

MURPHY, HENKELS, CAMERON SET RELAY RECORD

Lady Raiders, Blue Devils Tie For Union County Swim Title

By FRED LECOMTE
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

The Westfield High School girls swimming team was put to the test by a strong group from Scotch Plains-Fanwood; however, after all of the splashing ceased, both teams accumulated 275 points to share the Union County Championship title in Elizabeth on February 5. It marked the 13th consecutive county title for the Blue Devils.

Governor Livingston placed third with 154 points followed by Kent Place at 125.5, New Providence at 119, Summit with 116 and Oak Knoll with 91.5 followed by Union Catholic, Union, Roselle Catholic, Elizabeth, Johnson, Cranford and Dayton.

The Raider relay team of Jillian Murphy, Kristen Henkels, Mary Henkels and Amanda Cameron grabbed the spotlight by breaking the Union County meet record in the 200-yard freestyle relay with a time of 1:43.12. The old record stood at

1:44.94 set by Westfield in 2000. Jubilation erupted once again when the Raider quartet of Murphy, Brittany Larkin, Kristen Henkels and Melissa Helock touched first in the 400-freestyle relay with a time of 3:46.82. Westfield placed second in 3:50.10.

"Swimming several events is tough, particularly in the big meets but I knew as soon as I dove off, I had to get ahead and give it all I had," said Cameron. "We knew we had to take it out hard. We did."

Victory came Raider Murphy's way once more when she touched first in the 100-yard freestyle with a time of 57.19. Blue Devil Elizabeth Hawkins took second at 57.54 and teammate Alexi Kuska third in 58.06. In the 200-yard medley relay, Blue Devils Kylie Fraser, Jacqueli DeLaFuenta, Brittany Reyes and Kirsten Selert captured first in 1:55.82. The Raiders placed second in 1:55.89.

Raiders Cameron and Brittany Larkin had reason to celebrate when

they placed 1-2 in the 200-yard freestyle. Cameron's time was 2:01:99 and Larkin 2:04.09. Blue Devil Kuska took third at 2:04.51.

"We knew coming in that there would be a lot of competition coming into it but I felt comfortable having (Cameron) who I look up to as a really great swimmer next to me," said Larkin. "I had to take it our rather strong in the first 75, then the 50 and give it my all in the last 75. I knew girls usually tire in the third 50 so that's where I really worked it and got ahead. This is all about team and I especially wanted to beat the girl from Westfield and win this event."

Cameron returned to the water and took second in the in the 500 freestyle in 5:23.64 and Westfield's Amanda Dickson touched third in 5:31.65.

"I really don't pay attention to the people around me, but usually look up at the fans including the coaches who are telling me to go, so that gets me going," said Cameron.

In the 200-yard Individual Medley (IM), Helock touched second at 2:16.58 while Dickson touched third in 2:17.68. Helock then placed second in the 100-yard butterfly at 1:00.89 and Fraser touched third in 1:02.56.

DeLaFuenta swam to victory in the 100-yard breaststroke with a time of 1:10.76 and teammate Katie Morgan took third. Raider Rebecca Fox touched second at 1:12.06. In the 50-yard freestyle, Raiders Murphy and Mary Henkels finished 3-4, respectively, and Selert finished fifth. Henkels later placed second in the 100-yard backstroke in 1:02.66 and Union Catholic's Erin O'Connor touched sixth at 1:05.39.



REASON TO CELEBRATE...Raiders Amanda Cameron, left, and Brittany Larkin hug after finishing 1-2 in the 200-freestyle.

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Devil's Den

Out There in Hunterdon County, They've Got Priorities Straight

By BRUCE JOHNSON
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

It was a step back in time, a walk into the past. Last Wednesday, I headed out to Alexandria Township, Hunterdon County, to join old friend Jeff Gilbert in the stands at the Phillipsburg-Delaware Valley wrestling match. The calendar said Feb. 2, 2005 but it could easily have been Feb. 2, 1965. The gym was at Delaware Valley Regional, but it could easily have been at Westfield, or Cranford, or Scotch Plains. The coaches were Rick Thompson and Brett Conly, but it could've been Gary Kehler against Herbie Farrell or Len Zanicovich or Russ Riegel.

For nearly 2 1/2 hours, the packed-to-the-rafters gym rocked and rolled and cheered and screamed as the two teams went at it, tooth and nail. It started with Del-Val warming up to Van Halen's "Right Now" and it came down to the final match with Del-Val up by four, and with P'burg captain Bryan Kopesky looking for something better than just a three-point win. The crowd noise was deafening.

"Remind you of anything?" Jeff said. "Let's see, Westfield-Scotch Plains, pick the year, or Westfield-Seton Hall, Westfield-Cranford, Roselle Park, Middletown, Hunterdon Central, P'burg ... any of those matches in the 1960s and '70s," I said.

