

ONCE CALLED TITLETOWN, WESTFIELD SCHOOL SPORTS ENJOYS RICH HISTORY

BY BRUCE JOHNSON

When it comes to scholastic sports, Westfield High School has a long and glorious tradition that ranks with any other school in the New Jersey. The first sport team fielded by the school was in football, in the late 1890s. Basketball and baseball were added early in the 20th century, and then track and field. By the 1920s, Westfield also had teams in tennis and golf, plus girls sports that included a 1924 basketball team that played Lawton, Okla., for the mythical "national" championship (Lawton won).

In the fall of 1929, Bob Duncan was brought in as the football coach and athletic director, and sports at WHS began to take off. Duncan's first two football teams were unbeaten (but tied) and he also produced some of the top track talent in the state. In the late 1930s Duncan hired Joe Freeman, and he became a legendary coach in football, while also serving as basketball and baseball coach.

Westfield went through an athletic drought in the 1950s, which were anything but happy days. But the 1960s dawned bright in what Newark Evening News sports writer Ray DeGraw would call "Tittletown." Gary Kehler's football, wrestling and golf teams, Walt Clarkson's cross country, swimming and track teams, and Norm Koury's baseball teams put Westfield on the state's radar. And even the basketball teams produced outstanding teams, under John Lay, Bob Sanislow and Bob Fulton. In 1972, basketball reached its pinnacle, capturing the only state Group 4 title in school history.

The swim teams at Westfield started a dynasty in the mid 1950s. By 2005, the team

had won 48 of the last 49 county championships, a record 20 state championships and was the only New Jersey school with over 700 victories.

Tennis in the 1980s was always among the state's best. And girls sports? Field hockey,



COURTESY OF THE WESTFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

softball, swimming, tennis, volleyball and gymnastics have all been ranked among the state's elite at some point, led by coaches Carol Donner, Marilyn Diamond, Kathy Luckey, Maggie McFadden and Bev Torok.

Memorable Moments

1947: Gerry McGinley led the Blue Devils beating Plainfield 32-12 to put the topper on the finest season of coach Spittin' Joe Freeman's career. The team went 10-0 and averaged 35.4 points per game. It included four future WHS Hall of Famers – Gerry McGinley, Sam Mitchell, Rick McGinley

and Dave Townley – and was North 2 Group 3 tri-champions with Hillside and Regional.

1956: Former WHS standout Bob Clotworthy earns a gold medal in diving at the Melbourne Olympics. Clotworthy was a three-time New Jersey state champion, and

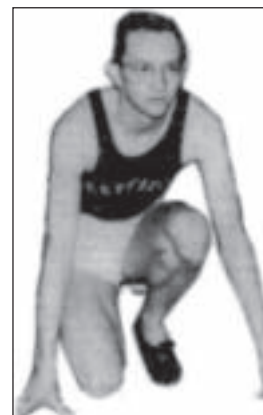
Academy. All five matches go three sets, with WHS winning at first singles (Doug Yearley), second singles (Jeff Factor), third singles (Joel Katz) and first doubles (Andy Biederman-Dan Perach) and coming up just short at second doubles (Andy Loft-Sri Nivargikar).

1992: Chris Campbell climaxes one of the greatest comebacks in Olympic history, capturing a bronze medal in Barcelona. Campbell, a former state champion at WHS and later a two-time NCAA champion at Iowa, was world champion and the heavy favorite to win the gold in 1980, when president Jimmy Carter had the U.S. boycott the Moscow Olympics. Four years later Campbell was injured just prior to trials and his replacement won a gold medal. After five years in retirement, Campbell retired to the mats and within two years he handed Russian legend Mahorbek Khadartsev his first career loss. Khadartsev avenged that loss in the '92 Olympics opening round, but Campbell won six straight bouts to earn the bronze.

1995: WHS wins its second Championship of Americas race, and first under coach Jack Martin, at the Penn Relays when the foursome including Lawrence Ho (3:15 1,200 leg), John O'Brien (51.4 400), Ted Kilcommons (1:56.2 800) and Matt Elmuccio (4:11.5 1600 leg). Same foursome finished fourth in the 4x800 Championship of America final, and Matt Elmuccio captures the distance medley.

1999: After 42 years of bringing home the first-place trophy from the Union County Swimming Championships, WHS comes up just short against Scotch Plains-Fanwood. The Raiders' Dave Russ is the hero, pulling out come-from-behind wins in the 200 medley and 200 free relays that prove to be the difference.

Keeping great moments of history alive and setting vision for the future...



BOB MCCOY
WHS 1937

had won a bronze medal in 1952.

1972: Neil Horne's first year as WHS boys basketball coach is capped with the only state title in school history, when the Blue Devils defeat Triton 44-42 in overtime for the Group 4 crown in Princeton. Juniors Tim Goski and Scott Novacek are the marquee names, but seniors Steve Reddy, Tom Pfeiffer and Larry Simmons are the glue in the 25-2 season. WHS avenged losses to Cranford (61-59) and Thomas Jefferson (52-50) in the sectional tournament, then edged Hackensack (56-51) before toppling Triton.

1973: The state's top two teams – Westfield and Nutley – meet at the Nutley Oval before a crowd estimated at well over 12,000 in what would be the 48th and final game in WHS's historic 48-game unbeaten streak. The two titans battled to a 0-0 tie, with Nutley containing Glen Kehler, and WHS stopping Nutley four times at the goal line late in the fourth quarter.

1977: Westfield defeats Barringer 37-12 before a Giants Stadium crowd of over 32,000. The win caps an 11-0 season for the Blue Devils, and earns them consideration as possibly the greatest high school football team in New Jersey history.

1978: On a cold Saturday night in January, Westfield was the place to be. At the varsity gym, coach Gary Kehler's wrestlers were pulling off a stunning 26-18 win over powerful Hunterdon Central. Across town at the Westfield YMCA, coach Perry Coultas' swimmers were upsetting the previously unbeatable Lawrenceville School 94-78.

1978: The foursome of Brion Gray, Allen Smith, Frank Kelly and Butch Woolfolk become the first WHS team to win a Championship of America race at the prestigious Penn Relays, capturing the 4x100.

1978: The Westfield boys tennis team captures its first All-Groups title with a 4-1 victory over arch-rival Christian Brothers

the generous support of town residents, have enabled funding of significant projects benefiting the 25 men and women athletic teams, band and cheerleaders.



CHRIS DIEMER
WHS 1980

WESTFIELD ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME

Founded in 1994, the Westfield Athletic Hall of Fame meets every two years around Thanksgiving to honor past athletes and coaches who have excelled at Westfield High School (WHS), college, Olympics and professional sports. For more information and to be involved, contact the athletic department at WHS.

WESTFIELD BOOSTERS

The Westfield School Boosters Association (WSBA) is an all-volunteer organization whose sole objective is to provide ongoing financial assistance in support of all Westfield High School athletic programs.

Over the past 52 years, donations in excess of \$350,000, raised by the WSBA through

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