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# THE WEEK IN SPORTS

Sports Section - Pages 11-14

## RAHWAY'S GARAY CLAIMS STATE 217-LB. CROWN

### Raider Cousar Reaches 2nd Round of State Mat Tourney

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

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School senior 191-lb. wrestler Gary Cousar earned a trip to the NJIAA state wrestling tournament at Meadowlands and advanced as far as the second round on March 10. On March 11, 217-lb. Dan Garay of Rahway became the only Union County wrestler to win a 2001 state title.

Cousar defeated Jon Mercado of Clifton, 11-9, in the Preliminary round of the Super Regions in Union

on March 7 to advance to the Meadowlands. But it was not easy! Although Cousar dazzled Mercado with three first-period takedowns to take a 6-2 lead, he had some wind taken out of him in the second period when he missed a Japanese whizzer and Mercado capitalized with a four-point answer. Cousar battled through it to add a reverse but Mercado later took a 9-8 lead with just 23 seconds remaining. Cousar got a second wind, scored an escape, then added a takedown just a few seconds before the buzzer.

After the bout, Head Coach Dave Bello accessed Cousar's weaknesses. "Well the same mistake that he has been making all year is that he relaxes in the wrong situation. He got in deep on a shot, he relaxed and the kid spun around for two. Perhaps he was tired or nervous or relaxed. I will have to talk to him and see what's going on."

"I got tired a lot in the second period," explained Cousar. "I think that I went after him too much because he wasn't doing anything for a whole two minutes. The whizzer took a little out of me but not a lot. As long as I had the arm deep on it, I knew I was still in control."

With respect to his burst of energy in the final 23 seconds, Cousar explained, "I just wanted to get out quick then get the takedown."

With this, "he gets to go to the Meadowlands. If he wrestles hard and gets lucky, maybe he will get a place," commented Bello.

In the first-round wrestlebacks at the Meadowlands, Cousar faced Alexis Aquino of Deptford, who had defeated him in last year's wrestlebacks, 16-5. This time Cousar turned the tables and clamped Aquino in 5:10. However, Cousar's quest for third ended in the next round when he was defeated by Bound Brook's Rich Januzzi, 14-2.

Garay of Rahway, claimed the 217-

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David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times  
WORKING THE PIPEWRENCH...Raider Gary Cousar, top, tries to use a pipewrench arm bar to pry Morrissett's Jon Mercado toward his back. Cousar defeated Mercado, 11-9.

## KAREN MANAHAN LED BLUE DEVILS WITH 196 PTS.

### Lady Devil Hoopsters Realize 'Hard Work' Will Pay Off

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

Momentum misfortune early in the season may have dictated the direction of the Westfield High School girls basketball team for the remainder of the season. After starting the season with relative reasonability, the Blue Devils had a letdown in their Holiday tournament then were staggered by presently 10th-ranked, 23-3, Malcolm X. Shabazz.

"We had high expectations of this year's team," expressed Blue Devil Head Coach Joe Marino. "But what put us off course, we entered the Christmas tournament 1-1, expecting some wins but walked away with a loss. Then we played Shabazz and that mentally dug us into a hole early in the season. And because of the high level of competition on our schedule, it was tough to get out."

The Blue Devils did have some close games with teams such as Cranford and Linden but wound up on the short side each time.

"One good thing was, the girls stepped it up and kept their competitiveness," commented Marino.

Westfield was led by senior Co-Captains Karen Manahan, who led the team in scoring, and Carolyn Matthews, who was second in assists and steals. Manahan netted 196 points for a 10.3 average and hit 50-66 from the free throw line. Defensively, she was third in rebounds with 77 and

third in steals with 37. Matthews scored 130 points had 32 assists and was dangerous at three-point range, sinking 12. Defensively, she created 40 steals and pulled down 48 rebounds.

But the Blue Devils also received plenty of support from junior Jackie Cusimano and freshman standout Ali McMahon.

Cusimano had the highest point-

per-game average at 10.8, netting 195 points. But she made the most noise from three-point range, nailing 20-66 for a 30.3 percentage. She also had the team's highest game at 32 points. Defensively, Cusimano led in assists with 43, was the chief thief with 59 steals and contributed 38 rebounds.

McMahon, a center, definitely ap-

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David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times  
TAKING A BREATHER...Some of the starting five Blue Devil girls take a breather during a Union County basketball game with Roselle Park.

## DESERIO LED TEAM IN SCORING AND REBOUNDING

### Blue Devil Hoopmen Finish Strong, Winning Six of Eight

By STEVEN KRAKAUER  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

The Westfield High School boys basketball team sputtered early this season with a record of 3-10. Finishing with only four wins last year, their season seemed to be going down that same tube. Then, the Blue Devils stepped it up and won six of their final eight games to finish with a respectable 9-12 record.

