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THE WEEK IN SPORTS

Sports Section
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Raider Cager Boys Expect 'Good Things to Happen'

By FRED LECOMTE

Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School boys' basketball team finished last season with a good, 16-11 record but feel that better things could happen this season.

Last year, the Raiders sank Governor Livingston in the Union County Tournament before dropping a, 70-66, overtime decision to Rahway in the quarterfinals. The Raiders scored big wins over Irvington and Elizabeth to qualify for the sectional tournament where they leveled Warren Hills, 51-32, in the opening round then fell to top-seeded Colonia in the semis.

"We had a real good year. We were a very aggressive and extremely defensive team, one of the better around and maybe overachieved in what we thought we could accomplish," said Raider Head Coach Brian Doherty. "This season however, we're going to be a different team. We're deeper with size and maybe a more talented basketball team. We're hoping to get that defensive intensity that we had from last year and bring it to this year with the talent that some of the younger kids have."

The Raiders will rely on their two top scorers. Junior point guard Brian

Dougher netted 386 points, including 52 three-pointers, and was the chief thief with 45 steals. Agile senior guard Greg Bayard terrorized opponents with 59 from three-point range and finished with 370 points last season.

"Brian is probably one of the better players who have come to Scotch Plains. He's one of the top juniors around, maybe in the state. Bayard comes back with him and both are our leading scorers. The biggest thing they bring is that experience to some of the younger kids. Both of them are two-year varsity players with quality time, along with senior Darnell Dortch who saw a lot of quality playing time. He will be a big help for us on the inside," said Doherty.

Big things are also expected from returning players junior forwards 6'4 Rob Zekunde and 6'4 Lordly OKarter to help out on the inside presence. In the mix include junior guards Greg Zabel, a very accurate shooter, and Kyle Mihanski, noted as a great athlete. Two strong junior forwards, 6'2" Keith Bronokowski and 6'5" Jason Boff, will make their presence known under the basket.

As to bringing a different style of play to the court, Doherty said, "We may not be as aggressive, play as

much man or pressure defense like we did last year but, IQ wise, we're a very smart basketball team. Offensively, we carry a lot more weapons."

Sophomores guard Reggie Solomon and forward 6'3 Kevin Maroney, from last year's junior varsity, the UCT champions, also should see playing time.

"Both of them may see some time. It's just a matter of getting them the experience to play in this conference, which by the way is, hands down, the best conference in the state. We may have perhaps the deepest team in the seven years that I have been Head Coach. I can go down to our ninth or tenth person and feel confident putting them into a varsity game," said Doherty.

"Of course our main goal is to get to the state tournament. In our conference there will be four or five teams in the state top 20 and we will be playing them day in and day out. From there, we feel that we have a good shot to win our state sectional. We're not afraid of anyone," said Doherty who added, "It's the type of kids that we have. They're good students, hard workers, they're very coachable kids and they're fun to be around."

See picture on page 20



UP IN ARMS AGAINST A TOUGH FOE... Blue Devil Mike Venezia, No. 22, guards Raider Brian Dougher, No. 20. Venezia rolled in 29 points, including four 3-pointers, and Dougher scored 11 points. They will meet again this season.

PLAYS WILL RUN THROUGH VENEZIA VIA BONARD

Blue Devil Hoop Boys Aware No Easy Games in Conference

By DAVID B. CORBIN

Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Senior Co-Captains Tom Bonard and Mike Venezia will be very busy leading the Westfield High School boys basketball team to a winning season through a very tough Watchung Conference. This season, the Blue Devils look to improve upon their 14-9 record and seek to qualify for the North Jersey, Group 4, Section 2 tournament for the fifth time in six years.

"It will be very difficult. It is highly competitive. In the Watchung Conference, there are no easy games. There are a number of Division 1 basketball players who are in the conference who play for Shabazz, Linden, Plainfield," said Blue Devil Head Coach Kevin Everly. "We just have to go out there and work hard."

