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THE WEEK IN SPORTS

Sports Section
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'ROBO', B-PORTER, PENNELLA, CAROW CARRY LOAD

SP-F Trackmen Reach High With Talented 'Workhorses'

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

Several fine athletes are expected to reap many team points to give the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School boys track team a viable shot at Union County top honors and a sectional crown. After being edged by Union for the Union County Tournament (UCT) top honors and placing third in a very close three-way race for the

sectional crown last year, the Raiders certainly have the motivation. The Raiders appear to be strong across the board, but will be especially strong in the tough athletic events such as the hurdles, triple jump, long jump and pole vault. Additionally, the Raiders have strength and depth in the shot put.

"We are stronger all the way around," said Raider Head Coach Rich

McGriff. "We have a better team at every single spot so, hopefully, we will go out there and be Union County champs, be conference champs and be section champs. We have that level of team right now."

Last year, Kyle Rowbotham, now a junior, hopped, stepped and jumped his way to the UCT title in the triple jump with a personal-best distance of

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A BIG PART OF THE RAIDERS' SHOT PUT CREW...Sophomore Mike Alleman grimaces as he begins to heave the shot put in practice. Alleman has several tosses over 50 feet so far in 2006.

KELLY, HILLMAN, GATES, VENA HAVE MANY TASKS

Lady Raiders Aim to Defend UC Relay, UCT, WCT Titles

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

Present holders of the Union County Relay title, the Watchung Conference (WC) National Division title and the Union County (UCT) Individual track & field title, this year's Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School girls aim to successfully defend all three and qualify several for the Group 3 Tournament. Despite having only two seniors on the team - Meaghan Kelly and Patrina Hillman - the Raiders, with talent in nearly every event, appear quite capable of accomplishing those goals.

"Our team goals are to repeat our three championships from last season and to qualify a large number of girls into the group championship meet," said Raider Head Coach Jeff Koegel. "We seem to have replaced many of our losses due to graduation. We don't really have a standout superstar, that was also our situation last year, but we still have good depth and balance and look to use that to our advantage."

Kelly, Hillman, Samantha Gates and Danielle Vena, among others, are expected to compete in multiple events and reel in many team points. Kelly, who is very strong in the 400 hurdles, is the defending UCT champ in the triple jump and will team with Gates, Vena and Kim Appezzato to run the 4x400 event. During the winter, the foursome broke the school record and qualified for the Meet of Champions (MOC) and Eastern States Championship (ESC).

"Our primary goal is to break four minutes," noted Koegel.

Although presently a little raw in the shorter 100 hurdles, "Kelly is one of the top intermediate hurdlers in the county and section. We look at this as an event where we can pick up a lot of points," said Koegel.

Another area for gathering big points could be the high jump with Hillman - defending WCT champ her freshman year - Vena and Gates in the mix. The Raiders are also defending UCT relay champs in the triple jump.

The Raiders should also pounce deep into the pit in the long jump with

junior Amanda Bobyack - the two-time defending UCT champ with a

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RUNNING WITH RAIDER FUTURE...Raider Head Coach Jeff Koegel runs with freshman Brittany Veeck during practice. Veeck split 5:29 this winter on the four-mile relay at Nationals.



FAKING A SUICIDE SQUEEZE...Blue Devil batter Pete Antonelli fakes a bunt while Kevin Hennessey, on third, fakes an attempt to dash home in a scrimmage game against North Plainfield.

VETERAN SQUAD APPEARS TO HAVE PLENTY OF CLOUT

Blue Devil Baseballers Look To Score Quickly in Bunches

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

Westfield's version of "Murderers' Row" will test its talent when the Blue Devil baseball team hosts Hillsborough at Edison Intermediate School on Saturday, April 1, at 11 a.m. This season, this veteran squad of sluggers look to score quickly and in bunches to subdue its opponents.

"We are looking to score quickly and in bunches," said Blue Devil Head Coach Bob Brewster. "We have a very, very solid offensive team."

With the exception of three individuals in last year's starting lineup, Billy Hearon, Bryan Power and Sam Kim, who have graduated, the Blue Devils return a savvy group of talented players who have the ability to apply the "Big Bang" theory at the plate. After junior speedsters Tom Bonard and second baseman Mike Diaz, who are expected to bat 1-2 in the order, "Murderers' Row" consisting of four-year starters Mike Murray and Tom Ricciuti and two-year starter senior Alex Zierler, respectively, will

step to the plate to inflict damage on the baseball.

Last year Murray, who will don the uniform of the Demon Deacons at Wake Forest in the fall, was named First Team All-State as a catcher and broke four school records (season batting average, career hits, career RBI, career doubles), tied two others (career home runs, RBI in a game) and struck out only one time (looking) in over 100 plate appearances. But Murray is not resting on his laurels.

"Mike cut weight in order to improve his speed. He is lighter now than when he was a freshman and he

has faster bat speed," Brewster pointed out.

Ricciuti (shortstop/pitcher) has a reputation for hitting the long ball, as does Zierler (first base), who tied school records with two grand slam homers in one game and eight RBI in a game.

From that point, a host of experienced players will take their turns in the 6-7-8-9 part of the batting order. Seniors Craig Ellis (centerfield/pitcher), Jay Anderson (third base/pitcher), Brandon Cuba (pitcher), Josh Gerckens (shortstop), Jayshawn King (outfield) and Dave Kaplow (catcher)

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