

# CENTER ICE

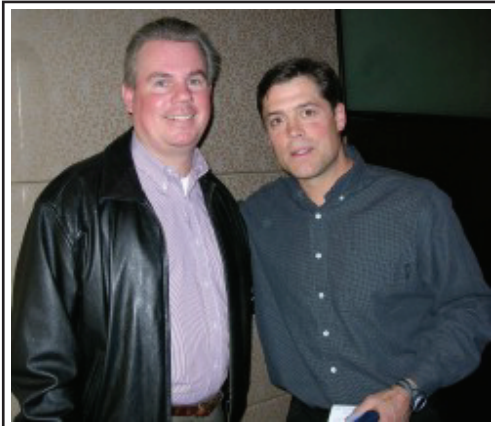
The Official Newsletter of The New York Islanders Booster Club



VOLUME 34 - NUMBER 5

Our 34th Year

JULY 2006



Pat (R) was joined by CIC executive director Jim Johnson

## Hall of Famer Pat LaFontaine Pays A Visit To The Club

(He Gave Us His Thoughts Before The Club Brought Him Into The Front Office)

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### Charity Report Membership Drive Contest

by Jim DiStefano

Did two years really go by since Pat LaFontaine last paid a visit to the Booster Club? Has it really been over twenty years since he first donned a NY Islanders jersey? The most remarkable thing about Pat is that he has an ageless, timeless combination of wonder, talent and charisma that lasted throughout his playing days and continues even now. We care about Pat because he embraces ideals, tradition and an appreciation of what got him where he is today. This may have been April 6<sup>th</sup> at the Long Island Marriott, but we really saw LaFontaine, the rookie, as a grown-up and a favorite son come home. And I mean this literally.

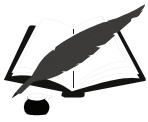
"We've become rooted Long Islanders," were Pat's first comments. "My wife is from Huntington, so we moved back to Long Island where it all started. We're enjoying our time here. Our kids are growing up on Long Island. The exciting thing for me right now is that I'm 'Mr. Mom.' I get the kids to school and get involved in their lives. My son plays hockey and both my daughters did for a couple of years. Now they play lacrosse, swimming and softball. Watching our kids grow up is an exciting phase in my life with my wife, Marybeth."

While not talking much about the concussions that shortened his career, he did pay tribute to its aftereffects. "The silver lining in all this was that I needed to retire a little earlier than I had hoped to. I wanted to play a couple of more years than I did. But I was able to be around and watch my kids grow up which was very special for me. That really got me involved in the Companions in Courage Foundation." The foundation is an offshoot of an idea he had while writing his book, *Companions in Courage*, when he retired. "The book is about 56 short, inspirational, heroic, athletic stories of everyday kids." While he must have told this story hundreds of times before, you could see the passion in his eyes as he told us what the foundation does (see their website: [www.cic16.org](http://www.cic16.org)).

"We designed these great state-of-the-art interactive game rooms that we put in children's hospitals for kids to escape to and play games, create music, and just get away from the noises and every day things that they have to deal with. The inspiration for this came from a lot of the kids I met during my playing days. Then we were able to go play video games with them and distract them from what was happening to them." It became clear to Pat that it was important to get the kids to forget, if even for a little bit, the intimidating environment in a hospital. These rooms are technological wonders. They get special 'keys' when they check into the hospital that allow them access to the room, called Lion's Dens. The software remembers their names and what they did in previous visits. "Why shouldn't technology be in these rooms for the kids?" It helps them cope and helps make a connection so that they are not alone. "That's our hope as we continue to grow. When you see a child walk into the room and smile within 15 minutes, it's better than the 'needles and nurses' environment they came from." They are in the process of installing a room in their third hospital (Columbia Presbyterian).

Pat had high praise for Jim Johnson, the CIC executive director, who also worked for the NY Islanders for many years. "Jim and I have been close, dear friends over 20 years, since the first year I became an Islander. Our paths have continued to cross throughout my career. If we didn't have him involved on a day-to-day basis (with the foundation) we wouldn't be able to get these rooms built. He does an amazing job." Jim was at tonight's meeting and answered a few questions about the foundation.

