



ONE OF A FINE GROUP OF FRESHMEN...Blue Devil center Stephanie Slodyczka, No. 21, was one of the five talented freshmen who blended well with upperclassmen, such as junior Lauren Sinnenberg, No. 20. Slodyczka led the team in rebounds with 179 and freshman Erin Miller led in scoring with 376 points.

MILLER WITH 376, SLODYZCKA AT 252 LED IN PTS.

Lady Blue Devil Cagers See Future as UC Contenders

By DAVID B. CORBIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

On the horizon lies a new potential contender for Union County top honors. It may not be next year, but the talent is definitely there for the Westfield High School girls basketball team to achieve that status.

After a dismal 0-23 season in 2004, the addition of five talented freshmen blended well with the existing upperclassmen led the Blue Devils to a respectable 9-13 record. Better than that, this youthful squad demonstrated with their moxie and team speed that they were willing to scrap with the best.

Senior Lauren Sinnenberg and junior Kristina Fietkowitz helped provide strong defense while contributing 35 and 29 points, respectively, and 44 and 35 rebounds, respectively. Katie Cronin had 48 points and 49 rebounds and Casey El Kourey had 54 points and 49 rebounds. Leanne Skorge finished with 23 rebounds and six points. Chip Simmons had 21 rebounds and 19 points and Kate Judd had 21 points and 11 rebounds.

Freshman wing, forward Erin

Miller had a knack to weave around or even drive through defenders to score and also banged in 31 3-pointers to lead her team with 376 points. She also led the team in steals with 85, was second in assists with 78 and pulled down 71 rebounds.

"She has the potential of breaking 1,000 points in her career," said Blue Devil Head Coach Joe Marino. "She is a hard worker. There were times when people would double team her and she would still get behind them."

Freshman center Stephanie Slodyczka played a fearless game, defensively and offensively, and led the Blue Devils with 179 rebounds while being second in scoring with 252 points. She also had 27 steals and hit 38-for-60 from the charity line.

"She worked very hard this season and in the off-season. She was very quick and competitive and was not intimidated by the size of the opponent," said Marino. "The great thing about Stephanie is that she also has an outside game, which was proven by her 252 points."

Freshman point guards Gabrielle O'Leary and Rose Driscoll shared

court time. O'Leary led the team in assists with 85 was the second chief thief with 44 steals and contributed 104 points. Driscoll totaled 19 points, six steals, eight assists and 11 rebounds.

"One advantage we have with Gabrielle is that she is a little taller. With her height, she can see better," said Marino. "Also, her strength is her ability to shoot from the outside. I would platoon them to give them equal time on the court."

The fifth freshman, Danielle Infantino, showed amazing tenacity defensively and was second on the team with 94 rebounds. She also had 68 points, 16 steals and 22 assists.

"The strong point is that she sees the court well and is fast. She is great on defense," added Marino who added, "Our strength as a team was speed and ability to play together but we want to work on being more aggressive defensively. I feel that this team has paved the way and, mixed with the upperclassmen, has the ingredients for us to be contenders to win the county tournament in the future."



Devil's Den When It Comes to Sports Movies, Phar Lap is Still My Favorite

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

Watched *Seabiscuit* the other night on HBO. A pretty good horse movie. Then I got out my VHS tape of *Phar Lap* and watched it. Free-spending owner, down-and-out jockey, old-time trainer, horse nobody wanted that goes on to be a champion ... it was like déjà vu all over again.

Phar Lap has long been my favorite sports movies. I have yet to watch it without crying at the end. Like *Seabiscuit*, it's a true story of a great Australian horse in the 1920s, which came from nowhere to become a national, and international, phenomenon. When *Phar Lap* died, of suspected poisoning by gamblers, the headlines in Melbourne and Sydney were as big as the Kennedy assassination headlines years later.

Sports movies can tend to be a little soapy, or too made-for-Hollywood. But there are definitely some that stick out above the crowd for me. Here are my favorites:

- *Phar Lap*: True story of a nag nobody wants to become the most famous racehorse in the history of Australia. Bring extra tissues to watch this one. (*****)

- *Go Tigers*: Want to see what life is like in a town (Massillon, Ohio) that is 365/24/7 behind its Washington High School Tigers? Male babies get little plastic footballs to play with in their hospital cribs! This is a documentary of the 1999 season. (*****)

- *Hoosiers*: Does it get any better than coach Norman Dale (Gene Hackman) having his kids measure the foul line distance and height of the basket when the farm boys from Hickory get to the big arena of the Indiana state basketball tournament? And Dennis Hopper is his usual fabulous as "Shooter," forever lamenting his last-second missed shot that cost Hickory a state title years earlier. (*****)

- *The Final Game*: An upclose look at Mike Pettine during his final season as the legendary head coach at Central Bucks High School West in Doylestown, Pa. (****)

- *Friday Night Lights*: The great book comes to life with Billy Bob Thornton as the head coach of the Odessa Permian Panthers in western Texas, where football is a way out. (*****)

