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Penguins make trade for goalie

By **JOE MANDAK**
Associated Press Writer

PITTSBURGH — Veteran goaltender Jocelyn Thibault signed a two-year, \$3 million contract Wednesday with the Pittsburgh Penguins after they acquired him from the Chicago Blackhawks for a fourth-round pick in next year's draft.

Thibault, 30, became expendable to the Blackhawks after they signed Stanley Cup-winning goalie Nikolai Khabibulin to a four-year, \$27 million deal on Friday that made him the NHL's highest-paid goaltender.

"Jocelyn brings a wealth of experience to our goaltending corps and will help us tremendously as we move forward," Penguins general manager Craig Patrick said.

Thibault didn't immediately return a request for comment left with his agent, Bob Sauve.

The Penguins initially sought Tuesday to sign Sean Burke, who at 38 is eight years older than Thibault, to the same deal they later gave Thibault. Burke signed instead with 2004 Stanley Cup champion Tampa Bay to replace Khabibulin, getting \$3.2 million over two years.

Thibault has played in 536 NHL games, with a 2.69 goals-against average, 36 shutouts and a 227-217-68 record. He has played in more than 60 games in four of his last five seasons, all with Chicago. Thibault played for Quebec, Colorado and Montreal before being traded to Chicago during the 1998-99 season.

"Jocelyn is a class act and did a lot for our organization," Blackhawks GM Dale Tallon said in a statement Wednesday. "We're happy to be able to get a deal done and we're happy that he's

going to a good situation in Pittsburgh. He'll do quite well for them, we wish him all the best. It was strictly a business decision."

The Penguins have been shopping for another veteran goaltender to complement the unproven Marc-Andre Fleury, the No. 1 pick in the 2003 entry draft, and their other young goalie, Sebastien Caron.



JOCELYN THIBAULT

Thibault is the Penguins' fourth acquisition since the NHL resolved its labor dispute. He joins defenseman Sergei Gonchar, who signed a \$25 million, five-year contract; forward Ziggy Palffy, who gets \$13.5 million over three years; and enforcer-style forward Andre Roy, who will make \$3 million over three years.

The Penguins are hoping to reverse a pattern of three consecutive losing seasons and falling attendance — they were last in the league in 2003-04 in both the overall standings and attendance — by adding to a nucleus of owner-player Mario Lemieux and veteran forward Mark Recchi. The Penguins also added No. 1 draft pick Sidney Crosby, who is making his first visit to Pittsburgh this week.

The Penguins also have another top prospect in forward Evgeni Malkin, last year's No. 2 pick who is signed to play this season for a Russian team. The Penguins want to add him this season if a deal allowing European players under contract to sign with NHL teams can be reached. Currently, the Russian and Czech hockey federations are refusing to recognize such an agreement reached between the NHL and the International Ice Hockey Federation.

Fleury began the 2003-04 season as the Penguins' starting

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HOT NEW RIDE



FERNANDO ESCOVAR/Associated Press

CHRIS COOK posed by the TradePortal Ford he will be driving this weekend in Busch Series and Nextel Cup races at Watkins Glen, N.Y.

Evans' team lands sponsor

From Staff Reports

Christine Marie Motorsports, a NASCAR team owned by Indiana businessman Chris Evans, announced that TradePortal, a leading direct market access software innovator for the financial services industry, will be the primary sponsor for driver Chris Cook during racing this weekend in Watkins Glen, N.Y.

Cook will race in the Busch Series Zippo 200 on Saturday and the NEXTEL Cup Sirius Satellite Radio at the Glen on Sunday.

"I can't wait to drive the TradePortal Chevrolet and build on the momentum we've established so far in 2005," said Cook. "TradePortal is an exciting, innovative company that I look forward to representing in both races at Watkins Glen."

The Watkins Glen events will be Cook's

third and fourth NASCAR races in 2005. He placed 26th (qualified 16th) at the Busch Series Mexico 200 in March and finished 28th (qualified 28th) at the Dodge/Save Mart 350 in June. The June race was his Nextel Cup Series debut.

