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Empire Junior Report: Friday, February 24, 2012

Volume 1 Issue 20 Week ending Sunday, February 19, 2012

Upcoming Weekend Games:

The Empire League West Conference will close the regular season this weekend with the remaining 5 games on tap. Playoffs begin in the East and South Conferences.

A complete schedule of league games can be found on line at:

<http://www.pointstreak.com/stats/pro/leagueschedule.html?leagueid=362&seasonid=7391>

Visit the Empire Junior Hockey League at:

www.empirehockey.com

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK

This section will be used to promote our **Players of the Week**. Each week the League will select a Forward, Defense and Goaltender as Players of the Week.

Teams are to make nominations no later than Tuesday of each week by 6pm. Players of the Week will be announced on Friday's.

This week's Players are:

Goaltender: Graham Hunt - New England
Forward: Tyler Drevitch - Boston Bandits
Defense: Grant Gallo - Boston Bandits

See their write up's next page.

Congratulations to these fine players.

Make submissions, along with picture to Pete Preteroti at: SportsNiag@aol.com

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK (Week ending February 19, 2012)



Goalie - Graham Hunt - NE Huskies - 95 (Concord, MA)

Graham picked up his 8 and 9th win of the season in the last weekend of play. The rookie posted a shutout against the South Shore Kings on Saturday night making 37 saves. Graham then continued on Sunday making 30 saves in the 7-2 win over the Bay State Breakers.



Defense - Grant Gallo - Boston Bandits - 93' (San Diego, CA)

Grant Gallo had a great weekend for the Bandits. In the three wins over the Jr Bruins, Salem and Springfield he had 6 points on 2 goals and 4 assists and was +4. He helped the Bandits to three victories playing good steady defense while chipping offensively.



Forward - Tyler Drevitch - Boston Bandits - 95' (Middleboro, MA)

Tyler Drevitch led the Boston Bandits to 3 big wins over the final weekend of the regular season to help move the Bandits up another spot in the standings. He recorded 10 points on 6 goals and 4 assists and was +6. Tyler scored two goals against the Jr Bruins including the game winner in OT in a dramatic come from behind victory. He added a goal and two assists in the win against Salem. Then against Springfield, with the winner receiving the higher seed, Tyler led the Bandits to victory with three goals and two assists.

Florida Eels Forward Steve Fister: An example in Leadership



The **Florida Eels** coaching staff wants to honor one of our players: **Steve Fister**. Steve is really the heart and soul of the Eels this year. He is a living example for all of us on the Eels and Empire Junior Hockey League.

No you won't find Steve Fister's name on the top scoring list in the league stats nor for the Eels. No you won't find his name in the assist column or goals against leaders in goal. Yet, despite his absence in the record book, he will go down as one of the top individuals who ever put on a Florida Eels Jersey and an exemplary player ever to play in the Empire League. Coach Scarpaci holds him out there with some of his decorated players of the past. Yes along side of RJ Boyd, Teddy Ruth Jari Sanders and the dozens of the 72 Eel alumni who went on to play college hockey.

You see Steve was scouted by coach Scarpaci this last summer. He is one of 11 players brought in from the greater Chicago area to have joined the Eels this year. Coach Scarpaci liked Fister's size, strength and quickness. Coach Scarpaci was impressed the way Fister drove to the net and his nice soft hands. Coach Scarpaci expected Fister to start with the Empire team and gradually move up the latter to the EJHL South team. From the outset Fister was great around the locker room. He showed signs of leadership. He took charge and was integrating so many of the players who were brought in this year. Indeed, there were boys from St. Louis, Denver, Michigan, San Jose, Ohio, Boston and New Hampshire to name a few.

Regrettably tragedy struck. In the Eels second preseason showcase of the young season Steve Fister's life was inalterably changed forever. We were at the New Jersey Hitmen Showcase. We just came off some big early pre season wins playing teams from Wisconsin, Tampa Jrs, USF (an ACHA Div 2 school in Tampa) and several other teams in the Empire South. Now we were trying to carry the excitement to New Jersey. This was our first year with the Empire League. We were all so excited and buzzing about.

Then Steve was hit at center ice. A strike to the head. Anyone watching the game knew right then and there this was not a typical injury. The contact struck his head quite badly and he went down like a tree cut down in the forest. The EMT staff at New Jersey responded immediately and he was removed from the ice and shortly thereafter transported to the local hospital. Steve could not remain awake or consciousness for more than a minute at a time. It was terrifying moments. Fister's parents watched it all on Fasthockey from their home in Chicago. In fact due to the serious nature of the concussion, the doctors advised that he could not return back to Florida by plane. Indeed they recommended that he go home to Chicago to be treated there.

Mr. Fister flew in immediately and had to rent a car to bring Steve back to Chicago. The diagnosis was he had a major concussion. He lost partial long-term memory and almost all short-term memory.