So what about hockey? "I still play hockey for fun. I play in a lot of charity hockey games. Sometimes I feel like I could still play, especially since they made those rule changes!" Then we learned that Pat had made specific suggestions to improve the game years ago. He elaborated. "I had a meeting with ESPN the first year I retired. They said they were going to do a symposium on changes and how to make the game better." One of the things *continued on page 3...*



## President's Message.....

My first year as President of the New York Islanders Booster Club has gone by so fast, I can't believe it. My job was made easy by the members of the Executive Board and Board of Committees. I sincerely thank them for their contributions and support.

It was also a pleasure working with my contacts at the Long Island Marriott. Jackie Breen, Senior Sales Manager and Carmela McLaughlin, Event Manager, were so helpful and just a delight to work with. Special thanks to the Islander's Office Staff who were always willing to help when we needed it. No matter who we asked for help, we got it. Special thanks to Nicole D'Addario who helped arrange all the guests at our meetings.

The season for the Islanders has come to an end, but before it did, we got an opportunity to see the future, a future that looks promising. Brad Shaw did a great job after taking over as head coach and I sincerely hope he receives serious consideration from other general managers looking to build a team with his experience. We welcome our new general manager, Neil Smith and our new head coach, Ted Nolan. We welcome the changes that are already happening in Islander Country, with the return of favorites Bryan Trottier, Pat LaFontaine and Steve Webb to the club. Islander fans are anxiously awaiting what or who will come next.

As I wrote this article, the final two teams met to face off in the Stanley Cup finals. It was as exciting as the Buffalo - Carolina Conference Final. Congratulations to the Edmonton Oilers for making

it to the finals and to the Carolina Hurricanes for winning the Cup.

The Booster Club closed out our season with two great meetings. Pat LaFontaine was, as usual, a most entertaining guest. He quickly won our pledge of support to help with the wonderful things his foundation is doing. We appreciate that Pat took the time out of his busy schedule to meet with us. Although it was a nasty rainy day, our last meeting, a "mini" Chinese Auction, drew a good sized crowd and we raised over \$2000 for several charities.

We may not have meetings during the summer, but there are still opportunities to get together. We had a table at the NHL Draft Party where we began our membership drive for next season. We are in the process of working on an incentive for those who join prior to October 1<sup>st</sup>, as well as a new membership pin. We also have group tickets for Long Island Ducks baseball. (Enclosed in this edition is the order form.) The Board will continue to meet throughout the summer as we make plans for the upcoming season.

Unfortunately, *Center Ice* editor, Jim DiStefano has submitted his resignation. Jim has been a long time member of the Booster Club Board and his expertise will be truly missed.

I wish everyone a fun-filled summer.

*Claire*

### Membership Drive 2006-07

Yes Boosters it is time to renew your membership for next season. We are looking for you to come back! And now is the time to do it! We hope you will take advantage of our incentive program and renew or join before October 1st! Details later in this issue.

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### The Booster Club Constitution & Bylaws

All the resolutions that were discussed and submitted for a vote during our general membership meetings have passed. Thank you for taking the time to cast your vote.

## New York Islanders Booster Club 2005-2006

**President.....Claire Harding**  
**Exec. Vice President.....Diane Hesse**  
**Second Vice President.....Danny Parisi**  
**Treasurer/Past President MaryannFilangieri**  
**Recording Secretary.....Rose Muller**  
**Corresponding Secretary.....Bill Finck**

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**Charities.....Jill Kozik & Rose Muller**  
**Constitution.....Bruce Schneider**  
**Historian.....Jean Nebiosini**  
**Membership...Rose Muller & George Schutz**  
**Newsletter.....Jim DiStefano**  
**Novelties.....Bill Hayes**  
**Publicity.....Donna Coughlin**  
**Special Events.....George Schutz**  
**Trips.....Ron Kind**  
**WebMaster/Convention.....Gary Harding**

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**Printed by: On The Spot Printing**  
**1916 86th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11214**  
**(718) 259-8200**

*Center Ice*, the official publication of the New York Islanders Booster Club, is published monthly during the hockey season and once during the summer. Opinions expressed in articles printed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Booster Club or of the New York Islanders. Submissions should be sent to:

NY Islander Booster Club  
PO Box 502  
Hicksville NY 11802-0502  
ATTN: Newsletter

Deadline for an issue is the preceding month's membership meeting.

