

CUCCURULLO, MERKEL, COMBINE TO SHUT OUT HAWKS

Raiders Blank JP Stevens, 2-0, In North Section Quarterfinal

By ALEX LOWE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Scotch Plains-Fanwood starter Patrick Cuccurullo and reliever Nick Merkel combined to shut out J.P. Stevens, 2-0, in the quarterfinals of the North Jersey, Section 2, Group 4 Tournament played on May 24 in Scotch Plains. Cuccurullo turned in five innings of scoreless work, allowing just two hits. Merkel entered the game in relief, striking out five batters and walking just two. Michael Dieu and Willy Gale had RBI singles to provide the winning margin for the fourth-seeded Raiders, who were set to face eighth seed Westfield in the semifinals on May 28.

“I’ve really become a fan of the way these kids are playing,” said Scotch Plains-Fanwood Head Coach Joe Higgins. “We want to keep winning so that we can keep coaching

them. They pitched really smart today. You’ve got to give them all of the credit. Cuccurullo and Merkel are great competitors and both of them threw as well as they possibly could today. We made the plays we needed to make.”

Cuccurullo struck out seven batters and walked five during his impressive start. He threw 104 pitches before giving way to Merkel.

“To be honest, everything was working pretty well today,” said Cuccurullo. “It was a tight zone but I was able to throw strikes when I needed to get them and I was able to use all my pitches.”

Merkel navigated his way out of trouble in the top half of the fifth inning by striking out the final two batters.

“There was a runner on second with one out, in a one run game, so I’m going out there trying to pitch and use everything I have to keep us in front,” said Merkel. “My curveball was really working today. I got a lot of swing and misses and caught them looking with that pitch today.”

It was as simple as that. Travis Ling and Shiv Patel each had a single for fifth-seeded J.P. Stevens (18-9). Patel pitched well and gave up two runs on five hits over six innings. But JP Stevens batters had little to offer against the Raiders’ dynamic duo on this day. Now Scotch Plains-Fanwood will get to face a very familiar foe in the semifinal round. Scotch Plains-Fanwood and Westfield have split a pair of 5-4 decisions this year with each team winning on its home field.

“Who we are playing doesn’t matter,” said Cuccurullo. “We are going to go all out and play every game like it is our last game because it very well could be our last game.”

Scotch Plains-Fanwood, which captured the Union County Tournament title, has been on a roll in the second half of the season. The Raiders have reeled off seven straight wins and have a knack for winning close contests. Fifteen games have been decided by two runs or less this year and the Raiders have an 8-7 record in those contests. But they are 8-2 in their last 10 games decided by two runs or less.

“These guys have been through a lot of baseball together,” said Higgins. “They are very close. They are very comfortable around each other. I think all of those things play into why they are on this roll at this time. We struggled a little bit in the first half of the season but I told them that in the second half of the season, they look very comfortable in these situations. I think that has a lot to do with just being comfortable with their teammates and the level of experience they have on this team.”

JP Stevens	000	000	0	0
Sc Pl-Fanwood	100	010	x	2



Alex Lowe for The Westfield Leader and The Times
RAIDER ONE-TWO PUNCH...Pitchers Pat Cuccurullo, left, and Nick Merkel combined to shut out the JP Stevens Hawks in the quarterfinal round of the North Jersey, Section 2, Group 4 Tournament in Scotch Plains on May 24.

PRYBYLSKI FIRES IN 2 GOALS; McLANE GOAL, 2 ASSISTS

Red Devils Top Blue Devils, 11-5, For Sectional Boys Lax Crown

By ALEX LOWE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

The Westfield High School boys lacrosse team fell to Hunterdon Central, 11-5, in the NJSIAA North, Group 4 championship played on May 25 at Hunterdon Central High School in Flemington. Jack Aimone scored five goals for Hunterdon Central, while goaltender Bryce Zell came up with 13 saves to power the third-seeded Red Devils to the sectional title. Aimone, a junior who will attend Rutgers upon graduation, proved to be an unstoppable force throughout the match.