Last year, the Blue Devils won the John "Butch" Kowal Tournament in Rahway in late December. They defeated perennial rival Cranford twice — they also beat the Cougars twice in 2004 — whipped Scotch Plains-Fanwood in their second meeting, topped Shabazz and burned Elizabeth,

57-55, at the buzzer in the first round of the Union County tournament.

The Blue Devils graduated forward Josh Gerckens who had a strong season under the boards with 172 rebounds and Terron Rogers but, this season, they will get a lot of mileage

from Venezia who led the team in scoring with 396 points and in 3-pointers with 31. Venezia, who will attend Colgate University next fall, also shot 47 percent from the field and also was second in rebounds with 120.

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BLUE DEVIL FEARSOME FOURSOME...Region 3 qualifiers last year, pictured, left to right, are: John Barnes (119-lbs), Sam Reichbach (140-lbs), Colin MacKay (130-lbs) and Mark Boyd (160/171-lbs) who are preparing to do battle on the mats this season.

MACKAY, BOYD, BARNES, CASTRORAO LOOK STRONG

Blue Devil Matmen Rebuild, Are Deep in Middle Weights

By DAVID B. CORBIN

Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Sophomores and freshmen comprise the vast majority of the Westfield High School wrestling team this season, so there is a strong probability that the future looks great. Presently, however, the focus is on rebuilding and the Blue Devils will look to seniors Colin MacKay and Mark Boyd to help build a solid foundation.

Of the 30+ wrestlers, most are concentrated around a few weight classes. The upper weights are shallow and have yet to be established.

"We are packed between 125 and 140," noted Blue Devil Head Coach Glen Kurz.

MacKay, a part of that pack, was the District 11 champion at 125-lbs last year and finished 29-7. This season, he will begin at 135-lb and drop to 130-lbs come tournament time.

"Colin came on big time last season. He was in a loaded weight in the regions and held his own," said Kurz. "That served as motivation for him for the summer. He's been in the

weight room since last spring. He's done everything he has to do to prepare himself to reach his goals of hitting Atlantic City this year."

Boyd revved up toward the end of the season and won the district title at 160-lbs, finishing with a 20-13 record.

"We will use him at 171 but come tournament time, he will probably be down at 160. We always knew he had a lot of potential. His style is going to give some kids difficulty. He's put in some off-season time and that pays off. He wants to go out

on top," said Kurz.

Smiling sophomore John Barnes improved vastly throughout last season to earn him a trip to the region tournament at 112-lbs. This season, he expects to compete at 119-lbs.

"He loves to wrestle. He loves to compete. He's coachable. You show him something and he is not afraid to try it. He's got no fear. It's a pleasure to coach someone like that," Kurz expressed.

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Corbin's Annual Wrestling Preview:

The Annual Wrestling Preview of eight Union County teams will be in the December 21 issue of *The Leader and The Times*.

The teams included are: Cranford, Brearley, Rahway, Johnson, New Providence, Governor Livingston, Scotch Plains-Fanwood and Westfield.

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The Westfield Lacrosse Club Announces Spring Registration

The Westfield Lacrosse Club (WLC) will begin accepting registrations on line starting November 15th for the 2007 spring season.

All registrations will be done on line at www.westfieldlacrosse.com between November 15 and December 31, 2006.

The WLC provides opportunities for boys and girls in grades 3-8 to learn and experience playing the great game of lacrosse. The WLC programs emphasize skill development, team development and having fun. The WLC programs run from March to mid June.

PLEASE NOTE: The registration deadline is December 31, 2006. Applications submitted after December 31 may not be accepted. All returning and new players are asked to register ASAP.

For further information please contact:

Lois Hely, Girls Division Head— 233-3960 or hely0922@comcast.net
Rich Werner, Boys Division Head— 789-3482 or wernerr@comcast.net

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