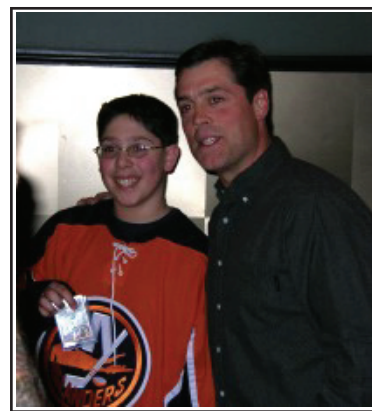
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Special mention to Scott Coates who redesigned the "shooting puck" logo now featured on our masthead.

Moving? Make Sure *Center Ice* goes with you! Please notify the Membership Committee of both your new and old addresses. **Have an e-mail address? Let us know that, too!**

All Photos by.....Jim DiStefano  
(unless noted otherwise)

**On Buffalo retiring his number: "It was a great thrill. I still pinch myself that I was a part of that... For an individual player from an individual team to have your number put in the rafters, it was really special. I was very emotional. I had my dad, three kids and my wife there to watch it go up. It was a great time and you forget how many years you played and what you put into the game. As years go on, though, you have a tendency to appreciate those moments and times of your life more than ever."**



Pat brought up at that meeting was "We really need to go to the three man shootout, we really need to speed up the game, and we need to bring the skill back into the game. There's too much clutching and grabbing." He made a basketball analogy. "Can you imagine if Michael Jordan wasn't allowed to break for the net and you could bump and clutch and grab him? If he didn't have a chance to slam-dunk a ball, where would basketball be today? So I said all these things eight years ago." Barry Melrose shot him down saying traditionalists would never go for it, but Pat pressed the issue. "You see a home run every game, you see a touchdown pass every game, and you see the slam dunk every game. When do you see the shootout or a breakaway? You don't see that every game. Why can't we see it more often?" Melrose answered, 'We can't do that.' The greatest thing was this year, the media went to (Melrose) and Barry said, 'You know, they should have changed this ten years ago!'"

"We forgot we were in the entertainment business. The good news, regardless of what the critics say, is that at least the excitement's back. I think (the rule changes) have brought a whole new element into hockey. Myself, I'm a fan and I watch the teams play and I'm enjoying hockey again. I don't mind the good hitting. I enjoyed the physical game until it got out of hand (with clutching & grabbing) and we lost an important part of the game. I'm happy to see it back."

Pat acknowledged two special aspects of his career. One was playing entirely for teams in New York. He recalled his eight years with the Islanders, his six years in Buffalo, and "My last year with the Rangers." Of course, after he received his only boos of the night, he quickly added, "I don't remember much of that last year! I will say that they did treat me first class. It would have been very difficult if I went straight from the Islanders to the Rangers. You don't have a lot of control of where you go." The second aspect was having his jersey #16 available on the three teams he played with. "The one time I didn't have it was during an all-star game and the only time I wore #17." Michel Goulet (then with Quebec) had seniority over Pat with the number that year. "I wasn't going to mess around with him." But interestingly, "One guy who used to get mad (that Pat didn't give up his number at an all-star game) was Brett Hull. He wore #16 but I was older than he was. Sorry, Brett. He's a great guy, and scored a lot of goals, but it comes with the territory. That's part of the tradition of hockey."

Pat had strong feelings about the NHL sending players to compete in the Olympics. "I was lucky. I played in the Olympics as an amateur in 1984 and as a pro in 1998. The Olympics have been the bookends of my career. Having played as both, I'm a

big believer that we should hand it back to the amateurs. There are a lot of reasons behind this. Unfortunately, marketing pressure, big business and the almighty dollar will prevent that from happening." Pat ticked off a series of events. "These (NHL) players have already played around 55 games before they go over to the Olympics. Then they're expected to join the team within two days and then become a team for ten days." He pointed out that one of the reasons that Switzerland beat Canada in the Olympics was that the Swiss had been playing together for a while on the big international ice surface. "They've been a team for a period of time. You're not sitting on a plane for twelve hours and expected to win two to three nights later after playing a bunch of guys you beat the night before!" He wasn't knocking his experiences though. "There's nothing like representing your country, don't get me wrong. It was one of the greatest experiences I've ever had in my career." But he could put a case together for creating a real amateur Olympics using college and junior players. Since European players turn pro at an earlier age, you could make different categories or age restrictions. Pat thought it could be done.

"I think one of the reasons that snow-boarding was so big (in the Olympics) was because they were all amateurs. All of a sudden a guy comes out as the 'flying tomato' and you never heard of him before!" Pat was talking about red-headed, gold medal winning US snowboarder, Shaun White. "Now he's a big name. Everyone loves someone who loves the sport and it's not about the money. Personally, I would love to see it go back to the amateurs."

