

DAN NAPOLITANO WINS 200-FREE

Raider Boys, Girls Get 2-3 At Pirate Invitational Swim

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School boys swim team placed second and the Raider girls placed third at the 31st Pirate Invitational at The Bubble in Princeton Junction on January 16 and 17. The Raider boys totaled 214 points, while Christian Brothers Academy took top honors with 275 points. The Raider girls totaled 159.5, while West Windsor-Plainsboro South took first with 333 points and Pennsbury took second with a total of 228.

Raider Dan Napolitano touched first in the 200-yard freestyle with a time of 1:47.8, while teammate Joe Dunn finished sixth with a time of 1:57.13. Napolitano (backstroke at 27.28) also teamed with Greg Baliko (breaststroke at 28.97), Mike Napolitano (butterfly at 24.16) and Dunn (freestyle in 22.8) to win the 200-medley relay with a time of 1:43.27.

Mike Napolitano at 5:05.87 and Ryan Gajdzisz at 5:10.99 touched 3-5 in the 500-freestyle. Mike Napolitano also took the 100-fly with a time of 54.59 and Dan Napolitano took fifth at 55.0. Baliko touched second in the 200-individual medley with a time of 2:01.41 and Dan Pesin finished sixth at 2:18.29. Baliko took third in the 100-breaststroke with a time of 1:03.15 and Pesin took sixth in the 100-backstroke at 59.38. The Raiders finished third in the 400-free relay with a time of 3:24.76 and fifth in the 200-free relay at 1:37.52.

Kelsey Rossi touched second in the girls 100-freestyle with a time of

55.05, and she touched second in the 100-breaststroke with a time of 1:07.93, while teammate Steph Baliko finished fourth at 1:11.53. Hannah Markey took fourth in the 50-freestyle with a time of 25.82, and Jodie Thompson tied for fifth with a time of 26.9. Becca Dunn finished fifth in the 100-butterfly at 1:03.95. The Raiders placed fourth in the 400-free relay with a time of 3:54.63 and fifth in the 200-free relay at 1:45.8.

Devil Boys Get 10th At Group 4 Track

The Westfield High School boys winter track team tied Dickinson for 10th place with a total of 10 points at the NJSIAA Group 4 Relays held at the Bennett Center in Toms River on January 17. Old Bridge won the event with a 39 total, followed by Toms River North at 25 points.

Dave Fishman with a height of 12'6" and Ben Fine with a height of 10'0" placed third in the pole vault with a combined height of 22'6". Mike Kelley, Jonathan Henry, Tyler Cusick and Ryan Scrudato finished fourth in the distance medley relay with a time of 10:38.3.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood boys placed 15th in the Group 3 meet with 7 points, placing fourth in the team high jump with a height of 11'4" and sixth in the distance medley relay with a time of 10:54.43. The Raider girls finished 21st by placing fifth in the team shot put (Kim Wendon and Osa Ebose) with a distance of 65'0.75".



Devil's Den Barber WHS's Best Bet At County Mat Tournament

By BRUCE JOHNSON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

While wrestling has been around on the high school level in Union County since the 1930s, when teams like Thomas Jefferson (Elizabeth), Roselle Park and Union were among the state's best, the sport didn't really kick into high gear until the 1960s. That's when Cranford, Scotch Plains-Fanwood and WHS started producing very strong teams.

By the '70s most every school had a team and in 1976 the Union County Tournament was held for the first time. The dominant team for the first six years was Westfield, which won all six titles. Since 1981, however, WHS has won just two more titles, in 1990 and '92.

Ironically, a school that was barely an afterthought when the event started, Kenilworth (or David Brearley), has become the county's premier program. The Bears won nine of the 14 weight classes to easily win last winter.

And Brearley will be the favorite to repeat at this year's meet, the 35th, this Saturday at Union High School.

Despite a couple of one-point losses last week, WHS's best shot at a gold medal is Christian Barber. The junior moved up two weights to 152 against Livingston and dropped a 3-2 decision. Back at his normal 140 he lost 2-1 to Brearley's top wrestler. Barber has been "wrestling up" recently to get better competition and better prepared for the tournament season. He recently beat an '09 county finalist from Gov. Livingston 10-2, and a returning regional champion from Madison 5-2.

Mike Kalimtzis, Troy Skibitsky, Ryan Jennings, Brian Henry, Eric Gozdieski, Chris Tomasso, Bill Kim and Tom Snyder have been wrestling well and are all potential point-scorers.

