

Baseball Legend Cy Young
Born March 29, 1867

THE WEEK IN SPORTS

Sports Section
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D'ANGELO ON MOUND; DEGNAN SHORT, ZAZZALI 2ND

Baseball Raiders Building Steppingstone for the Future

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

Four returning starters and only one of them a senior means that this year's Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School baseball team will field an extremely young squad, but the talent is there and the coaching staff plans to build upon that.

"We are a very young team. We have four seniors on the roster. Each and every game we are going to have five to six underclassmen playing, including two freshmen, two sophomores. We are young across the board. It will be a steppingstone for the future," Raider Head Coach Tom Baylock said.

But the future is not that far away. "They are working real hard. It's

fun to go to practice. They are getting better each day. We are going to be able to compete pretty much with anyone," said Coach Baylock, who added, "Last year we had an 11-11 record, but probably five of those games we were leading going into the last inning, and we didn't know how to close them. We have some key guys back, who can hopefully help us close things out."

Junior James D'Angelo is expected to be the Raiders' No. 1 pitcher.

"We have no senior pitchers. James is our number one guy. We want the ball in his hand in all the big games. He's a third-year varsity player, so he's got all the experience on the mound," Baylock pointed out.

Juniors Chris Ciccarino, Brad

Alleman and Kevin Raszka, sophomore Daniel Korduba and freshmen Kevin Maxwell and Matt Marino will also take to the mound.

"Chris Ciccarino was a JV pitcher and led the team to the county championship. He, Alleman and Danny were pitchers on that team. We got young guys, but we got young guys who aren't too bad. We are not just throwing guys into the mix.

Senior Ryan Henkels will start behind the plate, and sophomore Matt Ridge will also experience time in the catcher's spot.

"Ryan's got a whole year under his belt. He does a great job blocking balls, a great job working with the pitchers and keeping the pitchers un-

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PREPARING FOR THE REGULAR SEASON...The Blue Devils are prepping for another successful season. The seniors, pictured, left to right, are: Mike Coletta, James O'Rourke, Jon Gribbin, Brett Ryan, Mike Mondon and Matt Varakian.

O'ROURKE, VARAKIAN, RYAN RETURNING STARTERS

Baseball Blue Devils Testing New Faces at Different Spots

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

Many still have the memory of a banner season that yielded last year's Westfield High School baseball team its first sectional championship in 23 years and a trip to the Group 4 championship, but a host of fine players have graduated, including a pair of superstars, so this year's Blue Devils' first test would be to fill the vacancies with the right personnel.

"We are trying a lot of different

people at a lot of different places. We are still in an experimental stage," Blue Devil Head Coach Bob Brewster said.

The carved in stone starters, however, are seniors James O'Rourke, Matt Varakian, infielders Brett Ryan and Jon Gribbin and Mike Coletta, who according to Coach Brewster, "has done a great job at first base. He has really improved his throwing."

Last year, James O'Rourke had a .412 batting average (BA) and 43 runs scored. His coverage in

centerfield was second to none, and he proved it with two of the most outstanding catches ever seen.

Varakian, a leftfielder, finished with a .358 BA with 27 RBI. Gribbin got his big chance when Varakian broke his hand in the sectional semis. Gribbin went 3-for-4 with a pair of doubles and three RBI against Perth Amboy. In the Group 4 championship game, he smashed a grand slam and added a pair of brilliant catches

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GETTING READY FOR ACTION...The Raider returning veterans are excited about the upcoming season. Pictured, left to right, are: front row; Christian Zazzali, James D'Angelo and Kevin Raszka; back row, Brett Kovacs, Ryan Henkels, Frank Degnan and Anthony Krajcsik.

DePAOLO, KIRNA, ISBIT, CIARDULLO TEAM CAPTAINS

Blue Devil Track Boys Focus On Enhancing Performance

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

Winning is one thing, but performance is the most important thing for this year's Westfield High School boys track & field team that carries 140 participants according to Head Coach Jack Martin.

"We don't just look at points. We look more at performance. We want kids to run faster. We are not going to do things just to score points. We never have done it that way. We try to get some good relay performances, because the relay gives everybody the chance to participate and be a part of the team. Last year in the Union County Relays, out of a potential 14 distance spots, we had 14 different

kids carry the baton. Whereas when you get to the individual championships, you have a lot of kids doubling and tripling, so you don't use as many. We try to get everybody involved," he said.

The Blue Devils have capable personnel in nearly all events, beginning with seniors Bob Ciardullo (co-captain), Kyle Star and Brendan Dugan in the sprints, and seniors Jake Vergara, Jason Isbit (co-captain) and Kevin Ingram and junior Kevin Smith in the 400 and 800 meters.

Senior Chris Jimenez heads the long jump crew, along with Dugan and senior co-captain Mike DePaolo, who is the main man in the high jump, followed by DeClan

Fitzmaurice and several newcomers. DePaolo and Fitzmaurice will be strong in the pole vault.

"We cover most of the events pretty well. We have a decent sprint crew as well. Our jumpers are actually pretty good. Jimenez has gone over 21 feet and DePaolo is a solid 6-2 jumper in the high jump. Mike and DeClan are in the low 40s in the triple jump," Coach Martin pointed out.

Junior Peter Fagan and senior John Stelmach will add impressive heights in the pole vault.

"Fagan did 12-6 in the wintertime and John was 11-6. We have a bunch of kids in the 11-foot range, so [Coach] Don [MacDonald] does a

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BLUE DEVIL TEAM CAPTAINS...Pictured, left to right, are: Bob Ciardullo, John Kirna, Jason Isbit and Mike DePaolo, who have been selected team captains of the boys track team.



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