

Five programs represented on First Team

All-Bee Girls Hockey

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by BRYAN JACKSON Reporter



The All-Bee First Team all-stars came from across The Bee's coverage area and include, first row, Brooke Becker, Frontier/ Lake Shore/Orchard Park; Mia Wendell, Williamsville; Emma Roland, Williamsville; second row, Abigail Blair, Kenmore/Grand Island; Lilli Adimey, Clarence/Sweet Home/Amherst; Mary Kromer, FLOP; Jersey Phillips, Lancaster/Iroquois/Depew; Jenna Cavaleri, Williamsville; and Coach of the Year Kevin Miller, LID. Photo by Don Daly Purchase color photos at www.BeeNews.com

The 2019-20 All-Bee Girls Hockey First Team consists of players from five of the seven programs in The Bee's coverage area, with Western New York Girls Varsity Ice Hockey Federation Champion and state title finalist Williamsville leading the way with three selections.

In addition, Williamsville's Emma Roland earned Co-Player of the Year honors, along with Frontier/Lake Shore/Orchard Park's Brooke Becker, a three-time reigning Player of the Year selection.

Kenmore/Grand Island, Lancaster/Iroquois/Depew and Clarence/Amherst/Sweet Home join Williamsville and FLOP with First-Team selections.

Four players are first-time First-team representatives, while the four — including Roland and Becker — are repeat selections.

Mary Kromer, Forward

Frontier/Lake Shore/

Orchard Park

Mary Kromer has been a potent and consistent threat during her four-year FLOP career.

The Lake Shore senior followed up a 32-point 2018-19 season with a 29-point effort this season, good for fifth in the league. Kromer's 16 goals and 13 assists — which helped FLOP to semifinal appearances in both the federation and Section VI playoffs — pushed her into the No. 8 spot on the all-time scoring list with 115 career points.

While Kromer's offensive skills are obvious, what makes her one of the best is her indefatigable work ethic, said FLOP assistant coach Lucian Forucci.

"We would have a 5:30 a.m. practice, and we'd finish at 6:30, and she would stay on the ice for an extra 15 minutes doing sprint work either with her older sister, with Brooke [Becker] at times and sometimes even just by herself," he said. "I think that self-motivation, that work ethic — on top of just having natural talents — has really solidified her as a top player to come out of our league.

Kromer, who tied for third this season with four game-winning goals, proved to be an indispensable leader on the bench, as well. In fact, during a timeout midway through the season when trying to spark the team, the senior uttered what would become FLOP's motto for the rest of the year: All gas, no brakes.

"That's just the type of player that she is," Forucci said. "She goes all-out, all the time. She gives you 110% whether it's practice [or] in a game."

Kromer plays club hockey for the Stoney Creek Junior Sabres out of Stoney Creek, Ontario, Canada. In the fall, she will team up with fellow All-Bee First Team all-star Jersey Phillips at Mercyhurst University in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Jersey Phillips, Forward

Lancaster/Iroquois/Depew

Jersey Phillips is a scorer, plain and simple.

The LID forward and Depew senior led the federation in points per game (2.22) and finished second in total points (40). Her 22 goals were second-most in 2019-20, and her 18 assists tied her for first in the category. Phillips anchored LID's top line that wreaked havoc on opposing defenses and led her team to the No. 1 seed in the playoffs and a runner-up finish in the federation playoffs.

Kevin Miller, in his first year at the helm, admitted taking over a team with one of the best players in the league eased his transition from the boys game to the girls side.

"You could say I was a little bit lucky, no question about it, to have one of the league's best players, but not just one of the best players, she's really one of the best leaders any coach could possibly ask for," Miller, who previously headed up Lancaster's top-flight boys team, said. "She did a lot off the ice to just create a positive attitude for the team and to lift everybody within the team. She had her own natural abilities of putting pucks in the net, but she was probably one of the most positive leaders a coach could ask for. I've had a lot of really great captains in my day, and Jersey is certainly one of them, as well."

Miller said Phillips' skills and leadership would be sorely missed next season, but he could not understate her contribution toward building LID's program.

“The girls that are returning for next year, we talked about what kind of atmosphere we had this year, and a lot of it had to do with Jersey,” he said. “Hopefully it spreads to future years, because if we have that, good things really do happen.”

Phillips racked up 122 career points, the most for a LID player and sixth-most in the federation’s 10-year history. Her 1.69 career points per game mark is the eighth-best in federation history.

Next year, she will play at Mercyhurst University.

Jenna Cavaliere, Forward

Williamsville

Some playing alongside one of the region’s best hockey players night after night might get overshadowed. Williamsville forward Jenna Cavaliere was not one of those players.

The senior was an offensive force playing on the opposite line of 2019-20 All-Bee Co-Player of the Year Emma Roland, and her ability to create her own shot or scoring chances for teammates meant that opposing defenders rarely had the opportunity for a breather against Williamsville this year.

Cavaliere scored 13 goals, including five game-winners, and recorded 12 assists. Her 25 points was third-best on the team, and her five game-winning scores were tops on the team and second in the federation.

Cavaliere, who has been on the varsity squad since eighth grade, is always on the go on the ice, her head coach, Rick Hopkins said, and while her goal-scoring and playmaking abilities made her a regular on the score sheet, her willingness to approach even the less glamorous parts of the game are what sets her apart.