Young Fister continued to seek medical treatment in Chicago but the prognosis was not good. He was diagnosed with a serious enough concussion that would keep him out of the game for 1 month that later extended to 2 months and then 3 and 4 and 5 months. Ultimately the doctors determined he had sustained brain injury that would keep him out for an indeterminate amount of time. Due to the nature of the injury he was also not allowed to continue with education of part time college work.

Steve Fister was not about to quit. No he returned to the Eels in Florida. He attended practices (not on the ice) and assisted the coaches and players prepare for upcoming games and showcases. He assisted with chalk talk and video analysis. He was determined to be part of the team and he was going to be there and contribute one way or another.

As a coach it gave me goose bumps. Steve has showed so much dedication and intensive fortitude. He has shown tremendous resolve in seeking any and all medical help to make it back. He has shown enormous strength and courage in his quest to be part of the team. He is living example of what a team player is about. The Eels have had enormous alumni who have gone on to play at schools like the University of Maine, Boston College, University of Mass Lowell, Sacred Heart College, Bentley College, Plymouth State College, Concordia University, Castleton in Maine and Skidmore to name a few. I cannot tell you I have seen any with more heart, dedication and courage than Steve Fister. Deep in my heart I know Steve will make a comeback next year. There is no doubt if anyone has the desire and determination to do it is Steve Fister. Regardless however, if Steve does not play another day of hockey in his life, the Sport he admires and loves so much, we all know he will achieve all the greatness that one can get in life. Anyone who has the unselfishness and passion as this young man has shown to all of his fellow teammates and coaches we know he will go on to become a tremendous citizen for the USA for us to be proud of.

When we think of players with concussions, we all think of course of Crosby. No doubt one of the best players who ever played the game. He will be missed indeed. However, I for one will always be reminded of Steve Fister. Not a boy playing for money just passion and love. There are so many young men like Steve who are eliminated from hockey because of these injuries. I simply ask all of us who are more fortunate to have not sustained a career ending injury to give pause and thanks and maybe a prayer. That is why I asked for honorable recognition of this courageous young man.





The **Jersey Hitmen** are proud to announce that Empire team alumni Matt Weis have accepted a scholarship to Ohio State University for the fall of 2014. Weis, currently a high school junior, has made a big splash with the league leading Green Bay Gamblers of the USHL. Since Weis was added to the Green Bay roster, just after Christmas he has amassed 10 points in 17 games and is a +6.

“Ohio State will be getting a player with tremendous work ethic and a fantastic hockey IQ.” Commented coach Barling. “We at the Hitmen are very pleased for Matt and wish him nothing but success as his career continues to flourish.”

Weis becomes the 5th member of the 2010-11 Hitmen Empire squad to make a division one commitment this season, and the 8th in the past two seasons. He follows former line mate Collin MacDonald (UNH), RJ Burns (USMA), Connor Clifton (Quinnipiac) and Anthony Stolarz (Nebraska-Omaha).

Weis set a Hitmen rookie record during the 2010-11 season by tallying 17G-22A-39PTS in 31 games played.

Jr. Blades Conclude Regular Season Smashing League Records



Estero, Fla. – The Florida Jr. Blades wrapped the regular season shutting out the Atlanta Knights 5-0 and clinching multiple Empire League records.

The 38-1-0-1 Jr. Blades now hold the best record in the Empire Hockey League’s 15-year history. Their .936 winning percentage is also unrivaled, including a flawless 20-0-0 home record. The second-year club holds the best record for the 2011-2012 season out of all 176 teams in Tier I, Tier II and Tier III leagues in the United States.

“This has been the best season I’ve ever had, and the best team I’ve ever been on,” said 19-year-old goaltender Eric Sugrue, who registered the shutout vs. the Knights. “I’m so proud of my 24 brothers - every ounce of blood, sweat and tears through these last 40 games has been worth it.”

The Jr. Blades’ depth and scoring finesse kept the squad at the top of the league’s special teams throughout the organization’s sophomore season. They concluded the regular season #1 in shorthanded goals (20), #1 in penalty kill percentage (92.70), #2 in power-play percentage (25.20) and #2 in power-play goals (55).

The Jr. Blades outscored their opponents a combined 317-66 in 40 games. The team smashed the previous record held by the Boston Jr. Bruins, who recorded 313 goals in 2010-2011. The Jr. Blades also edged out the previous holders of the goals against record, only allowing 66 goals, breaking the previous 69 GA record held by the New York Applecore in 2004-2005.

"It is an honor to be considered a top Empire Junior Hockey League team," said associate coach Jake Laime. "The Empire League has a rich history in player development and is considered one of the best junior leagues in the United States."

Along with team achievements, individual players have earned league honors.

