guards. Smith, high scorer against Army with 13, was voted

player of the game. The 6-1 junior plays a steady, heady game both ways and heads a Griff guard corps that also includes candidates Rodney Brown, Chuck Giscombe and Joe Mc-Carthy, who actually won the game with two clutch free throws.

Mike Hartman, guard, Niagara. The Eagles also are gifted at the guards with 6-foot freshman Hartman and 5-10 junior Darrin Bossert. Bossert, who hit 5 of 7 three-pointers in two games, is a bigger scoring threat. But Hartman catches the eye with a kind of tough abandon that marks him as a team guy who knows what's going on out there.

Marty Marbach, coach, Canisius. An easy choice, since he was the only coach seen who came away with a win. He probably will get another when Canisius meets Niagara at the Aud Saturday night. This reporter won't see it. The kindly editor has him in Olean to witness poor Bona's attempt to snap its record fivegame home losing streak against West Virginia. Talk about your miracles.

Meehan to lecture Mogilny on 'reality' PULUK

Soviet players have tough time adjusting in NHL?

By ROBERT J. SUMMERS News Sports Reporter

Defector Alexander Mogilny is not the only Soviet hockey player with problems in North America.

Life in the National Hockey League has not been one big bowl of borscht and cream for Mogilny and the nine Soviets who came to North America with their government's permission this season.

Including Mogilny, half of the Soviets in the NHL have appeared in 21 or fewer games, and only four in at least 80 percent of their teams' games.

One player, Sports Illustrated cover boy Sergei Starikov, has been demoted to Utica by the New Jersey Devils. Another, Quebec goaltender Sergei Mylnikov, practices but does not play. Of the five players, including Mogil-

ny, who still are getting regular ice time, none is among the league's top 20 scorers and only one - Calgary's Sergei Makarov — is averaging at least a goal and/or an assist per game.

It seems the two players with the best statistics - Makarov and Igor Larionov of Vancouver — are extroverts who have adjusted best to life in

SOVIET PLAYERS IN THE NHL Player Team Calgary Flames Sergei Makarov Igor Larionov Vancouver Canucks Alexander Mogilny LW Buffalo Sabres LW Vladimir Krutov Vancouver Canucks Viacheslav Fetisov New Jersey Devils Minnesota North Stars Helmut Balderis New Jersey Devils Alexander Kasatonov Calgary Flames Sergei Priakin New Jersey Devils Sergei Starikov Goaltenders Team 2 4.48 Quebec Nordiques Sergei Mylnikov Statistics include Wednesday's games COLOD

North America and the NHL.

Makarov, a 31-year old right winger who technically is the top-scoring "rookie" in the league, "is a very sort of open kind of guy," said George Johnson, who covers the Flames for the Calgary Sun.

"He has got along just fine. He makes jokes. He kids around. He was driving the second day he got to Calgary. He does TV commercials for a Ford dealer," Johnson said.

A veteran of international play and travel with the Central Red Army and Soviet National teams, Makarov seems not to be overwhelmed by the NHL's travel and grueling schedule.

"With his international experience, he has seen all this stuff before. It's not a big deal," Johnson said.

Larionov, a 28-year-old center who played with Makarov on the Soviets' famed KLM Line, speaks fluent English and, as Mike Bemish of the Vancouver Sun put it, "has embraced North American culture."

"Somebody said he was the most North American Russian he has ever met. . . . He dresses stylishly, he lives in an apartment," Bemish said.

But even Larionov, the second-highest scoring Soviet, has had problems adjusting to life in the NHL. He has been quoted, "Nothing in my experience had ever prepared me for the NHL. It's a constant, uncompromising struggle."

"Travel is a killer," Bemish said. "But he (Larionov) was talking more

See Soviets Page D2

Sabres GM intent on bringing end to disruptive mess

By JIM KELLEY News Sports Reporter

The situation involving Buffalo Sabres forward Alexander Mogilny, his teammates and his friends is nothing less than a mess and General Manager Gerry Meehan is moving to clean it up.

"I will be meeting with Alexander shortly," Meehan said late Wednesday afternoon. "I'm going to sit him down and give him an understanding of what we're all about. It's a situation where he's going to get a lesson and a lecture

Meehan did not know exactly when that meeting would take place. At the time of his conversation with The News, it was assumed Mogilny still was making his way back from Chicago by bus.