Somebody seems to have forgotten to tell the folks in Hunterdon County that there is supposed to be more to do with your life than spending a Wednesday night following your local high school team. The gym was packed with parents, old grads and students, who painted their chests - well, the boys did - and screamed and yelled. There were no cell phones or Play Stations, just rabid school support.

Kopesky tried and tried to get Matt Carr on his back, but the lanky football star had just enough energy to avoid getting disqualified for too many stall warnings, and even scored a late takedown when Kopesky went for an all-or-nothing move and missed. Final scores: Kopesky, 8-6, but Del-Val 25-24.

There is no way the New England Patriots and their fans felt any higher or celebrated any louder after the Super Bowl than the Del-Val kids and fans did last Wednesday. It was sports at its best. Following the game was a stop at the National Hotel in Frenchtown for several hours of discussion about whose class had the better sports year - Jeff's (1961) or mine (1963) - and other important things like which WHS football team was the best, whether Pat Kennedy was a better lefty pitcher than Dennis Burke, and memories of the late, great Robert Turner, coach of the Westfield Merchants.

TRIVIA QUESTION
Who was WHS's first heavyweight district champion, and who was the last?

CUTOFF FOR CONTEST
If you want to enter the What Year Was the Best for WHS contest - and who wouldn't want to win an evening at the Jolly Trolley with the Corbin brothers (and the Den, too) - you're running out of time. The cutoff date for entries is going to be Tuesday, Feb. 28. All entries must be emailed to me by midnight that night, at the address at end of column.

As of earlier in the week, there were just eight entries. Eight! Is that how much interest there is in WHS sports? Or is everybody just too lazy to take two minutes to send an e-mail to me with their guess for the school year that WHS athletes had the best combined won-loss record?

Several people have said they were going to enter, but we're still waiting for their entries. One who did send a guess - from far, far away - was Al Danker, Class of 1938, who is now living in Florida.

A HALL OF FAME LOSS
It was sad to note the passing last week of Gladys (Wewer) Gleason at the age of 98. Gladys was a member of the Class of 1924 at WHS, and played on the WHS girls basketball team that faced Lawton, Okla., for the mythical national championship that year.

When the WHS Athletic Hall of Fame had its first induction class in 1994, Gladys represented that team and brought down the house with her stories and anecdotes of that season.

REMEMBER WHEN ...
Feb. 10, 1970: Former WHS football standout John Griner, serving his second tour of duty, is killed in Vietnam.
Feb. 13, 1934: WHS swimmers beat

Bloomfield 47-28 for the first win in school history.

Feb. 13, 1965: WHS swimmers' 45-meet win streak is snapped by Princeton freshmen, despite WHS setting four school records. In final event, WHS set a school (1:29.7) but PU frosh tied the national record (1:28.5) to win the meet.

SEEKING CAPTAINS
In my research for the upcoming "History of WHS Sports" compilation, there are still some years where the captain/captains of various teams have been difficult to find. If anybody can help me with the team captains for the following sports/years, it'd be greatly appreciated. No guesses, please, but if you're sure, just e-mail them to the address below.

Baseball: 1947, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1984, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1998.
Boys basketball: 1945, 1989.
Boys bowling: 1982, 1984, 1985, 1989.

Boys cross-country: 1959, 1973, 1984, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1993.
Boys tennis: 1956, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1973, 1981.

Boys track: 1985, 1989.
Field hockey: 1973, 1974.
Girls basketball: 1974.
Golf: 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1973, 1984, 1985.

STREAK ENDS
All things must come to an end, and so it was for the 251-meet win streak for the boys swim team at North Penn High School in Lansdale, Pa. The Knights lost to Emmaus 112-74 last week, ending a streak of that began in 1987 - following a loss to Emmaus. Ironically, North Penn coach Brian Faikish was a sophomore on the team that began the streak.

BATTLE OF SEXES UPDATE
The much-hyped fundraising meet between the WHS boys and girls swim teams ended up in a 92-78 victory for the boys. The girls managed victories from freshman Alexi Kuska (200 free) and sophomore Brittany Reyes (100 fly), but never completely recovered from the boys' 1-2 finish in the opening medley relay. While the boys dominated the relays by a 30-12 margin, the girls did outscore the boys in the individual events 66-62.

TRIVIA ANSWER
Steve Jones was WHS's first heavyweight wrestling champion (1967) and Seth Coren was the most recent (1993). There have been seven other WHS heavyweights to win a district title: Jim McPherson (1968), Jim Zitch (1971), John Kerr (1972), Pete Shearer (1973), Jim Howard (1975), Rick Schadle (1976) and Chris Harvey (1977).

Bruce Johnson's Devil's Den appears every Thursday in the Westfield Leader. Contact him with comments or ideas at bj1019@aol.com



LAST MEET FOR FRIENDLY RIVALRY...Raider Amanda Cameron, left, Blue Devil Jacqueline DeLaFuenta, center, and Union Catholic's Erin O'Connor have been friends and rivals for years

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