

2008 SLUH Water Polo – Varsity Game Recaps

Preseason Outlook

Despite graduating the Missouri Water Polo Offensive Player of the Year, Defensive Player of the Year, and 1st Team All-District Goaltender, the two-time defending state champions begin the season ranked first in both the coaches' poll and the fans' poll.

SLUH is led by senior co-captains Tim Dale and Mike Sizemore. Tim, a 2-meter, returns for his third year on Varsity and second year as a starter, while Mike is the team's best two-way player. Fellow seniors Zak Ancel (goalie), Dan Geisman (defender), Kip Tandler (driver), and Max Wurm (2-meter) provide depth at their respective positions.

Junior 2-meters John Heafner and William Page finished second and fourth in scoring on last year's team, and Michael O'Neill steps in as the primary defender. Fellow juniors Nick Debandt, Charles Gerber, Trent Going, Matt Hohenberger, John Savio, and Steve Sigman join Varsity after leading last year's JV team to an unblemished 20-0 record.

After a halting start to the season due to a handful of canceled practices, the Jr. Bills look forward to some competition.

Game 1 – March 6, 2008

W (1-0) – 20-0 vs. Oakville

The Jr. Bills opened their season by avenging their closest game from 2007, dominating the Tigers from start to finish. The offense was led by Tim Dale (3 G, 6 A), William Page (5 G, 2 A), Mike Sizemore (5 G, 1 A), and John Heafner (4 G, 1 A). Michael O'Neill and Dan Geisman led a stout defensive effort, while Matt Hohenberger and Zak Ancel tallied seven saves and four saves in the shutout.

Game 2 – March 18, 2008

W (2-0) – 7-2 vs. Chaminade

The Jr. Bills struggled on one end of the pool but clamped down at the other to defeat the Red Devils. William Page provided the bulk of the offense (3 G, 1 A), and Trent Going was the only other SLUH player to manage multiple points (1 G, 1 A). Under first-year coach Tom Milford (SLUH '00), Chaminade prevented SLUH from counterattacking and played solid half court defense, but SLUH's impatience and poor shot selection contributed to the offensive woes. However, the Jr. Bills racked up 23 steals, led by Trent's six, and Matt Hohenberger stopped six of seven shots on goal to allow for a comfortable margin of victory.

Game 3 – March 19, 2008

W (3-0) – 15-4 vs. Lindbergh

The Jr. Bills dominated the fifth-ranked Flyers from the outset and cruised to their third win. Mike Sizemore scored three early goals, and John Heafner exploded for four within a span of 61 seconds, as the press defense and counterattack led to a 10-1 advantage just more than a minute into the second

quarter. SLUH switched to a drop defense for the remainder of the game and held Lindbergh's powerful shooters to only three late tallies. Offensively, the Jr. Bills stopped counterattacking at halftime and struggled to score half court, although the team did convert four of six 6-on-5's. Most impressively, SLUH finished much stronger in front of the goal, shooting 15 for 27 to follow up a meager 7 for 32 effort the night before.

Game 4 – March 28, 2008

W (4-0) – 9-2 vs. Mundelein

The Jr. Bills came out looking like a team that sat in vans for five hours, dropping the first quarter 2-1 before fighting back for a convincing win over the Mustangs, ranked fifth in Illinois. John Heafner (4 G, 2 A) led the charge offensively, but Michael O'Neill stole the show with three goals and typically impenetrable defense. SLUH turned the ball over a season-high 20 times but scored several impressive goals under heavy pressure. Matt Hohenberger and Zak Ancel notched seven and two saves, respectively, in holding Mundelein scoreless over the last three quarters.

Game 5 – March 28, 2008

W (5-0) – 12-2 vs. York

The Jr. Bills controlled all four quarters and held the Dukes to only eleven shots in a solid victory. Mike Sizemore (4 G) and John Heafner (1 G, 3 A) led a balanced attack that saw points recorded by twelve of SLUH's thirteen field players.

Game 6 – March 28, 2008

W (6-0) – 11-7 vs. Conant

The Jr. Bills played their worst defensive game of the season but controlled the ball and ultimately the Cougars. After getting beaten back door several times, SLUH switched to a drop for the last five minutes of the game and allowed two poor goals due to lack of communication. Conversely, the Jr. Bills drew seven ejections and scored six times to raise their 6-on-5 conversion rate to a season-high 65%. Tim Dale (4 G) and John Heafner (3 G, 1 A) led the attack, while Max Wurm scored the goal of the day on a beautiful sweep shot early in the fourth quarter. Zak Ancel played the bulk of the game and tallied seven saves in posting his first win, the team's sixth.

