



NON-PUBLIC VOLLEYBALL CHAMPS...The Union Catholic High School girls volleyball team show off their trophy after winning the Non-Public crown by topping Lacordaire of Montclair, 25-21, 19-25, 25-22, in the finals. See another picture on Page 16.

**PALUMBO, RUSNOCK, SCHURTZ AND HARRIS GLITTER**

# Viking V'ballers Down Angels, Top Lacordaire for State Title

By FRED LECOMTE  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times*

Intensity! Determination! The battle of intensity and determination was won by the Union Catholic High School girls' volleyball team, No. 3 in *The Star Ledger* Top 20, over 15-7 Holy Angel High School of Demarest in a three-game battle in the semifinal round of the NJSIAA/PSEG Non-Public Tournament in Millburn on November 10.

The victory catapulted the Viking girls into their fifth trip to the finals and a showdown with third-seeded, No. 15 Lacordaire of Montclair for the Non-Public title at William Paterson University in Wayne on November 12. The match also took three games to be decided but the Vikings prevailed, 25-21, 19-25, 25-22, to capture their first championship. The Vikings had lost in the finals on four previous occasions - 2000 to 2003.

Against the Holy Angels girls, Union Catholic (29-3) sparked early and won Game 1, 25-21. The Angels regrouped to win Game 2, 29-31; however, the Vikings orchestrated a furious attack in Game 3 led by Nicole Palumbo who came up with the momentum-changing kills to lead the Vikings to a convincing 25-7 decision.

Outside hitter Palumbo garnered nine kills, seven service points, 10 digs and two blocks, and outside hitter Paige Rusnock notched eight kills,

three service points, six digs and a block. Joanne Schurtz contributed eight kills, four digs and three blocks. The Vikings also received strong offensive showings from Courtney Harris - four kills, two service aces, five digs and two blocks.

Liz Douress led the Angels with four kills and four digs. Mary Cummings had four kills and 15 service points and Malissa Gallini had 14 assists, 14 digs and 12 service points.

"We came here to win and frankly, I was not pleased with the way we were playing. No one was moving, talking and they choked. I let them have it," said Viking Head Coach Nancy Saggio. "I told them you have the potential to do well and you're blowing it. It's all a mental state of mind and you're not where you need to be and you're going to end your season in Millburn High School instead of continuing on Saturday."

As to the Game 3 blowout, Saggio explained, "That's what they can do. They can really run amuck on people once they get in the groove and they're comfortable. They're not upset. That's what they're capable of. They can pass, hit and they can serve. They finally came out in game three."

The Vikings jumped to a 15-5 lead in Game 1. Under pressure, the Angels regrouped and edged their way back to tie the game at 18-18. Outside

hitter Harris found her comfort zone, putting away three straight points, while Schurtz finished off the game with a service ace.

The Holy Angels however, stayed nip and tuck with the Vikes as Game 2 became a seesaw match. Angels' Cummings took command later in the game by notching a kill and a dropped roll shot to tie the score, 29-29. A Viking serving error and Gallini's a service ace gave the Angels the 31-29 win.

In the third game, the Vikings regained their swagger and quickly jumped to a 15-5 lead with kills from Harris and Palumbo and service aces from Marissa Mauroudas. After that demonstration, the Vikings continued to help themselves with the help of six more crowd arousing kills to close the door for a 25-7 victory.

In Wayne, Union Catholic improved to 30-3 and advanced to the Tournament of Champions to face fifth-seeded, 23-1 Secaucus today, November 17, in Hackensack at 6 p.m. The winner will play top-seeded, 22-3 Pascack Valley in the semifinals at William Paterson University in Wayne on Saturday at 4:30 p.m.

Harris notched 13 kills against Lacordaire. Schurtz had eight kills, Rusnock hammered seven kills and Palumbo recorded 13 digs and two kills.

## Devil's Den

# If Watchung Closes, Which Conference Would Fit WHS?

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

The rumor mill continues to heat up and very reliable sources are sending out hints that the Watchung Conference, of which Westfield High School has been a member for 45 years, may no longer exist in a year or two.

Of course, for many of us, the Watchung Conference that we knew and grew up with hasn't existed for years and years. Where once our conference rivals included Governor Livingston, Summit, A.L. Johnson, Hillside, Dayton and Rahway, they have all left the conference and been replaced by schools Shabazz, Irvington, Kearny and Newark East Side.

Schools have been switching conferences for years, trying to either play schools of a similar size, or to avoid playing schools of a dissimilar size - in either case it's usually because of power points and football playoffs.

So if the Watchung Conference, which at one time was a nice little basically all-Union County league, does disband, what would that mean for WHS, and most likely Scotch Plains-Fanwood and Cranford, since that trio would probably try to join the same conference.

As far as the Watchung Conference, what would be the reasons for staying: football power points, which would be important if the team was in contention for the playoffs, and ... anything else? The reasons for going to another league: better competition for all 23 sports WHS competes in, better rivalries and safer travel.

Here's a look at the four most likely conferences that WHS might join, with reasons for and against the possible move:

**Greater Middlesex**  
Best new opponents: East Brunswick, Edison, Old Bridge, Piscataway, Sayreville, J.P. Stevens.  
Plusses: Fairly convenient and we play many of these schools already in assorted sports.  
Minuses: Does anybody in their right mind want to be driving around Middlesex County to and from games during rush hour?

