

Devil's Den

Booster Dinner Honors The Best of the Best

By BRUCE JOHNSON

Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times



You see stuff online (OK, maybe nj.com/forums/westfield is not the greatest source for quality information about any town) about how bad the town of Westfield is, the awful traffic, the taxes, the teachers, the coaches, the woes of open lunch and the problems at the high school as compared to (try not to laugh) Scotch Plains and Cranford, and you begin to maybe wonder what's happened. Are we living in a Bizarro World, like in the old Superman comics, where everything is backward?

And then you attend last week's 39th Westfield High School All-Sports Award Dinner, sponsored by the WHS Boosters, and you realize that Westfield is still a great town, and still producing much more than its share of outstanding scholars/athletes and future leaders of America.

As the win-loss records of all the teams were announced, and the many conference, county and sectional championships told, you knew that Westfield was still Westfield, still a team that wins much more often than it loses, and is good in just about every varsity sport. And then came the scholarship awards, 17 of them. And you listened to the accomplishments of the winners, and your mind sort of staggered at what these talented kids are able to do, given that they are working within the same 24-hour day, 7-day week restraints that we all have.

(One downer note: it seemed like, for the second year in a row, between 25 and 33 percent of the seniors whose night it was to be honored chose not to attend the dinner.)

This year's scholarship winners (and their colleges) were: Meg Driscoll (Manhattan), Pat Daurio (Princeton), Tom Taylor (Jersey City University), Andrew Shaffer (Maryland), Jessica Bender (Connecticut College), Joanne Matthew (Boston College), Sal Esposito (Scranton), Rich Scialabba (Penn State), Jimmy Arbes (Rutgers), Matt Kamel (Boston University), Lauren Sinnenberg (Williams), Kris Kagen (American), Mike Murray (Wake Forest), Amy Santoriello (Michigan), Lisa Aliche (Temple), Kris Fietkiewicz (Franklin & Marshall) and Jeff Perrella (William & Mary).

WASH YOUR CAR(S)!
Jennifer Lane, a senior at WHS, has come up with a great way to help honor the memory of her classmate and friend Greta Schoenemann, who was killed in a freak accident at the high school during their freshman year. Greta's family annually presents a scholarship in honor of Greta, a soccer player whose older sister Heidi (swimming) and brother Erik (soccer) were WHS captains. Jennifer and a large group of friends will be

holding a car wash Saturday, June 10 (rain date, June 11), 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Presbyterian Church. Cost is \$5 per car (\$6 for you SUVers) and all proceeds will go to the Greta Schoenemann Memorial Scholarship fund. For more information, contact Jennifer Lane at jalane113@hotmail.com.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD
The WHS football program has had its ups and downs over the past 35 years, mostly ups. And two of the constants during that time have been assistant coaches Ron (Gunga Din) Barner and Greg Gorski, who recently announced they were stepping down from their coaching duties. Both started coaching under Gary Kehler. Barner (1980-83, 1985-2005) also served under Dick Zimmer, while both worked with Ed Tranchina and Jim Benedict. Barner has been an offensive line coach and defensive coordinator for most of that time. Gorski (1972-82, 1994-2005) worked with quarterbacks and defensive backs.

FREQUENT FLYER
Back in 1963, one of the all-time great instrumentals was "Wild Weekend" by the Buffalo-based (Rockin') Rebels, 135 seconds of the best guitar-sax-drums rockin' you ever heard. It's pretty certain that they didn't have Mike Murray's upcoming weekend in mind when they put it out on a Swan label 45. But this is the WHS senior catcher's weekend itinerary: Fly out to Milwaukee tomorrow for a special pre-draft tryout with the Brewers, then fly back to Westfield for the prom, then fly out to Albuquerque, N.M., to play in the prestigious All-American High School All-Star Game. (One of his potential teammates there is 19-year-old left-handed pitcher Danny Almonte, the famous Bronx Little Leaguer of several years back.)

More on the baseball, softball and lacrosse seasons in next week's Den.

TENNIS UPDATE
A wonderful 23-3 season came to a stunning end for WHS's young and talented tennis team last week when it came up short against Bridgewater-Raritan 3-2 in the North Section 2 Group 4 final at Plainfield. It was stunning not because Bridgewater isn't a really, really good team — it went on to stun Cherry Hill East and West Windsor-Plainsboro South to win the Group 4 title — but because WHS had handled the Panthers 4-1 earlier in the season.

Kevin Shallcross at first singles and the second doubles team of Lee Bernstein and Matt Gralla were dominating against Bridgewater. Unfortunately, the Panthers dominated Ravi Netravali and James Chu at second and third singles. That brought it all down to first doubles, where two of the state's

top teams went to a third set before B-R's team avenged an earlier loss to Jack Trimble and Dean Thompson.