Pat's praise extended to the famous 1980 Olympic hockey team, but not just because they won the gold medal that year. "I thank them every time I see them because they really paved the road for hockey in the United States." As a boy growing up in Michigan, you never knew whether you would be good enough to play pro hockey or get a hockey scholarship because it wasn't usually done before. "You might have known somebody who maybe played college hockey. We were really out there all alone. If you're a Canadian boy growing up in Perry Sound, say, you have a precedent. Bobby Orr is from Perry Sound." Then you can point to someone who made it and think maybe kids have a shot. "All of a sudden, bang, the Americans win the gold medal, Bobby Carpenter plays really well, and then he gets drafted out of high school. All of a sudden scouts are saying, 'Hey, these American kids can play!' Our generation of players like Chelios, Modano, Roenick, and Schneider owe everything to that 1980 team for opening the door."

Pat, answering a question about the best teammates by position he played with, gave us a special insight towards one of them. He ticked off some names. On left wing he selected Mogilny, right wing was Bossy, Potvin was selected for left defense. Pat then quipped, "Am I playing center?" He would put Trottier *continued on page 4...*

## Pat LaFontaine... *final part*

in there if he had to make a choice other than himself. Then, after a little thinking, he picked Kenny Morrow for right defense. "You probably don't realize the intangibles that he (Morrow) brought to that room. In my first playoff game against the Rangers, they were draining his knees. I almost got sick from the stuff that came out. He's a true warrior, a true champion, and a true gentleman. He might not have been as skilled (as others), but his heart and his character were right up there." Then Pat observed how lucky Morrow was "to win an Olympic gold medal, a Stanley Cup, and the guy who plays you (in the movie *Miracles*) is left-handed and better looking than you! I think his wife almost left him and married this guy!"

We saw a reflective side to Pat when he answered a question about team's third jerseys. "I like tradition. All due respects, I like the old jerseys. Some people (on Long Island) go crazy over the orange jerseys, but I love the Islander's original jersey. I'm not afraid to change the game to make a better game, but some things, especially when a team has had some success; I like to see the classic jersey stay. That's my own feeling." People in marketing would not be pleased! "I think that's something that goes along with keeping tradition. My wife and I are traditional people. I like traditional values."

This was on the heels of a question about changes he would like to see if he played general manager of the Islanders now that Mike Milbury was stepping aside. "Obviously, I'm not in those shoes. It's not as easy as you think." The team's problems aren't just player personnel, but "getting a young exciting team in a new building will spur interest. You want to have some key guys to put your arms around to be a part of that." And you want to show these players that there is a tradition to the team. In a foreshadowing of his upcoming role with the Islanders, Pat said, "What I would love to see is that they bring the tradition back to this team. I would love to see them bring back players that were part of those (Stanley Cup) seasons. There are certain formulas that allow a team to be successful year after year." He named the Canadiens, Flyers and the Devils as organizations that have consistent management and philosophies. "It's one of those things where you have to have the right people in the right positions. Then it filters down. Then year after year you will have a competitive team. Then it (consistency and making the playoffs) becomes expected." Pat wants the players to "know what it means to be a NY Islander and what the tradition is when they walk into the room."

Then it appeared that Charles Wang could have been in the audience that night when we heard Pat say, "I think if it was the right situation and opportunity I might want to get involved back in hockey." He didn't relish being a general manager though. Traveling a lot, which a GM would do, meant taking time away from his kids. "That's not an easy thing. It's very taxing on family. I did that for 15 years (as a player). But if the right environment came along, it would be fun to get back in." As you may know, Pat was recently named Senior Advisor to the Owner in an official capacity to the NY Islanders.

Pat LaFontaine is busier now than he's ever been. He's writing a follow-up book, *Companions in Courage 2*, with additional inspirational stories. He observed as a player, "You're always chasing the next plane, the next game, the next