Game 7 – March 29, 2008

W (7-0) – 18-3 vs. Latin School of Chicago

The Jr. Bills played their best first half of the season, holding two of Illinois's best players to a combined three points in defeating the Romans. Play of the game was Mike Sizemore earning a 5-meter with 1 second remaining in the first quarter by baiting the goalie and stealing the ball from him while he attempted to run out the clock. William Page, Tim Dale, John Heafner, and Sizemore notched at least four points apiece, and eleven different players scored goals for SLUH, including goalies Zak Ancel and Matt Hohenberger masquerading as field players.

Game 8 – March 29, 2008

W (8-0) – 9-5 vs. Mundelein

In a rematch of their first game of the tournament, the Jr. Bills swam against the Mustangs for the championship of the second annual Midwest Classic at Schaumburg. And the result was the same, built on the strength of a five-goal second quarter. Player of the Game and Tournament MVP John Heafner scored a natural hat trick bridging the halves, all on assists from William Page. Again the play of the game involved Mike Sizemore, who threw a 12-yard pass with his left hand out of heavy pressure to a wide open Max Wurm, who buried the shot. Matt Hohenberger and Zak Ancel finished the tournament having combined to allow 19 goals and record 45 saves for an impressive save percentage of 70.3%.

Game 9 – March 31, 2008

W (9-0) – 17-1 vs. John Burroughs

The Jr. Bills pummeled the overmatched Bombers, scoring nearly all of their goals out of half court rather than counterattack. Tim Dale (3 G, 3 A) led the way offensively, and despite running conservative defenses in the second half, SLUH still limited John Burroughs to only seven shots in 28 minutes of play. Kip Tandler became the last Jr. Bill to find the back of the net this season, scoring on a breakaway in the third quarter.

Game 10 – April 3, 2008

W (10-0) – 20-7 vs. Parkway Central

The Jr. Bills played down to the Colts, but an astonishing eleven-goal second quarter resulted in an easy victory. The team enjoyed its best shooting performance of the season, converting 20 of 26 shots, led by Tim Dale's five for five. The Jr. Bills earned nine ejections and three penalty shots while getting called for zero, a credit to their smart positioning on both offense and defense. Zak Ancel picked up five steals and his third win of the season, and Matt Hohenberger posted ten saves during the second half.

Game 11 – April 5, 2008

W (11-0) – 11-3 vs. De Smet Jesuit High

The Jr. Bills played perhaps their best game of the season, turning the ball over only ten times in a convincing win over the second-ranked Spartans. Suspect shooting again held the SLUH offense in check, as they converted only 11 of 35 shots. But SLUH's stifling defense, led by Michael O'Neill and Dan Geisman, again ruled the day, limiting DeSmet to only sixteen shots. A weary Mike Sizemore managed three goals and two assists, Tim Dale scored two impressive goals within a span of 25 seconds, and goalie Matt Hohenberger made several spectacular saves on lob shots.

Game 12 – April 8, 2008

W (12-0) – 15-4 vs. Parkway South

The Jr. Bills played a strong first quarter but struggled to score half court for the remainder of the game in dispatching the Patriots. SLUH smartly converted the only penalty shot of the game and all five 6-on-5's, most on quick passes before the defense was set. William Page notched six assists, and Mike Sizemore and John Heafner tallied five and four goals, respectively. Goalie Matt Hohenberger recorded the play of the game, stealing the ball and launching a perfectly placed 20-yard pass out of pressure to Steve Sigman for what ended up as the game-winning goal.

Game 13 – April 10, 2008**W (13-0) – 19-4 vs. Oakville**

With several players divided onto a Varsity B squad, the remaining Jr. Bills rolled over the Tigers for a second time. Five players managed at least five points, led by William Page (4 G, 4 A) and including Trent Going (2 G, 3 A). Matt Hohenberger recorded thirteen saves and an assist in another solid effort. The game was officiated by former head referee Rob Higgins, in town for the DeSmet Invitational Tournament.

Game 14 – April 11, 2008**W (14-0) – 8-4 vs. Chaminade**

The Jr. Bills controlled the game and the third-ranked Red Devils, winning the first three quarters before a scoreless fourth. For the second time against Chaminade, William Page led the offense, this time with four goals. John Heafner (3 G, 1 A), Mike Sizemore (3 A), and Tim Dale (1 G, 1 A) contributed multiple points, and Matt Hohenberger notched another ten saves.