The Blue Devils quite possibly could have finished with a much better record if not for the conference they reside in. The Watchung Conference includes such powerhouses as M. X. Shabazz, Eastside, Plainfield, Linden, Cranford and Elizabeth.

Westfield Head Coach Kevin Everly pointed out, "It's probably the toughest conference in the state.

When you've got Watchung Conference members competing against each other in the state Group 3 and 4 finals, you know it's talented."

Highlighting Westfield's season were juniors Dan Deserio and Jay Cook. Deserio led the team in many power categories, such as points (268) and rebounds (151). He also reached the free throw line the most times (90) and made the most foul shots (59). Cook finished second on the team with 72 rebounds and second on the team in steals (25) as well.

Making his second appearance at the varsity level was Eric Turner, who led the team in points-per-game (13.2), steals (24) and assists (46). Turner also contributed with 60 rebounds and led the team with 23 three-pointers.

Jim McKeon was another star on the court, shining with 197 points and 20 three-pointers. Although nagged by injury for much of the season, this co-captain was able to contribute as a solid leader.

The other co-captain, lone senior Jon Semenaro finished with 40 points, 27 rebounds, 14 assists and five steals.

The Blue Devil bench contributed much as well. Louis Mercer, a late-season starter, finished the year with 69 points, 20 assists and 12 rebounds.

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David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times  
VERY INTENSE BLUE DEVILS...Blue Devils Dan Deserio, No. 30, and Jim McKeon, No. 22, have played their entire season with high intensity.



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times  
CONTRIBUTORS TO COACH MATTHEWS' 500TH WIN...The 2000-2001 Union Catholic High School girls basketball team recently earned Coach Kathy Matthews her 500th victory. Pictured, left to right, are: seated, Hope Loeffler, Jessica Ballweg, Amanda Kelly, Coach Matthews, Jackie Huber and Kenyail Johnson; standing, Melinda Rosado, Amy Snyder, Shrita Smith, Lauren Huber, Lisa Mortkowitz, Tammy Coangelo, Stephanie Green and Andrea Keller.

## MORE OFFENSIVE PUNCH EXPECTED NEXT YEAR

### Lady Viking Hoopsters Put Heart and Soul into Defense

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

Consistency is a good word to describe Union Catholic (UC) High School girls basketball Head Coach Kathy Matthews and her teams that she has developed over her 25-year coaching span. Consistency in excellence, that is! Matthews finished her 25th season with a 500-133 record, but along with it - on win number 499 - came her eighth Union County Championship.

Her 200th victory came in 1986. That team finished 27-1 and awarded her with the first of her four-in-a-row Union County Championships. Two outstanding Vikings that season were Chris Durham and freshman Cheryl Cop. The following year, Durham was named the National Player of the Year and, in the four-year span of Cop, the Vikings amassed 106 wins, four UC titles and three state championships.

"What I am happy about was that we won a lot of championships with different groups of kids," said Matthews. "It wasn't something that

we did in two or three years. For instance, we won our first county (tournament) in the 70s and our last one in 2001. I think that was a model of consistency that the program has shown. Those are the things that I am most proud of: the championships, the players and the people who have surrounded me."

On January 27, 1990 Matthews was awarded with win No. 300 and on January 17, 1996, win No. 400 arrived. Standouts on the 1996 squad were Lauren Majchrzak, who later attended the United States Naval Academy, and Devon MacDonald.

Win No. 500 came under peculiar circumstances. Matthews did not want to make an issue out of her victories and low-keyed it throughout the season. Only a few were informed and thought it could come in the state Parochial A game against Paramus Catholic on Thursday, March 1. Instead it really came on a Sunday afternoon game on February 25 against Mount St. Mary just one day after winning the county tournament.

Four days later, after all the media exposure, the Vikings had to play a tough Paramus Catholic team and fell short, 47-40.

"Winning the county then getting the 500th put us in a roller coaster ride emotionally. And then we had to regroup and play a team like PC (Paramus Catholic) who is in the sectional finals now. We just did not have enough for us to regroup," explained Matthews. "And that is what happens! Sometimes you achieve things then flatten out afterwards. But in a state tournament, you don't have time to regroup because everybody is really, really good."

Senior Shrita Smith led the Vikings in scoring with 301 points, including 46-60 from the free throw line, also led in steals and assists with 62 and 58, respectively, and was second in rebounds with 103. Amy Snyder led in rebounds with 110, was second in scoring with 194 points and created 24 steals.

Stephanie Green was third in scoring with 133 points and fourth in

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