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HOBSON STRIKES OUT 16; CALUGAY RAPS 3B, 2B, 2 RBI

Blue Devils Score Early; Stop A.L. Johnson in Softball, 10-3

By ALEX LOWE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times
Michaela Hobson struck out 16 batters in powering the Westfield High School softball team to a 10-3 victory over AL Johnson on April 9 in Clark. Hobson allowed three runs on five hits and walked just one batter on her way to the complete game victory. Teammate Kalea Calugay had three hits, including a double and a triple, while driving in two runs and scoring once. The Blue Devil offense hammered out

contest. In innings three through five, Hobson recorded eight of the nine outs via strikeout.
"She definitely had a very good day today," said Blue Devil Head Coach Caitlin Cheddar of Hobson's overpowering performance. "We are looking for her to build on that. She is somebody we depended on last year and I'm sure she will be that again for us this year. She gave up all three RBIs to their best hitter."
Westfield got an insurance run in

"We've been playing really well," said Coach Cheddar. "I don't have many complaints. We definitely have small adjustments that we can make but we are playing as a team, we are staying positive and we are all doing a really nice job right now."
Johnson, which is anything but a pushover, fell to 2-2 on the season. Through four games, the Blue Devils have scored 57 runs and have not been held under double digits yet. Combine this highly productive offense with a solid defense and a standout young pitcher and it is no wonder why the Blue Devils sit atop the standings in the UCC-Watchung Conference. Still Coach Cheddar knows it is way too early to start booking reservations in the UCT championship game.

"We've had some impressive results so far this year but we don't need any reminding that we have a lot left to prove this year," said Cheddar. "We are looking forward to doing that."
Westfield 170 100 1 10
AL Johnson 002 010 0 3



Alex Lowe for The Westfield Leader and The Times

HOMEWARD BOUND...Blue Devil Julia Gagliardi, No. 4, makes the turn for home in the game against the AL Johnson Crusaders.

16 hits against Johnson starter Nicole Pecoraro, while improving their season mark to a perfect 4-0.

Hobson was spotted to an 8-0 lead by her teammates as Westfield scored a run in the top of the first and followed with a seven-run outburst in the top of the second. Armed with a big lead the sophomore sensation was able to challenge Crusader hitters. After getting tagged for a two-run homer over the left-centerfield fence by Johnson's Victoria Zatzko, Hobson settled in and dominated the rest of the way.

"I really just pushed through because I've had a lot of injuries lately," said Hobson. "Recently I strained my hip flexor and I tore my meniscus twice over the summer. It has been acting up a little bit lately, so I've been learning to just push through. After she hit the home run, I knew that my team would pick me up, so I really didn't worry too much. I knew we would get it back."

Hobson's heroics aside, this was also day in which the Blue Devil offense shared center stage. Westfield cranked out seven doubles in the game with six players racking up multiple hits on the day. Along with Calugay, Emma Pietrewicz and Julia Romano each collected three hits.

"This is a team sport," said Calugay, a freshman. "We've got a lot of people on this team who can hit, especially with some of the newer players."

Romano drove in the first run of the game with a double into the leftfield corner that scored Gen Howell from first base. Howell had walked to lead off the game. The Blue Devils broke the game open in the second inning by scoring seven runs. Alivia Macaluso had a two-run double in the inning. Julia Gagliardi and Pietrewicz each had RBI singles during the outburst. Calugay led off the inning with a double and would go on to score a run. Calugay came up again in the inning and belted an RBI triple off of the right field fence.

Johnson closed the gap to 8-2 after Zatzko's two-run blast in the bottom of the third inning. But this is when Hobson took complete charge of the

seventh when Pietrewicz poked an RBI single to make it 10-3. Pietrewicz finished the day with three hits and two RBI. Romano finished with three hits, two doubles and two RBI. Macaluso had two hits and two RBI.

Union Tops Raiders In Softball, 6-4

The Union High School softball team defeated the hosting Scotch Plains-Fanwood Raiders, 6-4, on April 10. Sophia Lerner had three RBI and scored once for the Raiders and Amanda Venezia doubled and scored once. Chrissy Gubernat singled and scored once. Casey Ferguson had an RBI. Arielle Roman led Union with two home runs and a single. Alyssa Thomas tripled, doubled, singled and scored once.

Softball Raiders Blanked By Johnson Crusaders, 7-0

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Johnson had no such problems in stringing hits together. The Crusaders plated two more runs in the top half of the fifth inning to increase to a 6-0 lead. Megan Tinger had an RBI single and Nicole Randazza scored all the way from first base on a single by Julia Schelhorn. The play was an adventure as Scotch Plains-Fanwood actually got the lead runner trying to score from second base on a throw to the plate but when catcher Cassidy Novello tried to double up Randazza at third, her throw sailed into leftfield allowing the trailing runner to trot home.

