



Left to right: Paul Vallone, John Jablonski, and Doug Miller, following Buffalo's 23-10 victory over the East Side Axemen of Seattle. The game took place as part of the Sweet Sixteen Playoffs in Dallas, Texas.

The Three Amigos

By Paul J. Vallone with contributions from Ted Graney

Of all the positions on a rugby field, perhaps the most important positions are the "loose forwards" or "third row" players. The reason these positions are so important is because these players serve dual roles on a rugby field, playing mostly in the pack with the forwards but also being able to run with the backs. Because of this dual role, the loose forwards are usually the most fit players on a rugby team and the most highly skilled. This is necessitated by the physical demands of the position that require that the loose forwards be tough enough and strong enough to survive the

conditioned player on the team, Doug brings a "win-at-all-cost" mentality that is vitally important to the team. His relentless play inspires everyone around him. Doug possesses all the tools of a wing forward, sure tackling, offensive scoring ability and superior fitness combined with an overall knowledge of the game that allows him to always be around the ball. After playing for three years at Buffalo State College, Doug joined the Buffalo Rugby Club in 1990 and has played several A-Side positions before settling at wing forward. When not playing rugby, Doug can usually be found partaking in his other passion, riding his Harley Davidson or Indian

pounding of playing in the forwards while being fit enough and skilled enough to partake in the ball handling and other skilled aspects of playing with the backs. The saying is a rugby team is only as good as its loose forwards.

The loose forwards are comprised of two "wing forwards" and one "8-man." They are called loose forwards because these players line up, and play, on the outside of the scrum. They are involved in all phases of the game, leading the tackling on defense and supporting the ball on offense. On the Buffalo Rugby Club, the current starting 8-man is John Jablonski and the current starting wing forwards are Doug Miller and Paul Vallone.

John Jablonski ("Jabo") is one of the veteran members of the Buffalo Rugby Club having first joined the team in 1989. Prior to playing with the Buffalo Rugby Club, John played for three years at Buffalo State College where he was a member of the East Coast Collegiate All-Star Team and the Upstate New York Select Side Team. In addition to John's veteran experience and knowledge of the game, one of his greatest tools is his height, towering at over 6' 5". Along with the traditional roles required of his position, such as coordinating the ball transition from the pack to the scrum half, John is the main jumper responsible for retaining possession of the ball on all line-out play, one of the most important aspects of the game. He also possesses uncanny speed for someone his size making him an offensive threat whenever he has the ball. Along with playing, John has served as the club's captain and president in the past and is currently a member of its executive committee. When not playing rugby, John is employed as an attorney for Anspach Serrano Meeks and Nunn, LLP.

Doug Miller ("Malaki"), epitomizes the sheer toughness associated with rugby and the unwavering commitment to physical fitness and desire to win. In addition to being perhaps the most well-

motorcycles. Doug is currently employed as a warehouse shift manager for Tops Supermarkets.

Paul Vallone ("Provolone") is the team's captain and over the last several seasons has developed into one of the Club's most important players. Despite his apparent lack of size (5'-8" 165 pounds) Paul is a fierce tackler. Opposing runners rarely take Paul for granted on the field after the first few minutes of the game because he can be counted on to make big tackles and he is always around the ball. Paul's speed and ball handling skills also make him an offensive threat for the opposition to contend with. While he is not known for fiery pep talks, Paul leads by example through his dedication to the club on and off the pitch. Paul's rugby career began after high school while he attended Franklin and Marshall College. In addition to playing rugby, Paul was a free safety on the F&M football team for four years. He continued playing rugby while attending Business School at the University of Buffalo both with the University of Buffalo team and the Buffalo Rugby Club and played for three years with the Albany Law School Rugby Club while obtaining a law degree. Upon graduation from Albany Law School, Paul returned to Buffalo and resumed playing with the Buffalo Rugby Club in 1994. In 1998 Paul was a gold medalist in the Empire State Games playing with the Western N.Y. 7's team. In addition to his duties as captain, Paul sits on the Club's executive committee – serving as the "match secretary." During business hours Paul practices law at Hodgson, Russ, Andrews, Woods & Goodyear, LLP where he is an attorney in the general business department.

John, Doug and Paul are currently playing with the Buffalo Rugby Club in the National Sweet Sixteen Championships in Dallas, Texas. For more info call 839-0290 or check out the Club's website at <http://members.tripod.com/Propman-Fullback/index.html>.