## Charity Report

By Rose Muller

### Here is a list of what we accomplished this year:

At our November meeting we had a food drive for the **Mary Brennan Inn** in Hempstead. We collected 50 pounds of food that was greatly appreciated...At our January meeting we collected board games and books for **Big Brothers/Big Sisters**. They could not believe that we donated 10 boxes...At our March meeting we collected an amazing amount of detergent and fabric softener for **Ronald McDonald House**...We were able to collect \$2,220 from our auction on April 23rd. **Companions in Courage, the Sarah Grace Foundation, Little Flower Angel Fund** and the **Child Life Department at Schneider's Children's Hospital** will be the auction beneficiaries. Thanks again for coming out, especially after the terrible weather we had that day...In addition, we made a donation of \$1,000 from your coins (and dollars) we collected throughout the year for leukemia to **St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital**...Proceeds from the game used fireman's jersey raffle netted a hot \$530 for the **Teddy Bears Foundation**...From the sale of **Alan Hahn's** books we donated \$1,150 to the **Long Island Royals Pee Wee Minor Youth Hockey Team**. Some excerpts from the thank you note from Royals team manager Marc Stuart: "*Your donation helped fund our trip to Ottawa this past January to participate in the Bell Capital Cup, a very prestigious youth hockey tournament...The kids had the thrill of a lifetime when they faced off against a team from Moscow Russia. Additionally, we went to watch the NY Islanders play the Senators...They also had their picture taken with the Chinese team that Charles Wang brought to Ottawa to participate in the tournament...Thanks again for your help.*"

**Thanks to all our members for their generosity!**

**A very special thanks to Bill Hayes for all the donations of t-shirts and other novelties he gave us for our door prize raffles at our general membership meetings. Keep skating, Mr. Bill!**

bus, the next puck in the corner, and the next goal. The first time since I stopped playing hockey, I'm not chasing anything. It's kind of a nice road to be on by not having to go after something unless it really feels right."

You had to marvel at the depth of compassion that Pat has for kids, for the game of hockey and the respect he has for the people of this community. His time tonight with the Booster Club flew by. You could see the genuine hope that his foundation will make a difference in the lives of kids. He's upbeat about the Islanders when he said, "They're at an interesting place and at a crossroads. My hope is that all the right things happen and that you see a team year after year going to the playoffs, competing and doing well." He truly thanks the fans for supporting his causes. In one of his final comments, Pat told us that having post-concussion syndrome was "a very humbling experience. It makes you appreciate the little moments all the time." Pat, we appreciate all your good work. We are indeed fortunate to have a favorite son come home.

## A Good Editor is Hard to Find Changes in the Future for *Center Ice*

By Gary Harding

After nearly sixteen years of dedicated service, Jim DiStefano is 'retiring' as the editor of *Center Ice*, the newsletter of the New York Islanders Booster Club. Although Claire (my wife and NYIBC President) was disappointed and reluctantly accepted his resignation, both she and I feel that his shoes will be tough to fill.

Jim and I were co-editors of *Center Ice* in 1990. We were both hungry and looking forward to the challenge of writing articles and creating a newsletter that NYIBC members would be happy to read. The challenge for us was making the newsletter move up to the next level, and finding the right program and print format to please the eye.

I was only involved with the newsletter for about a year, as I moved on to become a Vice President and later President of the Club. During my four years running the NYIBC, I always knew that the newsletter would be done in a professional manner. In addition, the articles that Jimmy would write would be creative, funny, and make the reader think.

Some of Jimmy's best work was when he would do a point/counterpoint with his wife Sue. They would take an interesting topic and present views from both sides of the fence. If anyone remembers the Jane Curtin/Dan Aykroyd discussions on Saturday Night Live, it was as close as you can get, the way that Jim and Sue battled each other in print.

I know that in the past year, the effort of creating this newsletter was taking a toll on Jimmy. He put in a great deal of time on his job, and spent a great deal of time working on some renovations to his home. You have to remember, being a board member of an organization such as this is something you do not get paid for, and in many aspects, are unappreciated. I know that I counted on Jimmy, and he never disappointed. I am sure that the Presidents that followed me and preceded me felt the same way.

I know that he is going to help me transition the newsletter, as I take temporary responsibility of the task, until we find someone who will take on the role as editor. This is where I will make the plea for help. Creating a newsletter is a tough job, but it helps when contributions come from others. If you like to write, **we can use your help**. It doesn't have to be about meetings, or the NYIBC. You can write about the Islanders, or the NHL (respectfully and positively – we will also not 'bash' or put down players or other teams). I also know that people take LOTS of pictures. We can use them. Players, trips, meetings, whatever; your pictures would be appreciated. **Volunteer to help; we can really use your expertise and assistance.**

Now in 2006, the newsletter is going to take a bigger step towards the future. Next season, we will try to convince you to receive the online version of the newsletter as an option. You will get the same number of newsletters as you did previously. The main difference is that you can get a 'full color' version of *Center Ice* online, via the NYIBC web site. You will be notified by e-mail when the newsletter is ready which will allow you to read and print the newsletter on your printer. This will save the club a little money by not having to print as many newsletters, so we can use your membership dues to focus on other things, and it will allow you to get a sharper, more colorful newsletter.

