



LEADING SCORER AND REBOUNDER...Senior David Kane, No. 14, led the Blue Devils this season with 197 points and 126 rebounds, while adding 37 steals and 40 assists.

KANE LED IN REBOUNDS, SCORING; MURRAY ASSTS

Blue Devil B'ballers Focused On Defense, Finished 12-13

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

No superstars to lead in scoring and for most of the season no giants to control the boards, so this year's Westfield High School basketball team focused on honing its defense to keep opposing teams' scoring low, while figuring out a way to spread the offensive wealth.

"I was very proud of how my kids competed all year. We knew going into the season that we were going to be a different team from last year. With our top two scorers graduating and our third out with an injury, winning was going to require us to be very good defensively and also to figure out how we can be effective on offense," Blue Devil Head Coach Daryl Palmieri said.

The Blue Devils, who finished with a 12-13 record, did indeed spread out

its scoring attack with six players totaling, at least, 100 points and another who scored 97 points in a half season of action.

"As far as wins and losses, it was an up and down year for us. However, this group of kids was an absolute pleasure to coach. They came to work every day and played hard every game. As a coach, all I ever ask of them every game is to play as hard as they can and be a good teammate. They did that every game for me," Coach Palmieri said.

Seniors David Kane and Dylan Elliott were the scoring leaders with 197 points and 180 points, respectively. Kane, who had 40 assists and 37 steals, also led the team with 126 rebounds. Elliott, who had 87 rebounds and 39 assists, led the team with 26 3-pointers and 47 steals.

"David Kane and Dylan Elliott were warriors for us. They did everything they could game in and game out to give us a chance to win. We really tried to lean on them as much as we

could to help us win," Coach Palmieri said.

Seniors Ben Schuman and Chris Sweeney were consistent throughout the season, and senior Chris Wright became eligible in mid January and made his presence known. Schuman scored 104 points and pulled 71 rebounds, while Sweeney netted 47 points, 54 rebounds and added 10 assists. Wright scored 97 points and grabbed 80 rebounds.

"Ben Schuman, Chris Wright and Chris Sweeney gave us solid play. We were very unselfish and it showed on the stat sheets. It seemed like every game we had a different leading scorer," Coach Palmieri said.

Junior Sean Elliott bucketed 136 points, including 13 3-pointers, and added 70 rebounds, 26 assists and 29 steals. Sophomore Owen Murray was able to find the open man and proved it with a team-leading 79 assists, while also adding 80 points, 75 rebounds and 24 steals. Sophomore Parker Hess

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Devil's Den

Knapp and Scott: Perfect Together

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



Liz McKeon picked a wonderful time to join the coaching staff of the WHS girls basketball team. A former three-sport, 12-letterwoman and 1,000-point scorer at WHS ('99), McKeon's first year as a volunteer assistant saw Joe Marino's team set a school record with 23 wins (in 27 games) and have two girls join her in the five-member 1,000-point club.

Those two girls were juniors Lil Scott and Jackie Knapp. Or is that Lil Knapp and Jackie Scott? Sometimes it's hard to tell.

"They're two peas in a pod," McKeon said. "Their relationship is one of a kind. Part of me is jealous. I would've loved to have a partner in crime back in high school. Jackie and Lil just look like they are having so much fun that it makes you want to go out there and play with them."

"There was no competition on who was going to score 1,000 points first. If they had it their way, they would've scored their 1,000th at the same time, on the same basket."

Truth be told, Scott was the first to reach the magic number. It came Feb. 4 against Rahway - on a pass from Knapp. Then on Feb. 25 against Union it was Knapp's turn to reach 1,000 - on a pass from Scott.

The Knapp-Scott connection actually started way back in second grade, when they played on the same in-town rec league team. "I don't remember its name, but I clarified with Lil and we're pretty sure we were undefeated," Knapp said. "My dad (former Princeton University captain Gary) was our coach and we rocked."

The two girls then went their separate ways until eighth grade, when they were reunited on the Garden State Sharpshooters, an AAU travel team. And that was the start of what has blossomed into a wonderful year-round friendship.

"Sometimes the only difference is their hair color," McKeon said. Scott is also an inch taller (5-foot-7) and left-handed.

Both possess a high basketball IQ, excellent court awareness and outstanding shooting range. Their favorite play involves hitting a really long-

range 3-pointer, assisting on a teammate's basket or, of course, setting up their "bestie" for a bucket.

"Our friendship started on the basketball court and led to a friendship off the court," Knapp said. "We just hang around all year, whether it's doing something we consider fun or playing for our AAU team (they switched this year to the N.J. Panthers). We just have a lot of fun and work well together."

Scott: "It's funny because Jac is still the same player I remember from when she was little... a ball of energy who never stops running."

Unlike Knapp, Scott does take time from basketball for something else. She will be a co-captain of next fall's WHS girls soccer team. "I love soccer and up until high school I was equally committed to both sports," Scott said.

When asked which three people from any time in history they would like to have dinner with, both included Michael Jordan, but Scott went with Martin Luther King Jr. and Ellen DeGeneres for her other two, while Knapp had Babe Ruth and John Lennon. Musically, Scott prefers Bob Dylan over Knapp's Beatles. A psychologist could probably make something of those selections.

