



## First Team features returning talent, all-time top scorers

All-Bee Girls Hockey

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by PATRICK NAGY Sports reporter



The 2024-25 All-Bee Girls Hockey First Team features some of Section VI's top all-time players. Team members pictured included, from left: front row, Gabby Sojda, FFLOP; Player of the Year Maya Griffin, FFLOP; Jocelyn Smaczniak, FFLOP; Sophia Phillips, HEWS; back row, Co-Coach of the Year Nicola Adimey, CASH; Jenny Wild, CASH; Ella Celej, CASH; Izzy Bourgeault, KenGI-Port; and Co-Coach of the Year Eric Cooper, HEWS.

Photo by Joe Eberle

There is no shortage of talent sprinkled throughout the 2024-25 All-Bee Girls Hockey First Team.

Including All-Bee Player of the Year Maya Griffin of Orchard Park, four players are returning First Team recipients. In addition, two of the four selections are ranked in the league's top-10 for all-time scoring and another selection posted one of the best single seasons in league history.

Here is a look at the 2024-25 All-Bee Girls Hockey Team's First Team All-Stars:

### Sophia Phillips – Forward

#### HEWS

Sophia Phillips had no problem finding the back of the net for Hamburg/Eden/West Seneca.

The junior center and repeat First Team recipient from West Seneca West finished the season with 32 points. She scored 19 goals, including six of HEWS' seven playoff tallies. Four came in a semifinal upset of No. 1 seed Kenmore/Grand Island/Lockport. She also tallied 13 assists.

Coach Eric Cooper said what sets Phillips apart is her ability to work with the puck and create space for herself.

“I have coached Sophia for a long time, including travel hockey with the West Seneca Wings 16U, and I recognized from the time that she was little that she has a knack for finding the net,” Cooper said. “If she does get her opportunities, she is one of those kids that has an ability to score goals, and I think that makes her a valuable asset to our group.”

Cooper said Phillips also has worked hard to develop her shot.

“I’ve seen her throughout the season go top shelf on goalies with little snapshots. I also saw her standing on the blue line, get a pass and put a slap shot into the top corner of the net,” Cooper said. “Those aren’t skills that you see a lot out of the girls that are in that league. I think she’s worked really hard to put herself in a position where she can do stuff like that.

“She is the one driving the train for us,” Cooper continued. “She is the captain of our team and we put a lot of faith in her. I’ve seen her time and again come through in big situations. She is willing to battle for any free pucks and I have great confidence in her that she is going to be able to come up with the puck and do something pretty spectacular with it. Her hands are super slick that even against top defensemen, there is always a good chance she is going to turn them inside out and make them look foolish. It’s no knock on them; she is that good at what she does.”

### **Isabelle Bourgeault – Forward**

#### **KenGI-Port**

Isabelle Bourgeault’s legacy with the Kenmore/Grand Island/Lockport team cannot be overstated.

The senior left winger and co-captain concluded her fantastic six-year career with 146 points, which is second all-time in program history and fifth all-time in league history. She tallied 16 goals and 13 assists for 29 points this past season.

“She does a little bit of everything,” KenGI-Port coach Matt Miller said. “She has an unbelievable shot, but she’s usually looking to pass first. She sees the ice well, better than most players I have ever seen. She loves being on the perimeter looking to find somebody on the back door, in the slot or in a better scoring position. But because she is so used to doing all the stuff, she has got really good stick skills and can pull off a shifty little move to suck a defender in thinking she is going to make a pass – and then she’ll make a quick move around the defender and get herself in a good scoring opportunity.

“She’s got slightly more assists than goals, but could do whatever you needed her to do,” Miller continued. “It wasn’t until this year I started using her on the penalty kill as well. She is very good at getting into lanes

ALL-BEE SECOND TEAM		
Name	School	Position
Bella Jayme	KenGI-Port	Forward
Emily Lysiak	LIDA	Forward
Brynn Holland	HEWS	Forward
Morgan Cooper	HEWS	Defense
Laela Osinski	LIDA	Defense
Ella Buczynski	HEWS	Goalie
HONORABLE MENTION		
Avery Szczesek	St. Mary's	Forward
<i>** Editor's note: Due to the way the voting broke down, there were only enough players who received votes for there to be one Honorable Mention forward.</i>		

and reading passes. I think because she's such a good passer, she knows where people are looking to make plays and can jump in those lanes."

As a captain, Miller said Bourgeault always did a good job of bringing everybody else on board.

"She's not the loudest person but she quietly says the right things and makes sure everyone feels comfortable and welcomed," Miller said. "On top of being a great hockey player, she is a great kid."

Bourgeault, last year's All-Bee Girls Hockey Player of the Year, will play Division III hockey at SUNY Canton.

"You can't ask for a better kid," Miller said. "She asked me if I would write a letter of recommendation for a scholarship and it was the easiest yes because she is such a great kid. She works hard in school. She's in the DECA business club and she is involved with the unified teams. I don't know if she is going to win it, but she is up for Senior Athlete of the Year at Kenmore West. She's really good at lacrosse, is the varsity goalie for soccer and is playing flag football this year."

