



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times
MAKING THE CHARGE DOWNFIELD...Blue Devil midfielder Jon Herttua, No. 18, charges downfield in the game against West Windsor-Plainsboro South. Westfield won, 10-6.

Devil's Den

Kapner Gets Record 'The Right Way'

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

George Kapner is not an easy guy to be humbled. But the veteran WHS soccer and tennis coach was just that last Tuesday, April 26, when his tennis team outlasted Bergen Catholic 3-2 to earn Kapner his 740th career coaching victory.

That win - secured when freshman Kevin Shallcross rallied for a three-set victory at second singles - put Kapner one victory ahead of the legendary Gary Kehler at WHS.

"To even be mentioned in the same sentence as Gary is humbling," Kapner said. "I don't know how to explain it. It's been a lot of years, a lot of great teams and a lot of different sports. And I've had the backing of three phenomenal athletic directors - John Lay, Kehler and Ed Tranchina. Just to work and coach in a town like Westfield, I feel like I've been blessed."

Kehler's varsity coaching career started in 1959 and produced 739 victories, 115 losses and 23 ties - 171-67-7 in football, 239-45-10 in wrestling and 329-44-6 in golf. Kapner, whose varsity coaching career began in 1980, is now 740 wins, 299 losses, 33 ties.

It was Kehler who was one of the biggest influences on Kapner, when he arrived at WHS in 1975.

"When I came to Westfield, Gary was already an icon," Kapner said. "And not just in the town, but statewide and even outside of the state. I watched and learned and soaked up everything he did. He is one of the greatest coaches I've ever seen, at any level."

Piling up amazing won-loss records in girls soccer, boys soccer and boys tennis, it was just a matter of time before Kapner surpassed Kehler's win total. A disappointing 2-12-3 record in soccer last fall slowed the process. But this spring's tennis team has used a smattering of veterans (seniors Alec Wasserman, Brian Kender and Andrew

Levy, junior Lee Bernstein) with some talented youth (freshmen Shallcross, Evan Eisenberg and Ravi Netravali, and sophomore Jack Trimble) to post an 11-5 record and make Kapner *numero uno* at WHS.

Shallcross' match with BC's Paul Caceres was the first to start last Tuesday, and the last to finish. The diminutive Shallcross trailed 2-6, 5-6 and 15-40 on his own serve before staving off two match points and rallying for a 2-6, 7-6 (7-3), 6-2 victory.

"Kevin is all heart," Kapner said. "To come back and win that second set, then roll in the third set tells you all about him. He plays U.S. Tennis Association (USTA) but he loves playing high school tennis, loves the parents and teammates and kids from school cheering for each other."

Making the record victory even better for Kapner was the fact it came over a very good team. Bergen Catholic entered the match ranked No. 11 in the state, and WHS was No. 20.

"I'm very happy (the win) came against a quality team, a legit Top 20 team," he said. "And it was done with my kids playing well."

DEN TRIVIA

What goalie posted the first shutout in WHS lacrosse history, and against what team? And who scored WHS's first lacrosse goal?

AN EVENING WITH BRET

Bill Kane, Class of '77, will host an fundraiser evening with Bret Schundler - the former WHS All-state defensive tackle, former mayor of Jersey City, and current Republican candidate for governor of New Jersey - tomorrow, 6-8 p.m., 426 Birch Place. Contact Kane at (908) 389-1749 if you'd like to attend, or contribute.

Kane, you may recall, was a point guard on the 1977 WHS basketball team that went 19-8 and featured the 1-2 punch of Boo Bowers and Spud Monroe.

CATCHING UP WITH

Bill Cant, the man behind the WHS diving dynasty of the 1960s and '70s. Since the diving boards were torn down at the Y's Wallace Pool a couple years ago, we're not sure how Cant would react to seeing those open spaces. After the thousands of hours he dedicated from 1957 through 1972 to future All-America divers like Steve McCoy, Terry Gass, Jeff Schaub, Bruce McLay, Mike Ward, Don Mutz, Ham Riddle, Eric Van Leuven, Bruce Cant, Steve Tourtelotte and Steve Schramm.