A trip in a time machine had Scott wanting to return to "the time of the dinosaurs," while Knapp was along the same vein, wanting to return to the time he had was playing for Pete Carril at Princeton University, so she "could help him, explain to him his mistakes, like he does to me today."

Although AAU ball this spring and summer will be key for their college recruiting, they are both counting the days until the 2014-15 WHS season starts. And why not? Despite losing two solid seniors - Carly Friedman and Morgan Maloney - everybody else returns, and the junior varsity and freshmen teams were both undefeated! Sophomore Olivia Luzzi has already scored 345 points in two years, and classmate Amalia Montes led the team in rebounds (177) and added 100 points on offense. Freshman Hannah Liddy scored (128), rebounded (123) and was a defensive whiz (93 steals). And Jamie Miller scored 130 points as a freshman before injuries hampered her the last two years.

"A big part of our (personal) success this year was really because of our teammates," Scott said. "We were very fortunate to have a talented team in every position. I really like our chances. It won't be easy, but hopefully we will be able to make a run at the county championship."

Knapp, to no surprise, agreed.

"Next year is gonna be a big year for us because our team was disappointed when we lost to Union (in the county semis)," she said. "And losing (to eventual sectional champion Franklin) in the state game hurt the most because we should have won that game and then we would have played Union again. We wanted a rematch."

Both girls will have a tough time bettering their junior-year stats. Scott scored 455 points (No. 2 all-time), had a school record 102 steals and 92 assists (No. 4 all-time). Knapp added 401 points (No. 5 all-time), 81 steals and 86 assists. They rank Nos. 3 (Scott 1,136) and 4 (Knapp 1,031) in career scoring, behind Erin Miller (1,580) and Krissy Jeremiah (1,169), and ahead of McKeon (1,017).

So, who is better? C'mon, in a best-of-three, 1-on-1 showdown to 15, winner's out, one game each, 14-14 in the third... who wins?

Scott: "Jac."
Knapp: "Lil... but it would be very competitive."

BASKETBALL UPDATE

While he'll obviously miss David Kane, Dylan Elliott, Chris Wright, Chris Sweeney, Eric Shor and Ben Schuman, boys basketball coach Daryl Palmieri has to be excited about the potential of his guards next winter. He's got plenty of them. Now if he can just find another big man to go with Chris Boutsikaris.

Owen Murray played well at point guard, especially considering he was a sophomore filling in for the injured Danny Mitchell after Nick Mele transferred. Next winter, with Mitchell healed and Mele back, all three will be in the mix at WHS. Along with athletic senior Sean Elliott, sharp-shooting junior Parker Hess and sophomore Pat McCormack up from the Jayvees, it's quite an impressive group.

GRUBER SETS RECORD

Glenn Gruber (WHS, '67) set a world record during a Masters short-course meters meet March 11 in Oregon City, Ore. The 65-year-old Gruber, who swims for Ventura County Masters in southern California, won the 400 freestyle in 4:55.10, shaving almost a half-second off the seven-year-old record.

As a WHS senior, Gruber won county titles in the medley relay (anchor) and 100 free, and finished third in the 100 free and swam on the winning 400 free relay.

IN PASSING Mark Frega, 52, a former WHS football and lacrosse player and the father of several WHS athletes - past, present and future - passed away suddenly on March 5. He and his wife Christina were the proud parents of Katherine, Mark Jr., Jennifer, Kevin and John. Frega ('79) was a town resident for 46 years and owned Landmark Management. A solid lineman on the 1978 football team, he was co-captain of the 1979 lacrosse team, along with Tom Gilday and Jim Tadlock.

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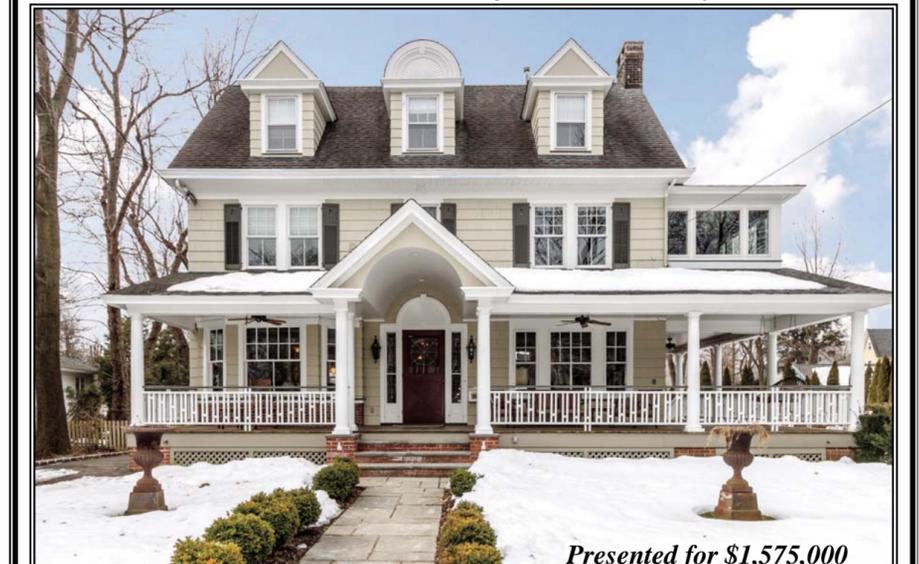
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