Once again, on behalf of all the current and past members of the NYIBC, I want to thank Jim (and Sue as well) for the hard work and dedication to making *Center Ice* one of the BEST newsletters of all of the NHL Booster Clubs. I can only hope in the interim, and for the next editor, that we continue the path that Jim set, and move this newsletter to new heights.

## Ducks Tickets Still Available

We have tickets available for one more Ducks game on Saturday, September 2nd. This game includes a picnic. Game time is 5:05PM & the picnic starts at 3:30PM.

**Ticket price:**

**\$30 Adults    \$23 Children 4-9**

This is Labor Day weekend, but what better way to celebrate than a picnic and a Duck's baseball game! Hopefully, the Ducks will be in contention for the playoffs and it will be an exciting game. We have plenty of tickets available, so why not invite friends and family to enjoy the game with you. You don't have to be a Booster Club member to attend these games.

**Please email Claire (or call on the hotline) if interested right now! We must have a commitment shortly for these tickets!**

Claire's email: NYIBC2@aol.com or

Hotline: (631) 547-NYIB (6942)

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## 2006-07 Membership Drive Contest

Renew your membership or join before October 1st, 2006 and you will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of these two prizes:

**First Prize - Four tickets to an Islanders game**

**Second Prize - Two tickets to an Islanders game**

Tickets compliments of the New York Islanders  
(Executive Board and Committee members not eligible)

**Members renewing by October 1st will also receive an additional membership gift!**

Info also at our website: [www.nyiboosterclub.org](http://www.nyiboosterclub.org)

### From The Editor: A Small Note of Thanks To...

- Gary Harding for his nice comments in this issue. While I will be giving up the production of *Center Ice*, I'll still try to contribute an article from time to time. Step up and send in a photo or a story that Gary can use for future editions. When you take an interest, everyone benefits.

- The present and past Presidents of the Booster Club for allowing me to serve on the Newsletter Committee under them. This is still an appointed job, and I appreciate the trust they showed in me to present the face of the Booster Club to our members.

- All the committee people I have had the pleasure of dealing with over the years. No club runs itself. It takes a commitment from many people, each with their own areas of expertise. I enjoyed working with all of you.

- All the members, too numerous to name, who submitted an article, a photo, a cartoon or gave me a kind word. It meant a lot.

- Finally, and most importantly, to my wife, Sue. Whether she was on the masthead as a co-editor or not, Sue was always **my** editor. Her keen eye for readability and punctuation defied any spell-checker. Her patience and understanding was tried many times while I finished an issue. Many, many thanks.

My vision of putting this newsletter together was always with the aim of giving the reader a real flavor of what went on at our meetings. Indeed, my biggest problem was not how much information to include, but what to leave out. In a way, it's fitting that this last issue features a story about Pat LaFontaine. My very first article for the newsletter was about rookie LaFontaine's first visit to our Club submitted over 20 years ago. Little did I know then what I was about to get myself into! So, it appears the circle has come around.

Thanks to you, our members. I hope the newsletter was as enjoyable to read as it was to write.

- Jim DiStefano

# Booster Club Meetings.....

**Summer Baseball With The Booster Club - You Must Act Fast!**

**L.I. Ducks Game Saturday, Sept. 2nd**

**Pre-Game Picnic: 3:30PM Game Time: 5:05PM**

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**New GM, New Coach, It's Time to Renew!**

**See Inside For Details On Our Early Renewal Incentive!**

- All meetings will be in the downstairs amphitheater at the Marriott across from the Coliseum. Call the Hotline or visit the website for up-to-the minute details about meeting locations.
- Meetings start at 7:30PM.
- The Booster Club Booth at the Nassau Coliseum is located between Gates 3 & 4, and is open before every home game. The booth closes 10 minutes before game time, and reopens between periods.

**You Can Reach Us On Our Booster Club HOTLINE: (631) 547-NYIBC (6942)**

**OR Our WEB-SITE:** <http://www.nyiboosterclub.org>

**OR E-mail:** [webmaster@nyiboosterclub.org](mailto:webmaster@nyiboosterclub.org)

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