Now 82 and living in Montgomery, Texas, Bill remained in coaching after moving to Texas, with Dad's Club, the University of Houston and most recently at the legendary Woodlands Athletic Center.

His son Bruce was a defensive back on the unbeaten WHS football team in 1971 and also a diver on the swim team. Cant's sister, Doris, married future Monmouth College legendary swim

coach Dick Steadman and she is still active in Masters swimming, while her daughter, Nancy, swam the English Channel last August.

"Although I've continued to enjoy some success in coaching divers down here, I still look back to the '60s as the highlights (of his career)," Cant said. "All those great divers... and that awesome group of swimmers... Dave Perkowski, Harvey Gerber, John Ketcham... and on and on. Those were great years. Westfield was a great town. Our three kids still think of Westfield as their home."

WRESTLING UPDATE

The news from the National Federation was not particularly good for most New Jersey high school wrestling teams. The Federation voted against cutting the number of weight classes from 14 to 12. So, get used to seeing lots of "won by forfeit" in your papers next winter again.

"I'm pretty upset about it," WHS coach Glen Kurz said. "It doesn't affect too many of the teams in the Top 10, but even teams ranked 11 through 20 forfeit one or two every match. Even a team like Phillipsburg, they don't forfeit often but they'd be a lot stronger team if it was just 12 weights."

Of course, Kurz had to deal with eight or nine forfeits every match this past winter, with only six, sometimes seven, varsity wrestlers. When you start out a match down 48-0 or 54-0, it's a daunting task.

We're not sure what the Federation was thinking when the vote was taken. But it is not a good thing for wrestling to have so many forfeits. Or to have kids who don't belong on the varsity mat go out there just to avoid a forfeit.

REMEMBER WHEN ...

May 7, 1937: The WHS baseball season is canceled "due to the lack of a field." The team was 0-6 at the time and coming off a 20-4 loss to Columbia.

May 7, 1992: Mark Hobbie beats teammate Cregg Watter in a playoff for medalist honors as WHS wins the Union County Golf Tournament.

May 11, 1949: Frank Piscopo hits a WHS school-record three doubles in a baseball game against Elizabeth's Edison Tech.

IN-TOWN BATTLE

Westfield's two entries in the Millburn Spring Girls Basketball League - Westfield-Miller and Westfield-Pickert - will meet at 7 tonight at The Sports Academy on East Willow St., Millburn.

TRIVIA ANSWER

The first WHS lacrosse victory was April 4, 1978 - 5-0 over Summit with Andy Carlson in goal. Dave Irwin scored the first goal. Games back then were played at Sycamore Field, behind the "new" firehouse on Central Ave.

Devil's Den appears Thursday in the Westfield Leader. Comments and suggestions are welcomed (usually) at bj1019@aol.com

Westfield Blue Devil Lacrosse Boys Win Big Over West Windsor-Plainsboro South, 10-6

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Gallagher crossed from left to right, received a sweet pass from Simone and jammed it into the net. Next, Sharkey crossed left to right, received a pass from Schott and made the score 4-3 at the half.

"Andrew Schott drew the double (team) and that left me wide open in the crease. That's one of our offensive sets that we run. It just happened

to work one of those times," said Sharkey who added, "I think we are moving the ball better, sharing it more and finding the open man who is able to finish our shots."

Sharkey scored early in the third quarter followed by Skorge who barreled the length of the field, fired a shot that rebounded off a goal post, gathered the rebound and flicked it in

for the score. Baron scored unassisted and Lau intercepted a Pirate pass in front of the goal and slammed it in to up the lead to 8-3. Lupo broke the Blue Devil streak with his second goal.

In the fourth quarter, Pirate Tosches netted his second goal and Mattes answered with an unassisted wrap-around goal. Dante Ingato scored for the Pirates and Sharkey, assisted by Simone, scored the final goal.

W. Windsor So.	1	2	1	2	6
Westfield	2	2	4	2	10

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NETTING THREE GOALS...Ryan Sharkey, No. 6, scored three goals for the Blue Devils against the Pirates.

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