With Bernstein the team's lone senior, and with most of the players only sophomores and freshmen this year, the next few springs could be something very special for coach George Kapner's team.

GOLF UPDATE
The WHS golf team continued to be among the state's best, winning the conference and county championships. The lone loss was to East Brunswick, and came after WHS captain Jimmy Arbes discovered he'd hit the wrong ball onto the sixth green. After giving himself a two-stroke penalty, WHS ended up losing by a single stroke. It was the second time in three seasons that coach John Turnbull's team lost an unbeaten record after a player hit the wrong ball.

MORE TOP FIVES
There have been many great athletic families at WHS over the years, and here, arguably, are the best of the best.

1. Jackson. Tom ('72), Mark ('73), Mary ('75), Eileen ('76), Paul ('79), Dave ('82).

2. Byrne. Fred ('67), Paul ('69), Bob ('72), John ('79), Billy ('83).

3. Goski. Joe ('66), Tim ('73), Rich ('76), Karen ('78), Paul ('84). Note: Ken ('64) was comparable to Tim in basketball, but did not play at WHS.

4. Taylor-Tourtellotte. Percy ('14), Bill ('40), Marcie ('66), Billy ('72), and then Marcie's kids, the Tourtellotte sisters, Amy ('91), Stacey ('93) and Lexi ('95).

5. (tie) Cognetti. Too many to name, but it started with Chris ('89) and is still going strong with twins Christina and Catherine ('08).

5. (tie) McCoy. Bob ('37), Steve ('65), Tom ('67), and Ken Welch ('50, uncle to Steve and Tom).

Honorable mention: Duellks, Gottlick, Harbaugh, Hearon-Isabella, McGinley, Monninger, Morash, Morris, Mueller, Wilson.

PUMP IT UP
After pumping my own gas for the last 25 or so years while living in Bucks County, Pa., I get a laugh out of New Jerseyans who were so vehemently against Gov. Corzine's proposed pump-your-gas thing in NJ. I would rather run out of gas trying to get to a Pennsylvania station to pump my own than stop at a station in New Jersey and have it pumped for me. (And that has actually happened twice.)

The Devil's Den appears Thursday in The Westfield Leader during the scholastic sports season. Contact us with comments, suggestions, story ideas or trivia questions at bj1019@aol.com. Go Devils!



BEING GREETED BY HIS TEAMMATES...Blue Devil senior Tom Ricciuti, left, is greeted by Mike Murray, center, and Alex Zierler, along with the rest of the team after slamming a two-run homer in the fourth inning.

Blue Devils Score 4 in 6th, Stop Raider Nine, 7-5

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out two and hitting a batter. Brandon Cuba followed with four innings of shutout ball, allowing four hits and three walks before fanning three. Joe Schurig faced three batters in the seventh and Pete Antonelli finished the inning to pick up the save.

Raider John Mineo pitched a one-hit shutout for the first three innings, yielded the two-run homer to Ricciuti in the fourth, gave up a run in the fifth, then ran into trouble in the sixth before being relieved by Dave Belford.

Three Raiders tapped the plate in the top of the second. Kolb singled, Matt Ferrara took it on the back and Weber drilled his RBI double to left. Bell followed with a two-run double to left.

After Ricciuti's homer in the fourth made the score 3-2, Olsen led off the fifth with a single, advanced to second on a wild pitch, slipped into third on Jayshawn King's bunt single and scored on Ellis' single to left. In the sixth, Alex Zierler walked, Anderson whacked his two-run shot and Olsen followed with a triple. Belford relieved Mineo, got the next two batters out but yielded RBI singles to Ellis and Mike Diaz that gave the Blue Devils a 7-3 lead.

"My first two at bats, I really wasn't waiting back on the ball. He threw me a hanging curve ball my first at bat and I popped up. He threw me the same thing that time, I have been

correcting my mistakes and it came through this time," explained Anderson. "They (Raiders) are a good team. Their record doesn't show how good they really are. They play us tough every game and, luckily, we came through in this one."

In the seventh, Kolb clouted a lead-off homer. Joe Cepparulo and Ferrara received walks and Antonelli came in

to relieve Schurig. The next two Raiders made outs and Adam Perez bounced a bad-hop single to load the bases. James Dinizo, who singled in the first inning, got an easy RBI with a walk then Antonelli extinguished the threat with a ground out to second.

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CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE COACH...Raider Chris Kolb is greeted by Head Coach Tom Baylock after blasting a solo homer in the seventh inning. Kolb went 4-for-4 on the afternoon.

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