## **Gabby Sojda – Forward**

### **FFLOP**

After finishing with only three goals and five assists for eight points as a seventh grader, Frontier/Franklinville/Lake Shore/Orchard Park's Gabby Sojda made a huge leap in her eighth grade year, finishing as the league's second-leading scorer with 26 goals and 26 assists for 52 points.

Sojda's total points and goals set single-season league records for an eighth grader and were sixth all-time for a single season in league history.

Her 52 points were second all-time in a season for FFLOP and only one point behind linemate Maya Griffin, the All-Bee Girls Hockey Player of the Year, for the overall league lead. Her 26 goals tied Griffin for the league lead and her 26 assists were second behind Griffin's 27.

"For her to go from eight points to 52 is just outstanding," FFLOP coach Bob Klimowicz said.

Klimowicz said they had to break Sojda out of some bad habits that she developed as a seventh grader.

"She wanted to be the cute player, the toe drag girl. This year, she was more business," he said. "Gabby also has a pretty darn good wrist shot for an eighth grader and can roof it underneath the crossbar. She's also able to dangle you and deke you out if she needs to, so if you throw those combinations in there, it leads to a lot of opportunities to score."

The left winger who attends Orchard Park scored twice, including the game-winning goal, in FFLOP's 4-1 win over Hamburg/Eden/West Seneca/Holland in the Section VI final on Feb. 17 at Buffalo State Sports Arena. With Griffin not in the lineup, she tallied two goals and one assist in FFLOP's 6-1 win over Webster Jan. 2 at the Hamburg Town Ice Rink.

“The future is very bright for her,” Klimowicz said. “She is going to have to continue to work to get better. Sometimes I see a young player do well and then they hit a plateau and stop working hard because they think it is easy, and other kids pass them by. If she goes at this pace, she is going to shatter the league’s scoring records.”

## **Jocelyn Smaczniak – Defense**

### **FFLOP**

Jocelyn Smaczniak’s return selection to the All-Bee First Team should not come as a surprise.

Despite missing five games due to a deep contusion on her leg, the junior defenseman from FFLOP recorded five goals and 25 assists for 30 points.

Smaczniak, who attends Frontier, has 68 career points in four seasons.

“She’s got good edge work and maneuverability,” Klimowicz said. “She handles the puck well and is a great skater. She is the captain of our power play. When we need someone to move the puck up from our offensive or defensive zone, she’s capable of doing that.”

Some notable plays on offense that Smaczniak made included tallying an assist on the game-tying goal in the third period against HEWS in the Section VI final that FFLOP won 4-1, and scoring with one second left in the second period to give FFLOP a 1-0 lead against Section V’s Webster in the Far West Regional on Feb. 19, a game FFLOP also won 4-1.

Klimowicz called the team captain “a quiet leader who leads by example and has taken some of the younger girls under her wing.”

## **Jenny Wild – Defense**

### **CASH**

Coach Nicola Adimey said there was never a shift this season where teams didn’t notice when Clarence/Amherst/Sweet Home junior defenseman Jenny Wild was on the ice.

While she did a good job stopping opposing teams’ top players, the repeat All-Bee First Team recipient was also CASH’s second-leading scorer with eight goals and six assists for 14 points. Wild, who attends Clarence, was also named the league’s Defensive Player of the Year.

“You have some players who have a good shift or make a great play, but any time Jenny is out on the ice, she is noticeable,” Adimey said. “She plays solid defense but is one that rushes the puck a lot, so she has an offensive side to her, which is becoming more and more popular with defensemen. I think that is why she is noticeable every time she is out there. She was also our go-to player on the power play and penalty kill.”

Adimey said Wild is also a great kid and always stays positive.

“I have never heard her come back and complain about one of her teammates,” Adimey said. “She is always like, ‘hey, next time can we try and do this?’”

“She gets beaten up on the ice and I tell her it’s a compliment because the other players go after the best players, but you never see her retaliate or drop her shoulders and give up on a play,” Adimey continued. “She always has a mentality of ‘go and move on and do it better next time.’”

As a team captain, Adimey said Wild was very compassionate and took the time to explain things to the younger players on the roster.

“In between periods, I usually said a few things and then I let the players add comments on what they’re seeing on the ice or where they seem to get stuck, and she always had good contributions during games,” Adimey said.

“She leads by example,” Adimey continued. “I know it’s an often used phrase, but she does. She works hard in practice and always shows up early and says ‘Hi, coach.’ She is just always a pleasant young woman.”

## **Ella Celej – Goalie**

### **CASH**

Ella Celej has put in the work to become one of the top goalies in Section VI.

Adimey said her junior goalie from Clarence, who stopped 409 of 443 shots for a 2.22 goals against average with two shutouts and a .923 save percentage, tries to get any extra time on the ice when she can.

“She has really worked hard to be where she’s at,” Adimey said. “She was a good goalie last year, but I think you can see that development where now she makes those extra saves where the top players come at her and they think they’re going to score and she makes those saves to keep you in the game. I think she has had great games against each of the teams that we have played and had that ‘wow’ moment of a great save.”

Adimey said Celej has done a good job taking eighth grade goalie Grace Elliott under her wing, is very knowledgeable of the sport and speaks to the team between periods on what to look out for from opposing teams.