“We weren’t giving up 6-on-6 goals in the first quarter,” said Westfield Head Coach Patrick Tuohy. “We were giving up turnovers and transition goals. That didn’t need to happen. We were spraying it around like it grew on trees. Not the best way to go out. You can’t spot a team goals, especially not in the finals.”

Trailing 5-1, Westfield finally got moving midway through the second quarter. Senior Devon McLane sprinted out from behind the net and potted one to cut the lead to 5-2 with seven minutes left in the half. Jake Engelke sneaked in from the right side and received a feed from McLane before finding the back of the net to close the gap to 5-3 with 4:44 left in the quarter. The score would remain that way until the break.

Westfield pulled even closer when Mack Prybylski scored on a charge through the middle to make it 5-4 with 8:34 remaining in the third quarter. But that was as close as the Blue Devils would get. Hunterdon Central closed out the third quarter with four straight goals to make it 9-4 heading into the final period.

“We battled back to 5-4 and then you know, we had a couple of bad decisions and quick goals for them,” said Tuohy. “Next thing you know, we’re down 7-4 and then you start pressing, trying to make things happen. Our guys got gassed and we walk away with a loss. Credit to them (Hunterdon Central). They really

stifled us at points and frustrated us a little bit and we just turned the ball over too much. That is what it really comes down to obviously. You can’t win games if you don’t have the ball.”

Hunterdon Central made sure that there would be no furious finish from the Blue Devils by scoring two quick, spirit breaking goals to start the fourth quarter. Tory Lentine scored less than a minute into the final quarter and Aimone followed less than a minute later with his fifth of the game to make it 11-4. Prybylski scored with seven minutes remaining but the Blue Devils could not mount much offense the rest of the way.

“One of the adjustments we tried to make against them was that we knew they wanted to throw long passes, so we tried to force them into staying on one side of the field,” said Vergalito. “That kind of forced them into a situation where they had to do things they weren’t used to doing. Those turned into some turnovers and extra possessions for us.”

Prybylski led Westfield scorers with two goals. McLane, Engelke and Papadopolous contributed one goal each.

It was a disappointing loss for Westfield, which entered as the fourth seed and was roaring after taking out top-seeded Ridge in the semifinal round match. But third-seeded Hunterdon Central had its own upset win to be proud of having defeated second-seeded Ridgewood. Earlier in the season, Hunterdon Central had defeated Westfield, 5-4.

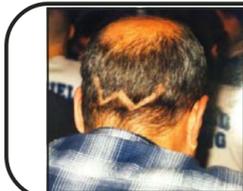
“I told them to keep their heads up and I thanked all the seniors for their hard work,” said Tuohy. “I told them that where Westfield lacrosse is now, when you mention the name Westfield it carries enormous respect. Just in my seven years as a head coach we’ve been to the sectional finals four or five times. There is not another Group IV team that can say that. We keep getting big wins in the playoffs, this year we knocked off Ridge. In years past, we’ve knocked off a really talented Ridgewood team. We’ve got a lot of good wins over the last several years. With this senior class leaving, they’ve had I think, three county titles and two sectional final games under their belts, as well as enormous wins against top-10 teams. I told them that they have continued a legacy of making sure that Westfield lacrosse remains a top program in the state.”

Westfield	1	2	1	1	5
Hunterdon Central	4	1	4	2	11

Devil’s Den

All Good Things Come to An End

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



This might have been one of the most rewarding and most stressful seasons of George Kapner’s 29 years as WHS’s boys tennis coach.

On the bright side, the team finished 21-5 – its 15th consecutive (and his 24th overall) 20-plus win season. It also captured the Westfield Invitational, its 15th straight Union County Tournament and fifth consecutive state North 2 Group 4 sectional title. And it was this close to advancing to another state final, before falling to Montclair, 4-1, last Wednesday in the state Group 4 semifinals.