Game 15 – April 11, 2008**W (15-0) – 19-3 vs. Lindbergh**

Inspired by the resilient play of SLUH's Varsity B team, who lost only 11-8 to fifth-ranked Marquette, and some challenging words from senior Kip Tandler, the Jr. Bills responded with their best offensive effort of the season in dispatching the Flyers. Despite taking no shots for the final nine-plus minutes, SLUH still annihilated Lindbergh, turning the ball over a preposterously low four times all game. Despite playing their second game in three hours against a squad playing their first game of the day, the Jr. Bills dug deep and looked as fresh as they had in any game this season. John Heafner led all scorers with four goals and three assists, while Matt Hohenberger and Max Wurm notched eight saves and one save, respectively.

Game 16 – April 12, 2008**W (16-0) – 16-5 vs. Ladue**

The Jr. Bills missed some easy shots early but still cruised past the Rams. William Page led the onslaught with four goals and four assists, while four other players managed four points apiece, including defender Dan Geisman (2 G, 2 A). Zak Ancel posted eight saves in earning his fourth win of the season.

Game 17 – April 12, 2008**W (17-0) – 11-5 vs. De Smet Jesuit High**

The Jr. Bills captured the championship of the DeSmet Invitational Tournament, the most competitive tournament of the season outside of the Missouri District Tournament, by controlling the host Spartans. Two solid but unspectacular quarters found SLUH ahead 6-3 at halftime, but a dominant 4-0 third quarter allowed SLUH to simply play keepaway for the final seven minutes. Tim Dale and John Heafner poured in four goals apiece, while defender Michael O'Neill filled every column of the stat

sheet, with a goal, two assists, six steals, a ball under, and a field block. Tim and John were named to the All-Tournament Team, although O'Neill and William Page were selected as the team's co-Most Valuable Players by the SLUH coaching staff.

More impressively, SLUH's Varsity B team managed fifth place in the ten-team tournament. In the first half of play of their first game, the Jr. Bills played poorly and found themselves lagging behind DeSmet 11-2. But the second half welcomed a renewed squad, who ended with a respectable 14-9 loss to the second-ranked team in the area. SLUH B followed up with an 11-8 loss to fifth-ranked Marquette, a 10-4 win over Lafayette, a 9-7 win over MICDS (!), and a 9-7 win over fourth-ranked Lindbergh in the fifth place game. SLUH B was led by goalie Zak Ancel, who backstopped two of the three wins, and Steve Sigman, who scored a preposterous 30 of the team's 45 goals.

Thus, SLUH can rightly boast having the first and fifth best Varsity teams in the state!

Game 18 – April 16, 2008

W (18-0) – 16-3 vs. Ladue

The Jr. Bills came out firing, jumping ahead 5-0 in the first five minutes and easing to their second victory over the Rams in five days. John Heafner scored four goals and added two assists, but the play of the game was William Page executing a reverse turn on the perimeter, swimming past the help defender, drawing the 2-meter guard, and passing to Mike Sizemore for the gift-wrapped goal. Zak Ancel recorded four saves and two assists in picking up his fifth win of the season.

Game 19 – April 17, 2008

W (19-0) – 18-5 vs. Marquette (50th consecutive win)

The Jr. Bills played a strong three quarters in dominating the third-ranked Mustangs for the program's 50th consecutive win. The second quarter stood out as perhaps SLUH's best seven minutes of the year, as they outscored Marquette 8-0, built mostly upon solid press blocking on the perimeter. Mike Sizemore posted two goals and five assists and Tim Dale contributed two goals and four assists, but more impressively, John Heafner and Steve Sigman combined to score ten goals on as many shots. Third-string goalie Max Wurm gave up his first two goals of the year late in the contest.

Game 20 – April 19, 2008

W (20-0) – 17-2 vs. MICDS

In their sixth of nine potential games at the Rec Plex this season, the Jr. Bills dominated the ninth-ranked Rams from start to finish. Goalie Matt Hohenberger's length-of-the-pool shot which caught MICDS's goalie out of position four minutes into the game ended up being the game-winning goal and secured Matt Player of the Game honors. Tim Dale (3 G, 2 A), William Page (3 G, 2 A), John Heafner (4 G), and Mike Sizemore (1 G, 3 A) added to their impressive offensive statistics. SLUH found success with a no-hole offense during the second half, scoring six half-court goals against one of the better defensive teams in the area.