Meehan made his remarks after a 96-hour period during which the Soviet-born hockey player:

Failed to show up for a scheduled flight to St. Louis and gave club officials almost no warning.

■ Told several teammates he was planning to quit hockey and indicated

See Sabres Page D2

sets sights on Olympics

Top woman skipper hailed as a contender

By ROSE CIOTTA News Staff Reporter

NEW YORK - Jody Swanson, America's yachtswoman of the year, has a lot to think about these days.

Even as she received accolades here Wednesday as Rolex Watch USA's top woman skipper, Buffalo's Swanson was looking to new challenges that many expect will include a campaign for the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, Spain.

"Jody is certainly one of our prime contenders at this point," said John Bonds, executive director of the United States Yacht Racing Union, the organization that sponsors Olympic qualifying events.

Bond said Swanson's recent victories, including her top finish among women skippers at this winter's Olympic Classes Regatta in Miami, have qualified Swanson for a spot on the U.S. Sailing Team. The selection means Swanson will

receive up to \$5,000 for expenses to compete in upcoming regattas leading to the Olympic qualifying trials in Long Beach, Calif., in the spring of

For her part, Swanson doesn't like to talk about her dreams of winning Olympic gold.

"I don't want the pressure," said Swanson, 24. "There is a long way to go before we even consider something like that. I don't want people to think because I've won a prestigious award it's a key to the Olympics."

When pressed, Swanson admits every athlete aspires to Olympic competition.

"I can't imagine anybody not wanting to go to the Olympics," she



Buffalo's Jody Swanson holds her Rolex award watch and crystal trophy.

And, she has taken key steps to position herself for it. This winter, she bought a 470, the 15-foot, hightech boat approved by the Olympics. Her model formerly was owned by Allison Jolly and Lynne Jewell Shore, the 1988 gold medal winners in Seoul, South Korea.

She also has teamed up with Cory Fischer Sertl of Rochester, an alternate to the 1988 games. Swanson said Sertl definitely plans an Olympic bid, but she's not sure yet if she plans to join her.

"We're going to take it one step at a time," said Swanson, who wants to concentrate this year on learning how to get the most out of the 470, a boat she admits to knowing little about. She's also still in awe at being selected for the prestigious Rolex award.

Larry Klein, the yachtsman of the year, used his honor to announce plans to field an America's Cup team that would fly the flag of the San Diego Yacht Club.

"When you look at the list of people (who have won before), you have a hard time believing your name is going to show up on the list," Swanson told an audience at the New York Yacht Club Wednesday.

She also said she was uncomfortable taking the award because "sailing is a team sport" and "my crew got me here."

See Swanson Page D2

tackle since 1980, is due to meet

49ers and Indianapolis Colts have

expressed the strongest interest in

acquiring him. He also has met

with representatives of the New

the teams taking a long look at

Harmon, who is without a con-

tract and known to have told the

Bills' brass he won't play in Buffa-

lo in 1990. Harmon's popularity

in town has been at an all-time

The Denver Broncos are among

England Patriots.

Back pains end Lemieux's point streak

Associated Press

NEW YORK - Mario Lemieux, who couldn't be stopped for 46 games by NHL teams, finally stopped himself.

Unable to continue because his back was "too sore," the Pittsburgh center left after two periods of Wednesday night's 4-3 overtime victory over the New York Rangers.

And with his premature exit went Lemieux's 46-game point-scoring streak, the second-longest in NHL his-

"The Rangers didn't stop Mario's streak - his back did," Pittsburgh coach Craig Patrick said. "His back was too stiff to play tonight. He tried a regular shift, but he didn't have any strength.

"He tried to play the power plays in the second but he didn't have any strength for that, either, so he didn't come out for the third."

The big center had been playing in pain for much of the last two months, locked into the lineup by his pursuit of Wayne Gretzky's record 51-game scoring streak, set during the 1983-84 season with Edmonton.

"If it wasn't for the streak, I wouldn't have played every game,' Lemieux said. "But even though I was hurt, I thought I could help the team. I wouldn't have played if I thought I was hurting the team."

Lemieux was sitting in the trainer's room when his teammates pulled the game out on Troy Loney's goal with 1:27 left in overtime.