The Jr. Blades' crease is home to the #1 and #4 best goaltenders in the league. Second-year goalie Joe Keyser is the best in the league, with a 23-0-1-4 record, allowing only 1.49 goals per game and an incredible .940 win percentage. First-year Jr. Blade Eric Sugrue is ranked fourth in the Empire with a 15-1-0-3 record, 2.11 GAA and .915 win percentage.

"The success this incredible group of young-men has achieved has everything to do with their work ethic and their relentless pursuit to achieve their personal best," said head coach and general manager Tad O'Had. "These accomplishments haven't occurred through luck. It has been achieved through an incredible amount of focus, determination, hard work and grit. This is a special team with an impressive mindset."

The Jr. Blades also boast the top-two offensive defenseman in the league. Defenseman Ty Lasker is ranked #1 overall, with 12 goals, 36 assists for 48 points in 40 games. Team captain and second-year Jr. Blade James Hyatt is ranked just under Lasker, with 15 goals, 26 assists for 41 points in 38 games.

Other ranked defenseman:

#9 Blake O'Neill (12g, 20a, 32pts, 39GP)

#14 Ross Kovacs (9g, 20a, 29pts, 39GP)

#16 Kristian Avellanet (6g, 22a, 28pts, 32GP)

Ranked forwards:

#6 J.P. Larmoyeux (31g, 48a, 79p, 40GP)

#7 D.J. Thomas (41g, 36a, 77 pts, 38GP)

#8 Joshua Koerner (39g, 38a, 77 pts, 39GP)

#13 Eryn Siracusa (20g, 50a, 70 pts, 37 GP)

BOSTON BANDITS Sweep Weekend Games, head into playoffs



The **Boston Bandits** finished the regular season on a winning note, sweeping their games against the Boston Jr. Bruins

Salem Ice Dogs and Springfield Pics. In the first game of the weekend the Bandits hosted the Jr. Bruins who had beaten them good the last time they played. The Bandits were not to be denied on this night even though they fell behind early 3-1. In the second Grant Gallo (93') got the Bandits back to within one and then on the PP Tyler Drevitch (95') tied the game up at 3-3. In the third the Jr. Bruins would take the lead on a PP goal of their own but the Bandits PP responded on a Paul Fregeau (93') goal. The game went to overtime and the Bandits Tyler Drevitch with his second of the game would score the game winner. Ryan McCarthy (93') stopped 41 of 45 shots. **BANDITS 5 Jr Bruins 4 OT**

In the second game the Bandits traveled to Everett, MA to take on the Salem Ice Dogs. The Bandits wasted no time taking the game over with three first period goals. The Ice Dogs would score two of their own in the second to close within one but the Bandits took over the game in the third with three more goals. The Bandits out shot Salem 65-25. Leading the offense was Tyler Drevitch and Paul Fregeau with a goal and two assists each. Also scoring were Grant Gallo, Mike Taormina (96'), Dylan Santos (92'), and Connor Callow (93'). **BANDITS 6 Salem Ice Dogs 2**

The final game of the weekend and the regular season was against the Springfield Pics. The winner would claim sixth place in the division, loser seventh. Again the Bandits came out flying in the first period, outshooting the Pics 15 -7 and taking a 4-1 lead. The teams would trade goals a few times with the Bandits prevailing. Again Tyler Drevitch lead the Bandits with 5 points on 3 goals and 2 assists. Paul Fregeau had 4 points on 2 goals and 2 assists. Evan Jackson (94') and Will Platt (94') had the other goals. **BANDITS 7 Springfield Pics 3**

Bandits to play South Shore in Playoffs:

The Bandits finished sixth in the Eastern Conference and will play the third seeded South Shore Kings. The Bandits finished with a record of 21-15-4. The Bandits enter the playoffs after climbing up the standings, On December 2nd the Bandits were 5-9-2 and found themselves out of the playoff picture but all the hard work started paying off and since then the Bandits have a record of 16-6-2. All playoff games for the first round will be played in Hooksett, NH The Bandits playoff schedule is: Friday February 24 at 7:00PM and Saturday February 25 at 1:30PM

Empire South Report

The Empire South wrapped up its regular season this past weekend. Here's a look back at the games.

Friday, February 17th --

Hampton Roads Whalers 9, Space Coast Hurricanes 0

An 8-goal second period broke open a scoreless tie and sent the Whalers on to the win. Ryan Abshear led Hampton Roads with a goal and 4 assists, while Grant Laughrey stopped all 17 shots he faced. Ian Shidlofsky made 52 saves for the Hurricanes. Space Coast was 0 for 10 on the power play with a shorthanded goal against, Hampton Roads was 3 for 11 on the power play.

Saturday, February 18th --

Hampton Roads Whalers 7, Space Coast Hurricanes 1

4 goals in the first and 3 more in the second sent the Whalers on to the win. Ryan Gullett and Brandon Large scored two goals each for Hampton Roads, Holden Melgoza made 15 saves. For Space Coast, Tom Hammond scored the lone goal, Patrick Tepedino made 42 saves. The Whalers were 0-3 on the power play, the Hurricanes were 0 for 4.