Game 21 – April 22, 2008

W (21-0) – 16-7 vs. Parkway West

In an uninspired performance on senior night, the Jr. Bills played well enough offensively to outscore the Longhorns. John Heafner (5 A), Steve Sigman (3 G, 1 A), William Page (3 G, 1 A), and Max Wurm (2 G, 2 A) filled up the score sheet, while Zak Ancel tallied five saves and two assists.

Game 22 – April 30, 2008

W (22-0) – 11-3 vs. Ladue

Having earned a bye as the top seed in the seven-team Central Conference, the Jr. Bills swam against the Rams in the conference tournament semifinals. Eight first quarter turnovers led to a tie score after one quarter for the first time all year, 1-1. (SLUH has been behind after the first quarter once, against Mundelein in the first game of the Midwest Classic at Schaumburg.) But Ladue could not maintain their intensity, and a solid 3-0 second quarter and a dominant 6-1 third quarter allowed for a comfortable 11-3 win. Tim Dale starred offensively, scoring three goals, setting up three more, and drawing two ejections. Michael O'Neill's five steals and Matt Hohenberger's nine saves and three steals in three quarters of play held the Rams in check.

Game 23 – May 2, 2008

W (23-0) – 14-3 vs. De Smet Jesuit High

For the third time this season, the Jr. Bills squared off against the second-ranked Spartans, this time in the championship game of the Central Conference Tournament. And for the third time, the Jr. Bills rolled, exploding for seven second quarter goals en route to a 9-0 halftime lead. Featuring a sagging defense, SLUH surrendered a number of perimeter shots by design, and Matt Hohenberger and Zak Ancel were up to the task, combining for thirteen saves. Player of the Game Mike Sizemore (5 G, 1 A) and John Heafner (2 G, 4 A) led the offense, with John scoring the goal of the game on a corner bar-in from the 7 yard line. More impressively, defenders Michael O'Neill, Dan Geisman, and Trent Going combined to limit DeSmet's three offensive stars to zero points.

Game 24 – May 14, 2008

W (24-0) – 16-1 vs. Kirkwood (State Quarterfinals)

Selected by the coaches as the top seed for the Missouri District Tournament, and with the bottom nine teams in the area funneled off to the Challenge Cup, the Jr. Bills reached the state quarterfinals via a bye. The Pioneers reached the same game by shutting out Parkway Central 9-0. Kirkwood opened with a plan, spreading out SLUH on the defensive end and earning position to the goal with long drives from the perimeter. But a quick adjustment to overplaying the goal stabilized the defense, and Kirkwood was powerless to stop SLUH's offense. The Jr. Bills surged ahead 4-0 in the first three minutes, and Max Wurm's natural hat trick before the end of the first quarter effectively ended the game. Tim Dale (2 G, 4 A) led the way at one end, while Dan Geisman (4 steals) led at the other. Matt Hohenberger and Zak Ancel combined for eight saves and an assist to offset the single goal allowed. SLUH advances to the final four for a remarkable 21st consecutive season.

Game 25 – May 16, 2008

W (25-0) – 12-4 vs. Marquette (State Semifinals)

The Jr. Bills advanced to the championship game of the Missouri District Tournament for the third season in a row by controlling the Mustangs, bursting ahead 6-0 after one quarter and preserving the shutout into the fourth. Tim Dale netted three first quarter goals, including the eventual game-winner, and William Page led in points with two goals and two assists. John Savio showed up everywhere, notching two goals along with one each assist, steal, ball under, and field block. And in his first game action of the season, Will Derdeyn swam his way to a goal. Matt Hohenberger tallied nine saves against zero goals allowed and contributed two assists in posting his nineteenth win of the season.

Game 26 – May 17, 2008

W (26-0) – 7-3 vs. Chaminade (State Championship)

The Jr. Bills completed their second consecutive undefeated season by winning the Missouri District Tournament, besting the Red Devils for the third time. SLUH found themselves trailing 2-0 for the first time all year after allowing two early counterattack goals, and Chaminade's tight defense kept SLUH from generating much offense for the remainder of the first half. But the Red Devils managed even less against the Jr. Bills' half court defense, led by Michael O'Neill's three steals and Matt Hohenberger's nine saves. Tim Dale, John Heafner, Mike Sizemore, and Max Wurm notched goals in the first five minutes of the second half, and William Page's 6-on-5 goal with under three minutes to play sealed the outcome. Dale earned Player of the Game honors with his three goals and two assists. The state championship is SLUH's third consecutive and thirteenth overall, most in the history of Missouri Water Polo.