**Iron Hills**  
Best new opponents: Livingston, Morristown, Randolph, Roxbury, Seton Hall Prep, West Morris.  
Plusses: Not sure if there are any.  
Minuses: Does anybody in their right mind want to be driving around Morris County to and from games during rush hour?

**Mountain Valley**  
Best new opponents: A.L. Johnson, Governor Livingston, Rahway.  
Plusses: The rivalries of the 1960s and early '70s against local teams would be reignited.  
Minuses: Football would be hurt by power points, but would be much more competitive, and almost every other sport would find competition better.

**Skyland**  
Best new opponents: Bridgewater-Raritan, Hunterdon Central, North Hunterdon, Phillipsburg.  
Plusses: Football team could play at P'burg's Maloney Stadium, the state's premier field. Facing the above four teams, plus SP-F and Cranford would make for great rivalries in a bunch of sports.  
Minuses: Route 78 eliminates many of the travel problems, but the trips would be longer.  
It would be interesting to see how the readers of the Devil's Den feel about this. Should we stay in the Watchung? If not, which conference do you think would be the best fit for the Blue Devils (and Raiders and Cougars)? Email me at the address at bottom of the column with your comments and vote for a conference, and we'll print the results next week.

**DEN TRIVIA**  
Last Saturday at Holmdel Park, WHS senior Jeff Perrella added the state Group 4 cross country championship to his previously won Watchung Conference, Union County and sectional titles this year. How many WHS runners have ever won a state group title?

**HOW SWEET IT WAS**  
WHS fans had to enjoy seeing the results of last Saturday's Elizabeth-Irvington playoff game. A week after trying to roll up the score on WHS, Elizabeth coach Jeff Wiener (pronounced Wee-ner, not Wine-er) got it thrown back in his face as his former team rolled to a 42-0 halftime lead. Now, the coach of the state's biggest school has a chance to close out a very underachieving 5-5 season with a loss to Scotch Plains on Thanksgiving Day.

**THIS AND THAT**  
Did you notice that Edison, which WHS beat in last year's NJSIAA consolation game, ended its 39-game losing streak last Friday night. The Eagles scored a last-minute touchdown and two-point PAT to force overtime, where they beat Spotswood 26-20 in the second OT ... With WHS sophomore John Dugan now wearing No. 58 and playing center on offense, does anybody remember the last No. 58 to play center and defensive end for WHS? Yep, 1970 all-stater Bob Harvey. ... Congratulations to WHS senior cornerback Marcus Allen Graham, whose two interceptions Saturday against Columbia give him eight on the season, tying Jan Coccoziello's two-year-old school record. ... More props have to go out to the WHS band and cheer squad for their continued outstanding performances. The band's halftime show continues to just get even better and better; and the cheerleaders are the best at WHS in years, maybe decades. Now, if we could just get somebody (Luke Baran comes to mind as a solid candi-

date) to be the Blue Devil again.

**OUT OF STATE FOOTBALL**  
It was a big weekend for my "other" teams, with Neshaminy (Pa.) rolling to a 38-0 victory and Massillon (Ohio) rallying for a 27-20 win, stopping Findlay at the 1-yard line on the final play!

That sets the stage for a couple of monumental games this weekend. Neshaminy will host Downington East and its record-setting quarterback Pat Devlin in a PIAA AAAA quarterfinal, Friday, 7:30 p.m., at Heartbreak Ridge. Massillon, meanwhile, gets its rematch with archrival Canton McKinley in the Ohio Region 2 final.

Can anybody say: "Road Trip."

**WHEN I'M KING ...**  
Booing will be outlawed. If you're caught booing, your head is cut off or, worse, you have to spend an entire day conversing with President Bush.

People who boo fall into four categories: 1) morons, 2) bed-wetters, 3) sports talk radio callers, or 4) non-athletes and/or fantasy league players. So, next time you're at a sporting event and somebody near you starts to boo a player, coach or team, just remember that and take pity on their poor souls.

**VINYL RANKINGS**  
WXPN (88.5 FM) out of the University of Pennsylvania recently celebrated its first year in its new home with a massive undertaking, having its listeners vote on the top 885 albums of all time. The results were tabulated and they played parts of albums 885-26, then complete albums of the top 25.

It is more than a little interesting to note that the Rolling Stones, the world's most over-rated rock-and-roll band, had just one album in the top 25: 1972's *Exile on Main Street* at No. 17.

Here are the top 10 (if you want the complete list, go to [www.wxpn.org](http://www.wxpn.org) and then go to the Top 885 albums link):

1. Abbey Road (Beatles, 1969)
2. Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (Beatles, 1967)
3. Dark Side of the Moon (Pink Floyd, 1973)
4. Born to Run (Bruce Springsteen, 1975)
5. Blood on the Tracks (Bob Dylan, 1975)
6. The White Album (Beatles, 1968)
7. Joshua Tree (U2, 1987)
8. London Calling (Clash, 1979)
9. Revolver (Beatles, 1966)
10. Rubber Soul (Beatles, 1965).

**TRIVIA ANSWER**  
Edgar Hoos (1946) won Group 3, and Dave Coleman (1961), Dave Calvert (1966), Cliff Sheehan (1979-80) and Matt Elmuccio (1994-95-96) all won Group 4 titles.

*The Devil's Den appears Thursday in The Westfield Leader during the scholastic sports season. Contact us with comments, suggestions or trivia questions at [bj1019@aol.com](mailto:bj1019@aol.com). Go Devils!*

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