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THE WEEK IN SPORTS

Sports Section
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Blue Devil Swim Boys Begin Tough Season with Big Win

By J.B. RAYMOND
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Ike ... Elvis ... the Cold War ... the Brooklyn Dodgers.

That's some of the big names and events happening back in 1956-57, the year the Westfield High School boys swim team took its place as the dominant team in Union County and started its ascent to becoming one of the elite teams in New Jersey.

Now, 50 years later, WHS is the winningest team in state history (over 700 victories), has won the county championship 49 of the last 50 years (including a national record streak of 42 that ended in 1999) and has won 20 state titles, more than any other public school. There are also more individual and relay state champions and All-Americans than the next two or three teams combined.

Into that mix comes first-year coach Jeff Knight, a former swimmer at Cranford High School, taking over for Bruce Johnson. Over the previous 12 years, WHS had won 11 county, nine sectional and six state crowns.

But despite the graduation loss of Pat Daurio (Princeton), Brandon Cuba, Kyle Murray, Dan McGrory, Evan Vanarelli, Tom Fringer and Ben Holt, Knight did not inherit an empty cupboard. As evidenced by last Friday's 88-82 victory over three-time defending state Public B champion Mountain Lakes, Westfield will again be a team to be heard from this winter.

Leading the way for Knight is a solid senior class, with Phil Anton, Luke Baran, P.J. Harley, and Colin Sullivan as the co-captains. Harley won county titles in the 200 and 500

freestyle last winter, while Baran captured the 100 backstroke. Anton is a favorite to take the 100 breaststroke this winter, while Sullivan is one of the team's top sprinters. Freestylers Rob Whitehead, Greg Blanton, and Brian Corea along with newcomer Jack Trimble round out the seniors.

If you yell "Hey Matt," half the junior class will turn their heads. Matt Green has taken over for Cuba as the team's top sprinter, and Matt Blutfield has been a more-than-solid guy in the sprints, butterfly and breaststroke. Matt Gelmetti has worked himself from a freshman novice to a potentially key swimmer this winter, and Matt Haddad is a solid freestyler. Jon Holt provides solid depth in a number of events,

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David B. Corbin (2006 sectional finals) for The Westfield Leader and The Times
BATTLING FOR POSSESSION OF THE BALL...Raider Colleen LaForge, No. 9, battles for possession of the ball with a Mendham Lady Minuteman.

Lady Soccer Raiders Deliver Special Successful Season

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

Defining the Scotch Plains-Fanwood (SPF) High School girls' soccer team's season would have to be noted as one filled with caring thoughts, a winning attitude and successful results.

"The girls dedicated their entire season from day one to Mrs. Debbie Mains. That was in the back of all of the kids minds to really help push themselves in taking every game seriously and playing hard in every game as if it were their last," said Raider Head Coach Kevin Ewing.

The No. 9 Raiders started the season slowly but roared back to finish 18-2-1, a SPF team record. They won the Watchung Conference championship, were Union county tournament champs and won their first sectional crown.

"Going to Brazil really prepared them for the season so they came in with real high expectations and thought that they would step on the field and roll over teams. We kind of had a major wake up call in our first game with East Brunswick who gave us a nice slap in the face with a loss. It was the turning point for us," said Ewing. "They did a great job from that point on through hard work and that is why they were so successful."

In the Union County Tournament, the top-seeded and defending champion Raiders battled to a 1-1, overtime draw with second-seeded Westfield to share the title.

"It's always competitive," said Ewing. "We knew Westfield would be our most difficult competition, which they proved to be. They fought, played well and it was a real team effort and I was proud of them. I thought what may have hurt us was the loss of several kids due to injuries

in our later games."

After defeating Voorhees and Ridge, respectively, the Raiders claimed their first North Jersey, Section 2, Group 3 championship with a 1-0 shutout of Mendham on Colleen LaForge's goal off a cross by senior Allie Hambleton.

"Winning it for the first time in girls' soccer at Scotch Plains was just unbelievable," said Ewing.

The Raiders were finally stopped,

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David B. Corbin (November 25, 2006 files) for The Westfield Leader and The Times
AGGRESSIVENESS LEADS TO FINE SEASON...Blue Devil Jack Meagher, No. 5, closes in as will Harbaugh noses into the thick of things against the Cardinals.

BONARD LED SCORING, HARBAUGH LED IN TACKLES

Blue Devil Footballers Turned Season Around, Finished 6-4

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

Westfield High School football fans had something to cheer about this season. After two straight 1-9 seasons, this year's Blue Devils had a promising beginning, weathered a midseason storm of very tough teams then rolled on a four-game winning streak to complete the season 6-4.

"Our season broke up into three parts. The first three games we played pretty well then hit a rough stretch, Union, Irvington and Elizabeth. Three really good teams! We got to that third part of the season and we talked to the kids about running the table," said Blue Devil Head Coach Jim DeSarno. "They went out and won every one of those games."

The Blue Devils defeated Cranford, Kearny, Shabazz, Bridgewater-Raritan, Plainfield and, probably the most memorable, a 28-21 victory over Scotch Plains-Fanwood on November 4 at Gary Kehler Stadium.

The Scotch Plains game was a real special win. Our seniors haven't beaten those kids since seventh grade. Hopefully, winning the last four will help us into next year. It's something to build on and something to be really proud of for our seniors," commented DeSarno.

The Blue Devils defensive line, led by seniors Will Harbaugh and Santo Nardi and junior John Dugan did a strong job all season but especially toward the end. Harbaugh (7 tackles for losses) led the team in tackles with 52 and assists with 34, while Nardi (42 tackles, 5 for losses) led the team with seven sacks and Dugan (25 tackles, 3.5 sacks) led in tackles for losses with eight.