A win there would have given Kapner 1,200 varsity coaching wins at WHS, in 71 seasons of girls (194 wins) and boys (280) soccer, girls basketball (42), boys swimming (42) and tennis (641).

“That was the last thing on my mind,” he said. “The kids didn’t even know about it until after the match.”

The stressing thing was that of the team’s 26 matches – mostly against high-quality opponents – 11 of them came down to a 3-2 decision; WHS won nine of them. And most of them seemed to come down to second doubles, and tiebreakers.

“We’ve never had as many 3-2 matches as this spring,” Kapner said. “Happily, we won most of them.”

With former star Damien Ruparel among several recent alums in the boisterous crowd last Wednesday, four of the five matches against Montclair went to a third-set super-tiebreaker, where the first to get 10 points wins. As if that wasn’t stressful enough, Matt Su at No. 2 singles suffered a hamstring injury in his second set and was being attended to by a trainer on the second court, waiting to see if he’d somehow have to finish his match.

Brad Hornbeck and Jai Sharma won a 12-10 tiebreaker at first doubles, but then Matt Bartok fell 10-8 at first singles ... and Sebastian Wroe lost 10-8 at third singles. This all happened within minutes of each other.

Then, as had happened so many times this spring, all eyes shifted to second dubs, where Irving Zhao and Justin Cafiero were in a 4-6, 6-4, 8-9 battle for survival. Montclair won the next rally, earning the match-clinching third point, so Kapner had Su default due to injury and WHS’s season was over.

“It’s come down to them (Zhao and Cafiero) time and again,” Kapner said. “And they’ve been coming through, especially at the end of the season.”

After mixing and matching different doubles combinations early on, Kapner eventually came up with Hornbeck-Sharma as his No. 1 and Zhao-Cafiero at No. 2. Against one of the state’s toughest out-of-conference schedules, Zhao-Cafiero went 15-4, including quite a few match-clinching victories.

They scored the winner against Millburn, and in the regular-season win over Montclair. But the turning point – “the day the light bulb went on,” Kapner said – was the April 20 Blue Devil Invitational. Because of heavy rains, the Westfield Tennis Club wasn’t available, so the event was held – after some major delays to clear the courts of puddles – at Tamaques Park.

The championship final pitted WHS against Delbarton, which had won the team’s first meeting ... 3-2. Because all eight courts were in use – with final and consolation matches for all four participating teams – that meant one match, second doubles, was held until a court became available.

Sure enough, the first match that ended was first singles. Before taking the main court, Zhao and Cafiero got some last-minute advice from Kapner. “I just told them, ‘The match will be decided by you two ... on the show court,’” he said.

Adding to the surreal atmosphere, a little while later, because of the late-in-the-day start of the match, the



Senior Irving Zhao and freshman Justin Cafiero had a 15-4 record at second doubles, including several match-clinching victories.

court’s lights came on. Zhao and Cafiero seemed to literally rise to the moment.

“They played out of their minds,” Kapner said of the 6-3, 6-2 match-clinching romp. “That was when I knew we had something there.”

Things snowballed from there. The county final was a WHS-Summit dual meet and, once again it came down to ... you know who. And Zhao and Cafiero outdid themselves in this one, while probably causing Kapner’s stress level to rise. After splitting the first two sets, Summit’s all-senior pair went up 3-0 in the third set AND was serving! Somehow the Devils rallied to win 7-5, clinching the county title.

“All of a sudden, just like that, they turned it on again and won,” Kapner said.

The Hornbeck-Sharma duo is undefeated against New Jersey competition, their only loss coming against Horace Mann of New York City. But they generally made relatively quick work of their opponents, leaving the high-pressure, match-deciding stuff for Zhao and Cafiero.

If WHS is to have a state champion in tennis this spring, it will be Hornbeck-Sharma. Because of a conflict with the school’s prom, Bartok, Su and Zhao will be dancing the night away. Sharma opted to join Hornbeck at the state Doubles Tournament. They are seeded third and play their first match on Sunday at Veterans Park, Hamilton.

