

LUKER, SHELMAN, MURPHY TO LEAD THE CHARGE

Blue Devil Lax Ladies Expect More Success This Season

By FRED LECOMTE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

First year Westfield High School girls' lacrosse Head Coach Caroline Franch plans to get much of the leadership, team balance and physical presence from this year's Blue Devil team. On the minds of a stronger and more experienced team featuring seven seniors, eight juniors and one sophomore, the goal is to finish high in the

Union County Tournament, the Watchung Conference and to capture a NJSIAA state crown. Last season, Westfield finished in style with a 12-4 record and advanced to the state sectional tournament, losing to Ramapo.

"It was the first time in awhile that we went to the states so that was a huge accomplishment for us," said assistant coach Elizabeth Stanley. "We

had a lot of strong players and a few things that were extremely extraordinary including a huge win against powerhouse Pingry. We always had a hard time winning against huge competition schools but the girls stepped up and showed just what skills and potential they had as a team and that was kind of characteristic of the entire season."

With three seasons of action now behind her, goalkeeper Michelle Zaffuto promises to be quite effective as the last line of defense.

"She is a fantastic player and keeps on getting better each year," said Stanley. "She's not afraid of the ball, really quick on her feet, determined and committed to the position."

Strong and furious offensive punch will come from senior Tri-Captain/attacker Julie Shelman, senior Tri-Captain Mary Kate Luker and attack winger Allison MacDonald, a fantastic and aggressive athlete. New faces, Rachel Iannazzone and Lauren Brunhofer, show great stick skills and promise.

Luker and defensive wing Lindsey Sauerwein will provide plenty of strong defensive pressure, along with key team player, senior Tri-Captain Caitlin Murphy, who finished with a fantastic season. Claire Bennett, Leanne Hewitt, Leanne Skorge, Katherine Taylor, Jessica Campo, Annie DePalmer, Kimberly Ripinger and Elizabeth McCarthy figure to step up big in the offensive and defensive equation.

"To have that many fantastic players coming from junior varsity is unusual," said Stanley. "There are players who you can play all the time and players you feel who can play some of the time. Every one of our players can be used in any kind of tough competition and would do very well. That's something that will prove to be a real benefit as the season rolls on."

"In terms of stick skills they are pretty good at penetrating, but right now we're looking for them to utilize their stick skills that they have and move the ball around a little bit more," added coach Franch. "We don't want them to look just for the first option but their outlets, while developing vision of the field. The captains are providing good leadership. They all seem to work well as a team and I believe they are going to be very successful."

The Blue Devils face East Brunswick in the season opener at Kehler Stadium in Westfield on April 2.



Fred K. Lecomte for The Westfield Leader and The Times

READY TO MAKE A STATEMENT...Leading the Westfield lacrosse charge this year are left to right, tri-captains Mary Kate Luker, Julie Shelman and Caitlin Murphy. The Devils look to finish on top in the UC tournament and advance to the NJSIAA state finals.



Fred K. Lecomte (2006 files) for The Westfield Leader and The Times

CHARGING DOWN FIELD...Blue Devil Julie Shelman, No. 15, looks to put a lot of pressure on the opposing teams' defenders.



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times

EXCITED TO GET THE JOB DONE...Raider Co-Captains Jillian Lusk, left, and Nicole Colineri and their teammates look forward to an exciting season while rebuilding. Lusk will play first base and Colineri will play shortstop.

LUSK, COLINERI NAMED RAIDER TEAM CO-CAPTAINS

Raider Softball Girls Rebuild, Excited to 'Get the Job Done'

By DAVE CORBIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Rebuilding offers a broad avenue of excitement for this year's Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School girls softball team that finished last year's campaign with a 17-8 record. With six talented athletes gone due to graduation, the Raiders return three starters but also have several talented players from last year's team that claimed the Union County Tournament JV title.

GL Laxers to Hold Wine Tasting Event

The parents of the Governor Livingston High School Lacrosse Club, with the assistance of the Berkeley Heights Wine Company, will sponsor a wine tasting at the Connell Building No. 1 at 100 Connell Drive in Berkeley Heights on Friday, March 30, from 8 to 12 p.m. The event will feature wines from around the globe as well as a raffle of gift baskets. The cost is \$50 at the door.

This year's boys' and girls' lacrosse teams, partially funded by the school, are some of the largest at Governor Livingston. For more information, call Linda Hogan at (908) 665-0352.

The Raiders' biggest challenge is to fill in key positions vacated by pitcher Elaine Piniat, shortstop Melissa Settee and centerfielder Kelli Kaskiw who have graduated in addition to the position once held by All-Union County catcher Lauren Mains.

A mainstay at first base is senior Co-Captain Jillian Lusk, who has occupied the position since her freshman season. Lusk rarely made a defensive miscue and finished last year with a .994 fielding average.

"She's going to be playing ball at Drew (University) but she hasn't forgotten that she has a job to do here first. She goes for everything. She's very optimistic. She's leading the team in play and leading by example," said Raider Head Coach Kelly Covert.

Co-Captain Nicole Colineri, a junior who was very effective at third base last year, has shifted to shortstop and, because of her speed and ability to get on base, is expected to bat either in the leadoff position or second. Last year, she crossed home plate 20 times.

"She is a coach's dream. I know she can get the ball. She will do anything you want all the time," said Covert. "She will do the job."

Stephanie Goines, a junior, started at second last year and has been showing promise as a pitcher.

"She's the same way, wherever you need me! She's been working hard at pitching. She loves the game," said Covert.

Junior Brienne Mahoney is also honing her pitching skills and may also hit somewhere in the 6-7 spot in the lineup.

"We lost some great players but what we are finding is that the girls are stepping up. We are relying on some different players. And our pitching staff, I am excited with Brienne Mahoney and Stephanie Goines. They are throwing very well," said Covert.

Filling in the spot vacated by Mains will be sophomore Nikki Mineo. Junior Melanie Davis is also working as a catcher.

"She (Mineo) lives for the game, does a good job calling the pitches. She and Brienne have a good relationship. They have played club ball together. And she works well with Stephanie too," Covert pointed out.

Since Colineri's shift to short, sophomore Saxony Nielsen is a primary candidate to play third.

"She moves well and can get the

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