"There are a couple of places where we didn't play a clean game in the field," said Hulnik. "But it is still early in the season. I know the scoreboard doesn't look great and the record isn't great either but we are getting better with each game. We'll sneak up on a few teams eventually."

Johnson plated runs in five of seven innings against Raider starter Amanda Venezia and reliever Maeve Kahora. Venezia went five innings, allowing four earned runs on eight hits while striking out three batters. Kahora finished the game going two innings, allowing one earned run on two hits, while striking out two batters. Johnson racked up 10 hits, which was a nice turnaround performance after having struck out 16 times in a game against Westfield pitcher Michaela Hobson earlier in the week.

"Our girls can swing the bat as a team," said DiNucci. "Sometimes we over think things and take a few too

many pitches. We are just trying to simplify things a bit. See the yellow ball. Hit the yellow ball."

The victory helps keep Johnson in the thick of the UCC-Watchung conference race where they sit currently tied with defending Union County Champ Roselle Park for third place. Westfield (4-0) and Cranford (3-1) occupy the top two spots.

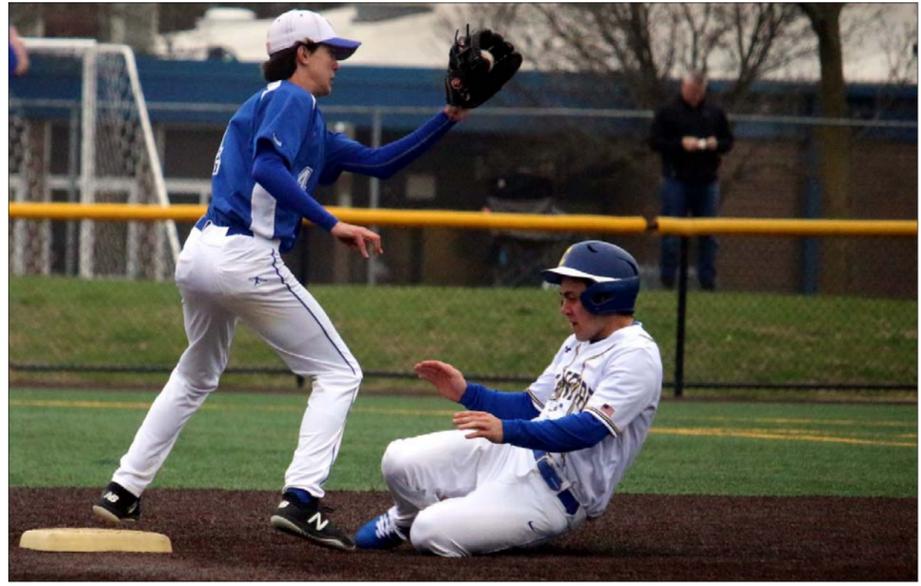
"The past week we struggled against some very good teams," said Zatzko. "I think, and I hope that today's game can serve as a jump start for the rest of the season."

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Alex Lowe for The Westfield Leader and The Times

NOT QUITE IN TIME...Raider Meghan Duthie reacts after grounding out to shortstop in the game against the Johnson Crusaders.



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times

ABOUT TO BE GUNNED DOWN AT SECOND...Cougar courtesy runner Parker Melchiorre will get tagged out by Blue Devil shortstop Jack Bowman as he attempts to steal second base in the fourth inning.

Cougars' Booming Bats Down Blue Devils, 9-5

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

left, Murphy hopped a single over third base and Plick slammed his three-run double to left.

"I was just trying to get something I could drive. I had a lot of guys in scoring position, so I just wanted to find a way to bring them in," Plick said. "I just fouled them until I got a fastball then I would drive it."

"I was leaving the ball over the plate and they were jumping on that first-pitch fastball. They were ready and I needed to adjust. But I think I did in the middle innings," Carlone said.

In the Westfield second, Flynn yanked a single to left, moved to third on a pair of passed balls and scored on Carlone's groundout to second. The Blue Devils scored twice in the fourth to tighten the score at 4-3. Danny Kohler, who walked, and Flynn, who was hit by a pitch, scored respectively on Carlone's single to center and Jack Bowman's sacrifice fly to center.