Cook will again drive for NEMCO Motorsports, under a partnership with Christine Marie Motorsports. Watkins Glen will mark the first foray into racing sponsorship for TradePortal, headquartered in Irvine, Calif.

"While some may view financial services software and a NASCAR team as unlikely partners, the corollaries of what makes each a success are strikingly the same," said David Smithey, Trade Portal CEO. "Speed, performance, reliability, control and team are all essentials for success in both racing and securities trading. Nothing drives this message better than what happens at a

NASCAR race."

Cook is a former road race instructor who worked with NASCAR drivers Tony Stewart, Dave Blaney and Tim Fedewa, among others, at the Bondurant Racing School in Phoenix, Ariz.

"Chris Cook was my instructor at Bondurant, and he spent a lot of time working with me individually. He had spent a little bit of time in a Cup car and understood what my challenges were and what I needed to get used to," said Tony Stewart via joesgibbsracing.com. "Having him as an instructor was definitely an advantage — he just taught me a lot of things that gave me a really good base of how to approach road course racing."

On the net: www.christinemariemotorsports.com

Two shoot 68 in junior tournament

By **MATTHEW BURGLUND**
Gazette Sports Writer

BLAIRSVILLE — Talk about setting a quick pace. Two of the first three boys to tee off Wednesday during the first round of the American Junior Golf Association MindMatters Championship finished the day with the low score — a 68 — that gave the field something to shoot for the rest of the day.

Brian Belden, an Emmaus native who won this event two years ago, and Eric Onesi, of Bear, Del., set the pace by finishing at 4-under and were just two of 15 players to break par at Chestnut Ridge Golf Resort.

Belden said he was happy with his start, but he's not satisfied.

"Yeah, if I had shot lower," he said when asked if anything could have been better than a 68. "But I'll take this start. In the first round, all you really want to do is put yourself in contention, and I did that today."

Scott Saal, of Virginia Beach, Va., joined Belden and Onesi at 68. Five others were one stroke off the lead, and four others were two back.

Incredibly, Belden said he could have finished with a lower score than he did, if it weren't for two bad holes at the end of his round.

"I was playing great. I was hitting almost every green," he said. "But on No. 16, I three-putted, and on 18, I hit it out of bounds for a bogey. I could have finished really low today, but maybe I will tomorrow."

That's probably not something the rest of the field wants to hear. Neither is the fact Belden was playing the course for only the second time. In Tuesday's Junior-Am tune-up event, Belden learned the course and shot a 66.

With his score as evidence, Belden said he's feeling better about the way he's been playing lately.

"I really feel like my game is coming around," he said. "I think winning this will just help my confidence."

Being paired with Onesi and Justin Kim, who shot a 73, only helped Belden's cause.

"All of us push each other," Belden said. "We were



TOM PEEL/Gazette

SAMANTHA FORMECK of Northern Cambria shot a 77 in the first round.

under par most of the round. I'd make a birdie, and I thought I was playing well, but then I'd realize they were only one or two behind me and that put pressure on me to get things going."

Onesi put plenty of pressure on Belden by playing a nearly flawless round with six pars and three birdies on the back nine. And that round was played on Onesi's first trip to the course.

"I didn't know anything about it," he said. "This is my first time seeing it."

Onesi said he used a conservative approach in the first round, but he's likely to be more aggressive in today's second round. The tournament concludes Friday with the third round.

"I'm just gonna try to play smart (tomorrow)," Onesi said. "There's a couple greens that I didn't attack today because I didn't know their shape real well so I hit it to the middle and took my par and got out of there."

Henna Cho, of Buena Park, Calif., was the only girl to break par by firing a 69 for a four-stroke lead in her division.