Meanwhile, Kapner must wait until next spring – the 100th season for WHS boys tennis, incidentally – to get his 1,200th coaching win.

“Hey (athletic director) Sandy (Mamary), can you call G.L. (Governor Livingston) and reschedule that meet from last week?” Kapner joked last Wednesday at Mercer County Park, before adding, “I was already planning to come back. I’m pretty sure we’ll get another win.”

A DEVIL HAD TO WIN
The WHS Blue Devils beat the top-seeded Ridge ‘Green’ Devils, 6-5, in the North Group 4 semifinals last Wednesday, but came up short against the Hunterdon Central Red Devils, 11-5, on Saturday in the North 4 final.

Ridge rallied from a 4-0 halftime deficit to tie the game, before Devon McLane netted the game-winner (his fourth goal of the game) with less than five minutes left in regulation.

But Hunterdon Central, after withstanding an early third-period barrage of three near-goals, pulled away from a 5-4 lead with six unanswered goals. It was the third time in the last five years the Blue Devils lost in the sectional final.

BY THE NUMBERS

Baseball: Mike ‘MJ’ Catanzaro bedazzled top-seeded and No. 4 in the state Bayonne (24-3) with slow curves and even slower curves, and the Brew Crew posted a 3-2 victory on Friday in the North 2 Group 4 quarterfinals. WHS got a clutch two-run triple from Matt McIntyre and some sparkling defensive plays by infielders Christian Pansini, Andrew Caminiti and Victor Coustan to advance to the semifinals at archrival Scotch Plains on Tuesday. Catanzaro allowed a single and RBI double to the first two batters, then gave up just two more hits and one unearned run the rest of the way, whiffing six – including the final out with the tying run on second base.

Softball: The Blue Devils’ outstanding season (21-3) ended when Columbia scored three times in the top of the seventh to break a 2-all tie and post a stunning 5-2 win in the North 2 Group 4 semifinals on Friday.

Track: The Blue Devils had a spectacular weekend at Ridge in the North 2 Group 4 sectionals, setting several school records, with the girls finishing third and the boys fourth. Among the highlights:

Sophomore Katie Hamilton won the 800 and also became the first Blue Devil girl to break five minutes (4:55) as she finished second in the 1,600. Julia Csorba also set a school record while finishing second in the 400 hurdles (1:04.32). Lauren Triarsi and Csorba finished 1-3 in the 100 hurdles; the mile relay (Csorba, Hamilton, Sophia Pappalardo, Caroline Bielen) was second, as was Sam Stravach in the discus and javelin.

Ajay Olson finished third (100), fourth (200) and fifth (400). Will Loggia (3,200) and the mile relay (Jake Saltzer, Olson, Steve Zucker, William Surks) were both second.

ON THIS DATE
1914: Harold Cruttden struck out 17 as WHS notched a 5-2 victory at Pingry.

1914: Steamboat Copperthwaite fanned 18 as the Westfield Cubs beat the Garwood Athletic Association, 4-2, at Recreation Park (now Kehler Stadium).

1955: Bob List whiffed 18 as WHS posted a 4-1 win over Roselle Park in their annual Memorial Day game.

1960: Future NBA superstar Rick Barry tossed a no-hitter as Roselle Park beat Westfield and Smitty Lanning, 3-0, in their annual Memorial Day game.

AROUND THIS DATE
May 31, 1935: Bob Wilkinson shot a 79-68-147 to win the state individual golf championship.

Blue Devils Stagger Ridge, 6-5, in Lax Semis

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

third quarter like that it was a huge goal. Then to end the game Jake [Engelke] had a sweet, behind the back finish. That was sick. It sealed the game for us.”