The Cougars' bats activated again in the fifth and it began again with Shriner's double to right field. Johnson walked, Jake DeClerico laid down a bunt single and Szczecch lofted an RBI sac fly to center. Plick added his fourth RBI with a grounder to second that scored Johnson.
"At leadoff, I always want to start it off well even whether I was able to get up in the fifth and start things off. Our chances of scoring with me leading off are higher. I hit the ball to right field with two strikes. I have to battle and put the ball in play somewhere," Shriner explained.

"They started stringing together a lot of good at-bats. They weren't go-

ing for the off-speed like before. They kept fouling them off. They were working the count and I was walking them. They were doing a good job," Carlone said.

Showcasing his peculiar style of holding the bat in front of him with a split grip before the pitcher goes into his windup Flynn then led off the sixth inning with his second single, strutted to second on a balk call, moved to third on a throwing error and scored on another error.

"Everyone asks me that. I have done that since I was like 12. I just got to the plate one day and I started doing it. Every single person thinks I'm going to bunt but, No! That's just getting me getting warmed up before the pitch. It's my routine," Flynn explained.

Kohler took to the mound in the sixth and Carlone switched to first base but the Cougars were ready and tacked on three more runs to up their lead to 9-4 and it began with Shriner's one-out bunt single. Shriner then stole second and scooted to third on a wild pitch. After a pop out to first,

Pioneer Nine Defeat Cranford Cougars, 4-2

The Cranford High School baseball team suffered its first loss of the season in a 4-2 setback to the New Providence Pioneers on April 12. Nate Scott rapped a home run and a single and had two RBI for the 3-3 Pioneers and pitcher Dylan Bedder was credited with the win. Jack Connor tripled, singled and had an RBI. Anthony Iannacone had two hits and scored once. Andrew Shen had an RBI single and Chris Kubas doubled and scored once.

Jamie Shriner rapped a pair of singles, scored once and stole a base for the 5-1 Cougars. Aidan Plick doubled and singled, Mike Murphy doubled and scored once and Jake DeClerico swiped a pair of bases, Joe Meola and Tyler Szczecch each had an RBI.

Lady Blue Devils Tap Montclair Laxers

Senior Paige Radice fired in five goals as the Westfield High School girls lacrosse team defeated Montclair, 13-10, in Westfield on April 11. Carley Farella put in two goals, while Olivia Shields, Nicole Scheuermann, Ana Fowler and Ellie Kate Brown each put in one goal. LJ Kehler had two assists and Liz Healy had one assist. Goalkeeper Mia Fleming made 15 saves.

Montclair 5 5 10
Westfield 7 6 13

DeClerico was hit by a pitch, Szczecch walked and Murphy added the icing on the cake by whamming a long three-run triple to left-center.

"The bases were loaded, two outs. I knew I had to put it in play. First ball was outside then he gave me a fastball right down the middle then I looked to drive it in the gap," Murphy explained.

Down to their last chance the Blue Devils put one more run on the board. Victor Coustan walked, Kohler was hit on the arm and Flynn found an opening past short for his third single. Chris Ho received an RBI when he was hit by a pitch.

"Two strike count and every count I am just trying to hit the ball hard, find the gap, find out where they are not and hit the ball hard. That is the approach every single time," Flynn said.

Having beaten major teams in Union County, the Cougars are looking forward to an eventual showdown with the unbeaten Governor Livingston Highlanders.

"Last year we had two tough games against them. We were able to tie and win, so I am pretty confident. I think we will play them pretty well," Plick said.

"Things are going well, 4-0! We have Elizabeth Thursday, New Providence Friday, so we want to win, then GL coming next week. That's a big one too," Shriner said.

"It's a great group of guys. We always find a way to win. We love it. Just grind out the games and hopefully we will do good this season," Plick said.

Westfield 010 201 1 5
Cranford 400 023 x 9

Blue Devils Improve To 6-2 in Boys Tennis

The Westfield High School boys tennis team defeated Scotch Plains-Fanwood, 5-0, on April 11 then topped Millburn, 5-0, and lost to West Windsor-Plainsboro South, 3-2, on April 13, to boost its record to 6-2.

Against the Raiders Matt Bartok won 6-0, 6-0, at first singles, Sebastian Wroe won 6-1, 6-2, at second singles and Nick Fomo won 6-1, 6-0, at third singles. Brad Hornbeck and Jai Sharma won 6-0, 6-2, at first doubles and Irving Zhao and Jordan Caffiero won 4-6, 6-0, 10-4 at second doubles.

The Millburn shutout had Matt Su winning at second singles and Wroe winning at third singles.

Against West Windsor, Wroe won at third singles and Hornbeck and Sharma won at first doubles

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