The only local player in the tournament, Northern Cambria's Samantha Forneck, shot a 77. Forneck, 15, who had to earn her spot in the field by playing in a qualifier last Sunday, had six bogeys and one birdie.

PGA field lines up behind Tiger, Vijay

By **JIM O'CONNELL**
AP Sports Writer

SPRINGFIELD, N.J. — Almost every question and comment going into the PGA Championship has mentioned Tiger Woods and Vijay Singh. The rest of the field is beginning to take umbrage.

"There's a lot of fine players playing this week," said U.S. Open champion Michael Campbell, the only player to finish ahead of Woods in a major this year. "I would not say it's a two-horse race. I think it's anyone's game this week."

Woods is looking to win three majors in a year for the second time. When he beat Bob May in a playoff to win the PGA at Valhalla in 2000, he became the first player since Ben Hogan in 1953 to win three-quarters of the Grand Slam in one year.

"I think the atmosphere is nowhere near what it was in 2000 because I had won the U.S. Open by 15 and the British Open by eight, so 23 shots in two tournaments is pretty good," said Woods, who is playing in his last major as a 20-something. "This year I've won two major championships. The Masters was a little bit closer, but I won the British by five. The atmosphere is also a little different because I've done this before. I guess from some of the media I talked to the novelty factor is not there anymore; I've already done it."

Woods, who has a total of 10 majors, is still excited about the prospect of another three-major year.

"That would be huge, huge," he said. "To have won three majors in a year, that's pretty cool."

Singh won the PGA Championship last year at Whistling Straits, joining Woods as a two-time winner. Only four players



Site: Springfield, N.J.
Schedule: Thursday-Sunday.
Course: Baltusrol Golf Club, Lower Course (7,392 yards, par 70).
Purse: TBA (\$6.25 million in 2004). Winner's share: TBA (\$1.125 million in 2004).
TV: TNT (Today-Friday, 1-7 p.m.); Saturday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m.) and CBS (Saturday-Sunday, 2-7 p.m.).
Last year: Vijay Singh won his third major title, beating Justin Leonard and Chris DiMarco in a three-hole playoff at Whistling Straits in Wisconsin. Singh closed with a 4-over 76 to get into the playoff, then made his only birdie of the day on the first extra hole. He also won the 1998 PGA at Sahalee.

have won three or more PGAs: Walter Hagen and Jack Nicklaus with five each, and Gene Sarazen and Sam Snead with three apiece.

"If I win, that will be great," Singh said. "I'll be over the moon if I do win it and get into that category with the rest of those guys. But I cannot look ahead. I've got to be in the present."

The present will have Woods, Singh and the rest of the field chasing a \$1.17 million first

prize on a 110-year-old golf course that has hosted seven U.S. Opens and, at 7,400 yards, is a long par-70.

The history is tough to ignore at Baltusrol.

Nicklaus won the Open here in 1967 and 1980. Lee Janzen won the 1993 Open, the last major the club has hosted, beating Payne Stewart by two strokes.

"Little things here and there are different and I think there's a few more bunkers than I remember," Janzen said. "The course is very long. They've added yardage on nearly every hole since we were here 12 years ago."

There have been plenty of changes since Nicklaus first played here. Though he's not in the field — he played his last major last month at St. Andrews — he will be a permanent presence on the 18th tee.

The PGA of America and Baltusrol unveiled a plaque in Nicklaus' honor on the tee box Wednesday. And while Nicklaus was reminiscing about his two Open wins, the topic turned to Woods and Singh. Nicklaus was asked if Singh is underappreciated.

"I don't know whether underappreciated is the word," he said. "Maybe many people just don't realize how good he really is. Or maybe how good Tiger is, nobody realizes how good anybody else is."

Singh wouldn't hear of limiting the likely contenders to himself and Woods.

"I would say it's the other way around. I think there's only 10 or 15 guys out here who may not be able to win the golf tournament," he said. "I think the course is going to favor whoever putts well this week. The guy who putts well is the guy who is going to win the tournament."