“She’s just a great two-way hockey player,” Hopkins said. “She played the point a lot on the power play, and played some defense when we were short-handed ... she blocked a number of big shots during our playoff run, and that’s something that, you know, some girls shy away from, but Jenna has no fear. She takes pride in all aspects of her game. She’s just a relentless backchecker that enjoys taking away scoring opportunities maybe just as much as she enjoys scoring goals for the team.”

Cavaliere will attend Mercyhurst University to play field hockey and club ice hockey in the fall.

Abigail Blair, Defenseman

Kenmore/Grand Island

Abigail Blair might have had a “D” for defenseman next to her name on rosters this season, but that categorization betrays the Grand Island senior’s skill and worth to her team.

"She's the quarterback of our power play, and everything runs through her," KenGI head coach Jeff Orłowski said. "She's just an outstanding player. I can't say enough about her. She's a great leader. The girls look up to her. It's going to be hard because for the last three years, I haven't had to do anything with the girls because I just text her, and she takes care of everything. Most of the stuff she does before I even have to say anything."

Blair led the Lady Viking Devil Dogs to a Cinderella run into the finals of the Section VI Tournament, where KenGI pushed eventual champion Williamsville to overtime before falling, 3-2.

Blair's 11 goals were tied with teammate Kaylynn Savoy for the team lead, and her 10 assists and 21 total points paced KenGI this year. In Blair's five-year career, she accumulated 94 points (51 goals, 43 assists) in 94 games, and she sits tied for 14th on the federation's all-time scoring list.

That 94-in-94 statistic shows Blair's consistency, and the show she put on in the Section VI playoffs this season shows her immense talent.

Orłowski shuffled Blair back to forward — where she plays on her travel team — for the playoffs, and Blair went on a tear. She recorded nine points in three games for the Lady Viking Devils Dogs during their postseason run.

As Blair's career unfolded, she became a player other teams did not want to face, Orłowski said, and with her on the ice, KenGI became a team that could never quite be counted out until the final horn sounded.

"You never know what she's going to do," Orłowski said. "She'll go end-to-end. She'll pick up the puck and go. She'll pick it up in a corner and put it in. You're never out of a game when you have her on your team. ... When you put her on forward ... she's like another defenseman on the ice because she's the first one back and the first one into the offensive zone, too. To have somebody with that speed that can keep up with everybody and catch the top-line players, she's just an asset to the program."

Next year, Blair will play at NCAA Division I St. Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire.

Lilli Adimey, Defenseman

Clarence/Amherst/Sweet Home

Opposing players and coaches saw a lot of CASH defenseman Lilli Adimey this season, and they probably weren't particularly happy about it.

Adimey not only anchored the blue line for CASH, she also was an integral part of the attack and a special teams stalwart. The Amherst High School junior scored five goals and dished four assists in 2019-20, tripling her point production from three to nine from her sophomore to

junior seasons. That increased production highlighted Adimey's versatility, according to CASH head coach Nicola Adimey.

"The dynamic on the team was different last year," coach Adimey said. "We had strong senior forwards, so Lilli's job was to defend, make strong plays in our own zone and get the puck to the forwards," she wrote in an email to The Bee. "This year, with so many young players, she took on the leadership role and with that, the initiative more often. She wants to lead by example, so definitely puts in the effort every game."

Lilli Adimey's malleability — and physical presence on the ice — was necessary for a CASH side that went with just two defensive lines this year. The junior was on the ice every other shift squaring up against the opposing team's top line, as well as putting in time on CASH's power play and penalty kill units.

Lilli Adimey is looking into playing at the next level, but before that, she is sure to be a lynchpin for a CASH team looking to improve in 2020-21. While Adimey's skill will certainly be needed for that, her leadership might be equally important, according to her coach.

"Lilli is very high energy with a strong work ethic and [a] very vocal leader, encouraging and cheering on her teammates," coach Adimey said. "She is very funny and helps making new players feel welcome and part of the team."

Mia Wendell, Goalie

Williamsville

Playing free and aggressive on the ice is a common trait of many of the best hockey teams from youth leagues to the NHL, and skating with that sort of controlled abandon was a bit easier for Williamsville in 2019-20.

Yes, Williamsville players could afford to jump a passing lane or go blue line to blue line now and again this year because they knew if that pass snuck through or their end-to-end rush broke down, Mia Wendell would be waiting in the opposite net — and she would probably bail them out.

Wendell, a senior from Williamsville East, was, simply put, a wall between the pipes. She led the league in wins (12) and was second in minutes played (707.10), save percentage (.948) and goals against average (1.02). Her 293 saves ranked fifth in the federation, and her 16 goals allowed were the fewest of any goaltender with 400 or more minutes played.

Williamsville coach Rick Hopkins, who was an assistant for Wendell's 12U travel team, could tell early on that she had the makeup to be an elite net-minder. During those formative years, Wendell would sometimes see 50-plus shots flying her way throughout the course of a game, and she learned early on that the most important save was always the next one.

"Her mental approach and mental toughness are [some] of the reasons she's is as strong of a goalie as she is," Hopkins said. "She's very calm, knows her angles and doesn't overplay the

puck. Her mental approach to the game is outstanding, which you need in a goalie. A lot of goalies get rattled if one gets by them or one that might be considered a soft goal, but Mia has a great ability to forget about the shot and to be focusing on the next one.”

Wendell saved her best for the postseason, where she allowed just five goals on 128 shots for a .961 save percentage.

She recorded three shutouts and tallied an otherworldly 0.71 goals against average in Williamsville’s seven-game playoff run that saw the team finish second in the state.

Wendell will continue her ice hockey career next year at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.