"Those three were definitely catalysts. We did a nice job this year stopping the run. The kids stepped up in big times in some of our wins. Overall, I thought we did a good job defensively. But we let up too many big plays. That's something that we

need to work on for next year," said DeSarno.

Linebacker Scott Newman and corner Mike Henry (3 fumble recoveries, led in passes knocked down with 8) each had 41 tackles. Jack Meagher, Sean Ferro (4 interceptions) and Tyrell Simmons (7 tackles for losses) had 33, 31 and 29 tackles, respectively. Linebacker Ryan Yarusi (4 tackles for losses) and corner Eddie Simmons (3 interceptions) had 22 and 18 tackles, respectively. Tackle Ryan Scanlon had 18 tackles and a fumble recovery.

Adjusting to a new offensive scheme was a little rough in the beginning but it paid off in dividends as the season progressed. Senior quarterback Tom Bonard (47 completions, 89 attempts, 463 yards, 5 touchdowns [TD], 206 yards rushing) broke loose on several occasions, especially in the last half of the season, and scampered for five TDs. He also kicked three field goals and 23 extra points

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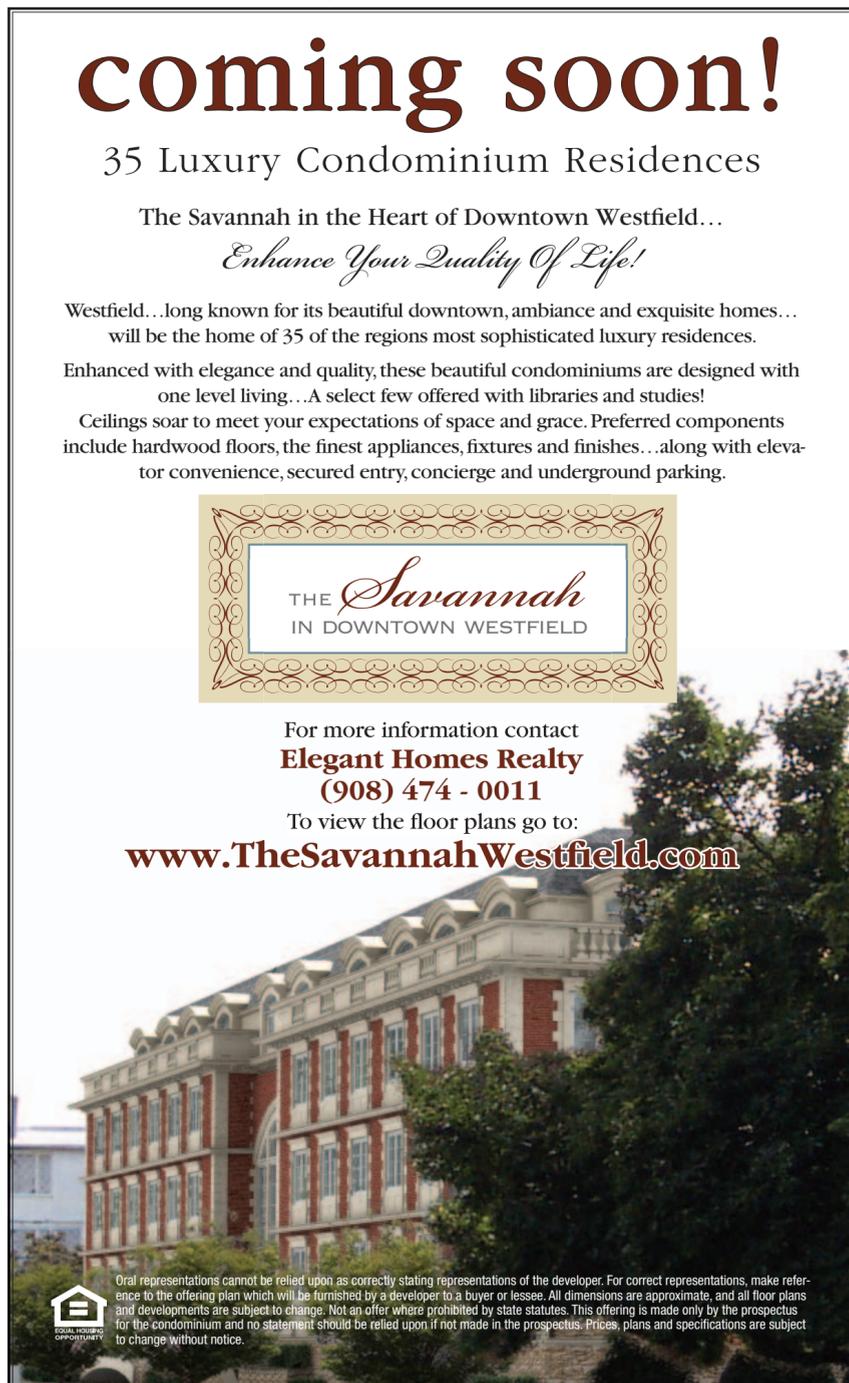
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Players, Parents and Friends of WHS Boys Varsity Soccer would like to give a special holiday greeting & their heartfelt thanks to:

Coach Keith Hertell

Whose inspiration and dedication to the players restored their morale and turned their season around from five straight losses and a regrettable season to a nine game winning streak with awesome memories.

With Mr. Hertell's influence the players had fun, earned the "respect" on their shirts and leave the 2006 season with pride, team spirit and a positive model of coaching & leadership.

Kudos to Coach Hertell

Thank you - Merry Christmas - Happy New Year
And we hope to see you again next season!