Kelly Kisio's second goal of the night, at 9:32 of the third period, had given the Rangers a 3-2 lead before Coffey tied it with his second goal at

The last time Lemieux failed to score a point was in a 5-1 loss to the Montreal Canadiens on Oct. 28 at the Montreal Forum. During his 46-game streak, Lemieux compiled 39 goals and 64 assists for 103 points. He leads the NHL with 121 points.

Cornerback Carl Mims is most sought-after of Bills' free agents

By VIC CARUCCI News Sports Reporter

Who is the hottest of the Buffalo Bills' unprotected free agents?

If you guessed Fred Smerlas, Art Still, James Lofton, Joe Devlin or any of the players on the 21-man list who were active for the team in 1989, guess again.

According to National Football League sources, the hottest of the Bills players left unprotected Feb. l is cornerback Carl Mims, who spent all of last season on the injured-reserve list.

Mims has heard from as many as 15 teams, NFL sources say, that are interested in signing him without compensating the Bills (such is the case for all unprotected NFL players through April 1). Apparently, those clubs see the same thing that prompted the Bills to the NFL's version of a mid-winter clearance sale, known as Plan B.

Of course, Mims first must rebound from a dislocated ankle that kept him on the Bills' injured had a lot of calls. There are a lot

reserve list from the moment he joined them. It is the second physical problem he has had since his senior year at Sam Houston State: he was drafted by the Washington Redskins in the fifth round in 1988. He suffered a broken leg in his final college season and spent all of his rookie year recovering on IR with the Redskins, who then gave him his release. The strongest pitch Mims has

received since being left unprotected is from the San Diego Chargers, whose new general manager, Bobby Beathard, was responsible for the Redskins' selecting him in the '88 draft.

Meanwhile, the Bills have been anything but aggressive in their pursuit of other teams' unprotected players. They aren't expected to sign more than a few, and don't plan any serious contract discussign him as a free agent in October sions with those free agents until - great speed. And he plays a the end of the month. They think position that offers little talent to their best hope for plugging holes is through the draft.

"We're really taking a lowkeyed approach," Bills assistant GM Bob Ferguson says. "We've



"We're really taking a low-keyed approach. We've had a lot of calls. There are a lot of guys who want to come in here. But we've contacted just a few."

Bob Ferguson Bills assistant GM

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The Bills started out with a list of 52 unprotected players who piqued their interest, and have whittled it to fewer than 10.

Among those they've consid- cut in October and signed by the ered is Paul Frazier, a running Seahawks. back from the New Orleans Saints. His agent is Ted Marchi- Harmon and wide receiver Flip broda Jr., son of the Bills offen- Johnson are known to have resive coordinator.

last year as a walk-on free agent roughly a half-dozen clubs each. and had 25 carries for 112 yards,

Another consideration for the

Bills is third-year defensive end Elston Ridgle, left unprotected by the Seattle Seahawks. Ridgle began last season with the Bills, was

Smerlas, running back Ronni ceived the second-most inquiries Frazier, who made the Saints among the unprotected Bills, at Smerlas, the Bills' starting nose

low since he dropped a pass in the end zone in the final seconds of the Bills' Jan. 6 playoff loss to the Cleveland Browns. Johnson, who was a disappoint-

ment as a starter and eventually lost his spot in the lineup to Lofton, has attracted interest from a few teams. Like Harmon, he lacks a contract and has expressed a desire to leave the Bills.

Surprisingly, Still has heard from about four teams, according to his agent, Tony Agnone. At 34, Still is seen by the Bills as no longer having the pass-rush skills he once possessed and they have

told him he isn't in their plans for the '90 season. However, he was with representatives of the San Francisco 49ers this week. The troubled by a sore shoulder last year, and another club might be willing to take a chance on him for one year.

Lofton was contacted by the Philadelphia Eagles, who are desperate for a big-play receiver.

Devlin, the only other unprotected Bill to be told he was not part of the team's plans this year, has not drawn much interest.

The Bills have re-signed fullback Sean Doctor, their sixthround draft choice last year whom they released after his return from a steroids suspension.

The Bills had offered the Buffalo native a spot on their developmental squad, but he refused, opting to pursue an opportunity elsewhere in the NFL. Doctor recently failed a Green Bay Packers physical examination because of a. knee problem he developed at Marshall University.

The Bills have also signed linebacker Wes Pritchett, a member of the developmental squad, to a regular contract.

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