Ridge fought back, quickly taking advantage of a man-up situation after a holding call against Reid Colwell early in the fourth quarter. Chris Crapanzano scored his second goal with 9:55 to play, pulling the Red Devils back into the match at 5-3. Crapanzano was there again to help his team by intercepting a Rich Martini pass that led to a transition opportunity. Sean Eversen finished the chance with a goal that cut it to 5-4 with 7:09 remaining.

“We didn’t give up a lot of six-on-six goals,” said Coach Tuohy. “We gave up unsettled goals and those come from bad turnovers. You take an early shot, you turn the ball over in the corner and you don’t have your middies back and it becomes a cluster going down the field. That is how they scored. Six-on-six! I’m fine with playing for minutes at

a clipso long as we maintain possession on offense and protect our defenders.”

Less than a minute later, Ridge got the equalizer on a goal by Nolan Haddad with 6:16 remaining. With momentum clearly wearing green, Westfield turned to an experienced, familiar duo to lead them to victory. After gaining possession, Engelke received a pass from behind the net from McLane and the St. Joseph’s bound senior did the rest. Engelke found the back of the net on a gorgeous reversal, backhanded flip that put the Blue Devils up to stay, 6-5 with 4:50 on the clock.

“We’ve been playing with each other since we were maybe 10 years old,” said Engelke. “So we’ve always been in the same attacks and we’ve always been good at finding each other. All year Devon has just been great at finding me on the crease and right there he found me again. I didn’t have a good angle, so I kind of wrapped it around to the back way to gain more of a window upfield for my

shot and I tired to wrap it around the goalie.”

Westfield goalkeeper Theo Dardia took it from there. Dardia withstood a last gasp barrage of shots in the final two minutes, swatting away an on-target shot by Crapanzano with just over a minute left to preserve the win.

“We’re trying to make sure that Theo gets shots that he can see,” said Tuohy. “If he gets shots that he can see he’s on it, he’s tracking the ball well, his feet are ready and he is making good adjustments to the ball. That is what we look for. We want to let everybody be able to do their job, including the goalie. If you don’t have faith in your goalie to make saves, then what is he there for? We have a lot of faith in Theo and our whole defensive unit.”

McLane led Westfield with four goals and one assist. Engelke added the game winning goal and William Papadopolous scored one goal.

Westfield	1	3	1	1	6
Ridge	0	0	2	3	5

PUBLIC NOTICE

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DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT, BUREAU OF CONSTRUCTION SERVICES
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Notice is hereby given that bid proposals will be received from Bidders classified under N.J.S.A. 27:7-35.2 via the Internet until 10:00:59 A.M. on 6/20/19, downloaded, and publicly opened and read, in the CONFERENCE ROOM, 1st Floor F & A Building, New Jersey Department of Transportation, 1035 Parkway Avenue, Trenton, New Jersey 08625; for:

Sign Structure Replacement Contract 2016-1, Contract No. SW153330, Various Routes, City of Newark, City of Linden, Township of Springfield, Essex and Union Counties; 100% State UPG NO: 153330; DP No: 19132

Bidders are required to comply with the requirements of N.J.S.A. 10:5-31 (P.L. 1975, c. 127); N.J.A.C. 17:27.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 19:44A-20.19, contractors must provide a Certification and Disclosure of Political Contribution Form prior to contract award.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:32-44, contractor must submit the Department of Treasury, Division of Revenue Business Registration of the contractor and any named subcontractors prior to contract award or authorization.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 34:11-56.51, contractors must be registered with the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Wage and Hour Compliance at the time of bid.

Plans, specifications, any addenda to the specification and bidding information for the proposed work are available at Bid Express website www.bidx.com. You must subscribe to use this service. To subscribe, follow the instructions on the web site. Fees apply to downloading documents and plans and bidding access. The fee schedule is available on the web site. All fees are directly payable to BID EXPRESS. Plans, specifications, and bidding information may be inspected (BUT NOT OBTAINED) by contracting organizations at our Design Field Offices at the following locations:

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