



THE GO-TO PERSON AND LEADING SCORER...Erin Miller, No. 11, was the Blue Devils' leading scorer this season with 362 points, bringing her two-year total to 738. She also nailed 25 from 3-point range. Additionally, Miller was second on the team in assists with 78.

MILLER LED IN PTS, STEALS, RBS; O'LEARY, ASSISTS

Blue Devils Accomplished Most Goals in Girls Hoops

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

Two years ago, the Westfield High School girls basketball program appeared to be in shambles and showed it with a winless 0-23 record. Then, last year, in came a talented group of freshmen girls who blended well with the upperclassmen to produce a 9-13 record. This year, the young Lady Blue Devils accomplished nearly all the goals set for them and finished with a 14-10 record.

The Lady Blue Devils got off to a good start by overpowering the Jonathan Dayton Lady Bulldogs, 52-30, for the Joseph Pepe/Larry Levee Holiday Tournament championship in Springfield on December 30 to up their record to 6-1. By midseason, their record shot to 10-4.

"We were taking it one step at a time and we knew that, eventually, we were going to turn our program around with the hard work that the girls put in, not only during the season but in the off-season. We reached our goals. We wanted to be competitive. We wanted to qualify for the states. We wanted to finish in the top-10 in Union County. The only goal we did not get was winning the county tournament," said Blue Devil Head Coach Joe Marino.

The Blue Devils played the entire season without the services of sophomore Stephanie Slodyczka, who was last year's leader in rebounds with 179 and second in scoring with 252 points.

"We missed her this year. Hopefully, she will get everything taken care of," said Marino.

When it came to scoring, sophomore Erin Miller was the go-to person and the Blue Devils' opponents knew it. Despite their defensive efforts, Miller netted 362 points (15.7 points per game) to bring her two-year total to 738. Miller also hit 89-138 in free throws for 65 percent. Not only did she have the ability to drive to the basket but she also proved to be effective outside and led the team with 25 from three-point range. Additionally, she was second in assists with 78.

"She's not a selfish player, which is good. She will pass the ball off to somebody if they are open. Basically, she sets the tone of the game," said Marino.

However, scoring was just one part of her game. Miller led the team in rebounds with 153 - 98 defensive (first), 55 offensive (second) - and in steals with 88 to elevate her two-year theft total to 166.

Sophomore point guard Gab O'Leary had the distinction of being the top Blue Devil in assists with 88 to bring her two-year total to 173. She was second in 3-pointers with 15, second in steals with 42 and third in scoring with 173 points. She also pulled 56 rebounds.

"Defensively, she does a great job on the other team's star player," Marino pointed out. "She keeps their points down."

Sophomore Danielle Infantino finished with 91 rebounds - 58 defensive, 33 offensive - sank 110 points and had 29 assists.

"She seems kind of quiet on the courts but when she starts to step it up she can make the shots," commented Marino.

Junior Casey El Koury battled her way under the baskets to be the Blue Devils' second-leading scorer with 179 points and third-leading rebounder with 99 - second in defensive rebounds with 76. El Koury also committed 24 acts of theft.

"She was playing the four spot because Stephanie was out. She usually shares the three spot with Infantino," said Marino.

Junior Katie Cronen demonstrated her defensive qualities by grabbing 129 rebounds - second on the team - and led in offensive boards with 58. Offensively, she sank 102 points and went 34-for-61 (54 percent) from the charity line. Junior LeAnne Skorge, who entered the game to bolster the defense, pulled down 38 defensive and 30 offensive boards, while contributing 47 points.

"Katie and LeAnne mixed it up inside and played our big girl roll. I was trying to give them equal time at the five spot and also give El Koury a break at the four spot by bringing Cronen back in," said Marino.

Freshman Tara Handza came off the bench and scored 93 points, grabbed 15 rebounds and had five assists. Freshman Gabby Jakub contributed 16 rebounds and 14 points.

"What's nice about that is Tara and Gabby came off the bench to give the starters a breather," said Marino.

With every player returning and a healthy Slodyczka's presence, the Blue Devils should prove to be quite formidable next year.



ALL RETURNING NEXT YEAR...With no seniors, the Blue Devils will return all of their players next year.

WF 'Y' Cagers Win NJ 14U Hoops Title

The Westfield Area Y 14-and-under Division boys/girls basketball team, led by coach Quinton Redding, won the YMCA New Jersey State Championship after defeating Montclair Y, 35-33, on March 5. Coach Redding has been a part of the Westfield Area Y staff since 1998 and has been coaching the team for two years.

This league invites all NJ YMCA's to compete in four different divisions. The Westfield Area Y offers basketball leagues for all ages. Tryouts for next year's team will be held in October. For more information, please call Jennifer Hessberger, Sports Director, at (908) 233-2700, extension no. 258 or e-mail jhessberger@westfieldnj.org.

Region 3 Wrestling NJ State Wrestling:

Check out photos of the Region 3 Wrestling Tournament on the web. www.goleader.com - Click Photos then click photos on left. Go to appropriate listing. NJSIAA Wrestling will follow in a few days.

SPF JV Hockey Men to Hold Skate Event on March 18

Community members from the surrounding area are invited to skate with the inaugural Scotch Plains Fanwood Ice Hockey team on Saturday, March 18, from 6:45 to 8:45 p.m. at The Rock Ice Pavilion in Dunellen. There will be free skate time, opportunities to shoot on Raider goalies and certificates to record the fastest slap shot speed.

Admission is \$10, which includes free skates if needed. Helmets are required.



Quinton Redding

There will be door prizes, which include a Raider hockey blanket and a prize from the New Jersey Devils organization. Raider hockey apparel, water bottles and team posters will be for sale as well as refreshments.

Information about becoming a member of the ice hockey association, Sunday afternoon roller hockey events and in-house leagues for younger skaters will be provided. Reduced price tickets to the Sunday, April 9 Devils-Rangers game will be on sale.

The Scotch Plains Fanwood ice hockey junior varsity team was established following a year effort by players, parents and community members. The proposal was approved late October 2005 and tryouts were held mid-November. The first game was played on December 5 against Vernon and the new Raider team won, 4-2.

The SP-F icemen continued their success ending the regular season in second place.

Rock Ice Pavilion is located at 125 North Avenue in Dunellen. Registration for the March 18 event is not required. Please e-mail baucons35@comcast.net for more information.

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