Hampton Roads Whalers 9, Space Coast Hurricanes 1

A potent power play helped Hampton Roads to the win. Alpee Herion tallied 3 goals and an assist and Alan Johnson had 17 saves for the Whalers, who went 6 for 13 on the power play. Tom Hammond again scored the only Space Coast goal, while Ian Shidlofsky made 69 saves. The Hurricanes were 1 for 8 on the power play.

Florida Junior Blades 3, Atlanta Knights 2

JP Larmoyeux scored twice and DJ Thomas once for the Blades, who got 24 saves from Joseph Keyser. For Atlanta, Boris Nnyazev and Dan Fendius scored goals, Sean Davis made 33 saves. Florida was 1 for 6 on the power play, Atlanta was 0 for 6.

Tampa Bay Juniors 7, Florida Eels 2

A four-goal second period helped lift the Juniors to the win. Michael Hirschauer scored 3 goals, Dustin Disbro 2 and both Nick Reed and Daniel Fritz 1 each. Aaron Wise was solid in net, making 29 saves. Domick Rovito and Erik Allard scored for the Eels, Jacob Widmer and Travus McDonald combined for 33 saves. Tampa Bay was 2 for 6 on the power play, the Eels were 1 for 5.

Sunday, February 19th --

Florida Junior Blades 5, Atlanta Knights 0

The Junior Blades scored all five of their goals in the second period. Eryn Siracusa and JP Larmoyeux had a goal and 2 assists each, while Eric Sugrue made 32 saves. For Atlanta, Sean Davis made 31 saves. Florida was 1 for 2 on the power play and 7 of 7 on the penalty kill.

East Coast Eagles 9, Space Coast Eagles 0

East Coast had 3 goals in the first to set the stage for an overwhelming third period in which they scored 5 goals and outshot Space Coast 28-0 on their way to the 9-0 win, outshooting the Canes 73-11. Josh

Martinez had 2 goals and 2 assists for East Coast, Sam Banasiewicz 2 goals and AJ Seffels, Brian Clare, Graff Richards and Matthew Burleson had a goal and assist each. Spencer Braswell made 11 saves. The Eagles were 1 for 3 on the power play and 3 of 3 on the penalty kill.

Monday, February 20th --

East Coast Eagles 7, Space Coast Hurricanes 2

Four straight goals to open the second period broke open a 1-goal game and propelled the Eagles to the win. For East Coast, Kevin Mullaney, Chris Magee, Sam Banasiewicz and Josh Martinez had a goal and assist each, while Scott Jackson made 19 saves. For Space Coast, Stephen Lojo and Tom Hammond scored 1 goal each, Ian Shidlofsky had 55 saves. East Coast was 1 for 4 on the power play and 5 of 5 on the penalty kill.

Here are some good Junior Blogs to follow:

USA Junior Hockey: <http://www.usacollegehockey.com/cgi-bin/UBBCGI/ultimatebb.cgi>

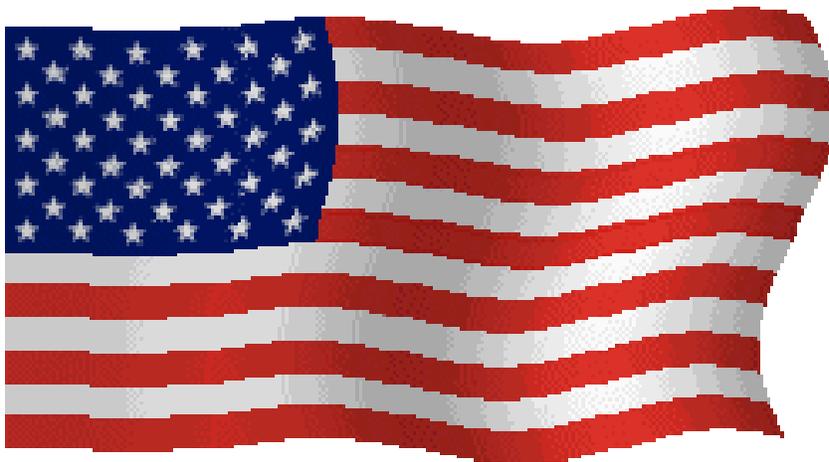
A great board for Junior Hockey discussion. I post in here all the time and am a moderator.

American Junior Hockey: <http://www.americanjuniorhockey.com/>

Please give us your feedback on this Newsletter and make sure to get it into the hands of your players and parents. This is only our first issue. It will only be as good as you make it. Make sure to keep news flowing in. sportsniag@aol.com

Pete Preteroti

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GOD BLESS THE USA

