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THE WEEK IN SPORTS

Sports Section
Pages 11-15

RAIDERS MUST BRING BACK MAGIC OF 2002 GAME

Raiders Face Stiff Challenge In 'Pre-Turkey Day' Game

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

Wednesday, November 22, would present quite a challenge for the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School football team's Pre-Thanksgiving Day match up with the powerful, sixth-ranked Elizabeth Minutemen at Williams Field in Elizabeth. The 4-5 Raiders have struggled with a four-game losing skid while the 9-1 Min-

utemen have been gliding like a well-oiled machine.

In the four previous Thanksgiving Day outings with the Minutemen, the Raiders have a 3-1 edge but were shut out 27-0 last year. In 2004, the Raiders shocked then No. 11 Elizabeth, 13-12, when wide receiver Sean Smith had respective fourth-quarter TD receptions of 20 yards and 61 yards from quarterback Dan LaForge and Mike

Baumwoll kicked the winning point after. In 2003, the Raiders' Wild Dog defense, featuring Travis Boff, Marc Fabiano, LeRoy Anglin, Mike Dinizo and company, baffled the Minutemen in a 6-0 upset. Quarterback Mike Walker scooted for a 22-yard TD.

But the most memorable was the very first meeting when the Raiders walked into Williams Field on a bit-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



PUTTING HEAVY PRESSURE ON THE QUARTERBACK...The rabid "Wild Dog" Raider defense, featuring Marc Fabiano, center, pressured the Minuteman quarterback all afternoon on Thanksgiving Day 2002.

MATTES, HENNESSEY, BARBA, PARKINSON LED TEAM

Blue Devil Soccer Boys Had 'Tale of 4 Different Seasons'

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

High expectations were set for the Westfield High School boys soccer team this season and all seemed to begin well when the Blue Devils won their first three games. A big losing streak and a big winning streak followed then, after tournament time, the Blue Devils finished with a 13-7-2 record.

"It was kind of like the tale of four different seasons. The first season, we went 3-0. The second season was 0-5-2. The third season was 8-0 and

the fourth season was tournament time," said Blue Devil Head Coach George Kapner whose career wins (all varsity sports) is 798 and for boys soccer is 199. "We started well, not winning impressively, but winning. Then we went into a tale spin. It may have been connected, to some degree, of (goalie) Greg O'Brien breaking his wrist. Six of those seven non-wins were competitive. Then Kearny ripped us to shreds. That weekend, we got together and I made a number of decisions. The single most impor-

tant decision, at his request, Chris Mattes felt that he would serve the team better as a sweeper rather than a striker. He had been a fullback his freshman and sophomore years, so it made some sense.

Although Mattes was invaluable as sweeper, he also notched four goals and an assist. Nick Barba, who was moved to marking back, contributed two assists and, later in the year, marking back Kevin Hennessey (2 goals) was moved to the midfield

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



SETTING A WESTFIELD HIGH SCHOOL RECORD...Blue Devil Marcus Allen Green hauls in his ninth interception of the season on Thanksgiving Day to break Jan Coccozzello's WHS record of eight set in 2003.

RUNNING GAME HAS STEPPED UP, MUST STOP DIXON

Blue Devils Want to 'Gobble' Cardinals on 'Turkey Day'

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

Three straight victories - Malcolm X. Shabazz, Scotch Plains-Fanwood and Bridgewater-Raritan - have assured the Westfield High School football team of, at least, a .500 record this season but the Blue Devils have their sights on finishing with a 6-4 record with a win over Plainfield in the 103rd meeting of the two teams on Thanksgiving Day at Hub Stine Field in Plainfield at 11 a.m.

The Blue Devils proved how tough teams in the Watchung Conference really have been with their 35-18 thumping of Bridgewater-Raritan on November 11, especially when they were afforded the luxury of playing many players from their bench in the second half.

"Look at the playoffs! Five teams went in, four teams won (as of November 16) and the teams that won, won pretty handily, and they were teams we lost to," said Blue Devil Head Coach Jim DeSarno. "There are no easy weeks here."

Westfield won the first recorded meeting against Plainfield, 26-0, in 1900 and own a 50-44-7 edge over the Cardinals who won the last three meetings - 9-7, 40-0 and 9-0. The Blue Devils, however, won the previ-

ous three Turkey Day meetings.

The 2000 game provided the most total points in all of the meetings with the Blue Devils winning a wild one, 42-25, to finish with a 6-4 record.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



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