Here is a year-by-year breakdown of WHS's performances at counties, with team place, followed by individual champions:

- 1976: first; Steve Brown, Dave Tinnesz, Ron Sozio, Jerry Gottlick, Joe Birmingham, Chuck Cosenza, Bill Hunziker
- 1977: first; Steve Brown, Dave Tinnesz, Joe Birmingham, John Iglar
- 1978: first; Greg Schmidt, Chuck Whedon, John Iglar
- 1979: first; none
- 1980: first; John Pinto, Vinny Hurley, Dan Iannascio
- 1981: first; Phil Gottlick, Bill Kahn, Mike Giacone
- 1982: fourth; Matt Shields, Mike Giacone
- 1983: eighth; none
- 1984: fourth; none
- 1985: sixth; Mike Stagaard

- 1986: seventh; none
- 1987: sixth; Tony Coleman
- 1988: sixth; Chris Jordan
- 1989: sixth; Chris Jordan, John Povalac
- 1990: first; Glen Kurz, John Povalac
- 1991: sixth; Paul Jordan
- 1992: first; Paco Gonzalez, Paul Jordan
- 1993: second; Chris Posey, Seth Coren
- 1994: third; Cory Posey, Paul Bal
- 1995: third; Cory Posey, Frank DiGiovanni
- 1996: seventh; Kevin Sullivan, Cory Posey
- 1997: seventh; none
- 1998: 10th; none
- 1999: 13th; none
- 2000: 11th; none
- 2001: 12th; none
- 2002: ninth; none
- 2003: fourth; Ethan Powell, Lee Tomasso
- 2004: ninth; Rob Mench
- 2005: 12th; none
- 2006: ninth; none
- 2007: 10th; none
- 2008: 13th; none
- 2009: fourth; none
- 2010: ?

Junior Jey Yengling (135) and freshman Brian Bulger (145) won their weight classes at the Rahway Jayvee Tournament last Saturday. WHS also had quite a few runnerup finishes.

DEVIL TRIVIA
The Watchung Conference was formed in 1955 as a league for basketball, baseball and track. Who were the original four member schools?

THIS AND THAT
Quite a pulse-pounding double dual meet at Lawrenceville's Lavino Pool on Saturday, as the WHS boys (92-78) and girls (89-81) swim teams swept the Big Red.

Highlights of the boys win over the 10-time defending state Prep School champions were Larry Zhang's 2:01.63 to win the 200 IM, No. 12 on the Top 15 List, and the 1:30.90 win in the 200 free relay, No. 15 on the List, with Matt Meserole's 21.42 anchor leg pulling out a win by .06 of a second. The girls, missing two of their top performers, got a huge performance from Meredith Smith. The senior won the 200 free and 100 fly, then anchored the meet-clinching 400 relay, with Emily Budnick, Suzanne Lemberg and Maeve Maloney, that went 3:42.89, No. 9 on the Top 15 List.

Proving that depth is what wins swimming dual meets, the WHS girls

team, using a less-than-stacked lineup against New Providence, won just three of the 11 events, but posted a 101-69 victory. The Pioneers are coached by former Blue Devil Chris Driscoll ('00).

After losing to national power St. Patrick and falling one point short of a good New Brunswick team following a terrific comeback, the WHS boys basketball team rallied for a much-needed W against archrival SP-F last Thursday. Junior Ryan Hess had a breakout game with 22 points, including 10 during a 21-12 fourth quarter that saw the Devils rally from a three-point deficit after three periods.

Similarly, the WHS girls hoopsers lost tough games to SP-F and Cranford, but also notched a couple of wins, against Rahway and Elizabeth. Amanda Markowski scored 17 and had 10 steals against Lizzy-Beth.

BENEDICT STEPS DOWN
Jim Benedict "retired" as the head football coach at Watchung Hills. Benedict, whose final 'Chung team went just 2-8 but did post a win over 8-3 WHS, was the head coach at Westfield in 1994 and '95, going 4-5 and 3-6. Rumor has it that the much traveled, 62-year-old will join Bill Tracy, his former WHS assistant, up at Ridge High School.

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO
Cliff Zackey?

Cliff ("Yes, one 'f' ... it's short for Clifton") was a baseball player at WHS ('65) and for the Westfield Merchants.

After a short stint at Rutgers ("I was not exactly astute academically at the time, and was on academic probation after one semester"), he joined the Marines. After fulfilling his service commitment, a "more mature" Zackey finished his college degree at RU, where he met Maureen of South Plainfield, his wife for 41 years. They have one son, Cliff, who wrestled at Ridge High School.

Following a 34-year career as a "headhunter" in New Jersey and seven years with Volvo, Zackey headed to Stuart, Fla., 40 miles north of Palm Beach, where he is "happy and retired, and looking out at the beautiful Atlantic Ocean every day."