- *Field of Dreams*: Kevin Costner builds a baseball field in the cornfields, and the rest is one of the best movies ever. (****)

- *A League of Their Own*: Tom Hanks is awesome as the manager of a women's professional baseball team in the 1940s. (****)

- *The Natural*: Robert Redford as the fictional Roy Hobbs, an unknown baseball talent who appears from nowhere to become a star. Robert Duvall

is great as the sports writer covering the team. (****)

- *Eight Men Out*: Interesting time-piece about the 1919 Chicago White Sox throwing the World Series. John Cusack is third baseman Buck Weaver, Charlie Sheen plays center fielder Oscar (Happy) Felsch, Gordon Clapp (NYPD Blue's Greg Medvey) is catcher Ray Schalk, and John Mahoney (the TV father of Dr. Frasier Crane) is manager Kid Gleason. (****)

Getting back to Hoosiers, if you don't have ESPN Classic on your cable, call somebody and get it! Forget that it's the only ESPN worth watching. It's also the only place you can see the actual film of the March 20, 1954 Indiana state championship game between tiny Milan and mighty Muncie Central. Gary Miller was the emcee of the show on a recent Sunday, which featured last-second hero Bobby Plump of Milan (Hickory in the movie Hoosiers) and one of the Muncie players answering questions during timeouts.

It was a grainy old black and white film, but it was tremendous to watch. The skinny foul lines. The one-hand push shots and two-handed jump shots. No dunks. Lot of layups. The pick and roll, boxouts, bounce passes. No whining. No hot dogging. It was like a trip back in time ... which, of course, it was.

TRIVIA QUESTION

The Gottlick brothers captured seven district wrestling championships for WHS. Jerry winning three, and Rich and Phil two apiece. What two pair of brothers combined for six district championships between them? (Hint, it was not Dave and Steve Brown, who had five; or Dan and Dave Morash, four; or Dave, Tom and Jim Tinnesz, also four.)

RAUCH DELIVERS

Lisa Rauch played a big role in Mount St. Mary's 85-85 tie with Immaculate Heart in the recent state Non-Public A Division swim championships at The College of New Jersey in Ewing.

The junior from Westfield came through with a season-best 1:02.23 to finish third (by .04 of a second) and break up a potential 1-2-3 by IHA in the 100 backstroke. Her swim helped enable the Mount to trail 81-75 doing into the final relay, where a 1-3 finish would produce 10 points and a co-championship. If Rauch had been fourth, IHA would've led by a pretty much insurmountable 82-74.

Rauch anchored MSM's "B" relay, and it was her foursome's finishing place that would ultimately decide the entire meet. Rauch delivered a sizzling 55.72 anchor split to nearly give her team second - she was just .24 of

a second behind IHA's "A" relay - and get the key two points for third place, ending IHA's state record win streak at 144 meets.

"I went faster in my backstroke last year (1:01.06) at (Junior Olympics)," said Rauch, still holder of the Westfield Y 11-12 backstroke record. "But I'd have to say that the swim against IHA definitely meant more. And the 100 (relay) split was my best. It was very exciting."

BUTTERMORE SEVENTH

Linnea Buttermore, a junior at Governor Livingston Regional in Berkeley Heights, finished seventh last week at the NJSIAA Girls Diving Championships at The College of New Jersey in Ewing. The Mountaintop resident, daughter of former WHS diver Glenn Buttermore, scored 267.05 for 11 dives.

REMEMBER WHEN

- March 10, 1973: Rich Gottlick (27-0) and Chris Campbell (26-0) put the finishing touches on unbeaten wrestling seasons by capturing state championships at Princeton. Gottlick wins 3-0 over Glassboro's Dean Guyton in the 148-pound final; Campbell defeats Howell's Nils Deacon 4-1 at 168.

- March 11, 1972: Kurt Stiefken wins the 157-pound state wrestling championship with a 9-4 win over Howell's Art Beins at Princeton.

- March 12, 1966: WHS swimmers capture a record, nine firsts (in 11 events) to win their sixth straight state championship. Dave Demarest wins the 200 and 500 freestyle.

- March 13, 1965: WHS swimmers John Ketcham, Dave Perkowski, Harvey Gerber and Peter Heesch set a national record in the 200-yard medley relay with a 1:39.5 clocking. That would remain a state record for 15 years and a school record until 1992!

- March 13, 1976: Chuck Cosenza beats Madison Township's Kevin Smith 8-2 for the state wrestling 148-pound championship at Princeton. Cosenza was the 11th state champion for coach Gary Kehler, and also WHS's last state champion.

- March 14, 1964: Joe Wiendl wins the 148-pound state wrestling championship with a 2-0 victory over Julio Fuentes of Toms River at Rutgers.

- March 14, 1970: Frank Jackson defeats North Hunterdon's John Marchak 5-2 for the state 178-pound wrestling championship at Princeton.

TRIVIA ANSWER

Pete and Rick Adelaar each won three; Cory Posey won four and older brother Chris won two.

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

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