"I have great memories of Westfield," Zackey said. "We used to play behind Edison, stickball with a shaved tennis ball. I grew up playing with guys like Marty Howarth and Greg Chlan. They could really throw

Devils of the Week Jhakyse Williams, Ryan Hess

hard. I figured if I could hit Greg, man, I could hit anybody.

"The last time I played baseball was with the Merchants (1968). I did play some church league softball, but nothing serious. And I still have my original glove, a Wilson A2000."

(Thanks to Faithful Reader Rich Danks, '68, for that request. Let us know if you've got somebody you're wondering, "what ever happened to ...")

IN PASSING

We were saddened to hear of the recent passing of Fred Kessler, the father of former WHS footballers Fred ('80) and John ('82). Fred Sr. was a longtime member and former president of the Westfield Boosters.

Another recent loss was Bob McDonough ('77), a former cross-country and track standout, and the older brother of WHS quarterback Matt ('78) and wrestler Paul ('80).

Also, Jimmy Decchellis ('68), a pretty good ball player in his day, lost a 10-year battle with prostate cancer; and Don Comby, the father of gymnast Donna ('77) and Hall of Famer Denise ('80), and uncle of Jeff Gilbert ('61).

DEVIL TRIVIA ANSWER

Cranford, Roselle, Roselle Park and Scotch Plains (not -Fanwood yet). Hillside and A.L. Johnson joined in 1956, Rahway and Westfield in 1960, and Jonathan Dayton Regional in 1961. By then, football, cross-country, soccer, and golf had been added to the conference's list of sports.

In 1973 the conference went "big time" and added Thomas Jefferson (Elizabeth), Linden, Plainfield and Union, former members of the Central Jersey League.

In 2009 the conference was eliminated after 54 years and the Union County Conference took its place.

DEVIL OF THE WEEK

This week's winners of a free sub from Westfield Subs (261 South Avenue East) are Jhakyse Williams and Ryan Hess. Williams, a senior sprinter, ran on three first-place relays as WHS won the Union County Indoor Relays title. Hess, a junior, scored 22 points as WHS rallied to knock off SP-F for the second time this winter.

The Devil's Den appears Thursday in The Westfield Leader during the school year. Contact me with comments, complaints and suggestions at bj1019@aol.com. Win or not, WHS4EVR!

Blue Devil Girls Stop Elizabeth in Hoops

The Westfield High School girls basketball team broke loose with a 17-4, third quarter run to cruise to a 49-33 victory over Elizabeth in Elizabeth on January 14. Senior guard Amanda Markowski pumped in 19 points, including a 3-pointer, added three assists and was by far the chief thief with 10 steals.

Senior Diana Venezia sank 12 points, had four steals, a blocked shot and two assists, and pulled down 13 rebounds, including three offensive boards. Junior Katie Ponce had 7 points, three steals, six assists and eight rebounds. Danielle Miller had 5 points, three rebounds, two steals and two assists. Gabby Cerami, Nicole Bilica and Sara Nelson each netted two points.

Westfield	14	8	17	10	49
Elizabeth	7	9	4	13	33

U.C. Baseball Assn. Slates 74th Hall of Fame Dinner

The Union County Baseball Association (UCBA) will induct four new members into the Union County Baseball Hall of Fame during award ceremonies on Sunday, February 14. The four inductees will be honored for their outstanding contributions to the national pastime on the baseball diamonds of Union County.

Frank Araneo of Union, Richie Burke of Elizabeth, Bob Hoffer of Linden, and Don Zsak of Scotch Plains will be honored at the 74th Annual Hot Stove League Baseball Dinner, which begins at 1 p.m. at the L'Affaire Banquet Center in Mountainside. The dinner is sponsored by the UCBA, in cooperation with the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Union County Department of Parks and Community Renewal.

In addition to the new Hall of Fame inductees, the dinner also will honor

young athletes from local baseball leagues for their achievements in 2009.

The special guest speaker will be Dale Berra, the former infielder for the New York Yankees, Pittsburgh Pirates and Houston Astros, and son of Yankee great Yogi Berra.

Since 1937, the dinner has been the primary fundraising effort for the association's County Summer Youth Baseball League for youngsters 8 to 15 years, and the Fall Teen League. Over the years, the awards dinner has honored many local and national baseball luminaries - including Phil Rizzuto of Hillside, Don Newcombe of Elizabeth, Joe Collins of Union, Jeff Torborg of Mountainside, Willie Wilson of Summit, Jake Wood of Elizabeth, and Elliott Maddox of Union.

Tickets for the dinner are available for \$40 and may be obtained by calling (908) 789-3686.

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