

Field Hockey Devils Will Miss Coach 'Maggie' McFadden

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

Finishing with a 7-9-1 record, the 2006 Westfield High School field hockey were competitive in every game and fell just short of qualifying for the NJSIAA state playoffs. Westfield did show vast improvement and enjoyed success by putting together several victories prior to tournament time and put more balls into the net than in previous years.

"I thought we had more of a cohesive team, the kids learned a lot this season and got consistently better," said Maggie McFadden in her final year as Head Coach. "It was disappointing that we were not .500 or better, but we hit a point that the girls played with a lot more talent."

Even though the Blue Devils lost against Kent Place in the Union County tournament and did not qualify for the NJSIAA playoffs, they

pointing. We were 2-2 after that, lost against AL Johnson, won the next two games and lost, 3-2 in overtime in our final game with Kent Place."

Westfield had impressive wins over AL Johnson, 1-0, and Union, 3-0 and 3-2. The Blue Devils whipped Governor Livingston 4-1 and 1-0, and trounced Roselle Park, 2-0 and 5-0.

"If you asked the kids about their choice of highlights it would be the double overtime, 0-0 tie in the rain with Cranford and the double OT win with GL and believe it or not, the overtime game against Kent Place. They highlighted their resiliency throughout the season. They never gave up, played hard and clicked as a unit. Sometimes we threw a klunker in there and they got their butts kicked," said McFadden.

With no shining superstars, the Blue Devils held their own with team captains forward Maureen Hughes,

seven," said McFadden. "Leigh did a very good job in the middle. You don't see a whole lot of defensive numbers because they are a lot harder to keep track of but she was pretty solid. The third captain Taylor, played in just one game due to a knee injury. She is perhaps as good as any captain on the field. She came to every practice, came to every game and was there more or less as an assistant coach."

Sophomore Agustina Healy led the Blue Devils with seven goals. "She's going to get better. Other coaches have noticed her. I see big things from her and I'm hoping that she scores lots of goals," said McFadden.

The most improved player was senior forward Christine Isabella (Union County [UC] and Mountain Valley Conference [MVC] Second Team selection). She recorded seven goals and six assists.

"Christine did an outstanding job offensively and some of the things she did this year were very impressive. Also, we don't want to forget about senior defenseman Alyson Guerriero who made UC and MVC Second Team," added McFadden.

Earning UC and MVC First Team recognition was senior goalkeeper Natalia Mavrogiannis.

"The fact that she was chosen over the likes of an Oak Knoll, Johnson or Kent Place goalie was quite an accomplishment. The coaches recognized the skill and talent that she had," said McFadden.

Westfield will suffer a huge loss when it graduates 11 seniors. "They were not always recognized as the most talented group but it did not matter because they worked their tails off every day and they were a great and fun group to go out with as my last group of kids coaching," concluded McFadden. "The kids that are left behind, the juniors and sophomores are going to be a really good nucleus. There is a lot of talent on the junior varsity level and this team is only going to get better next year."



BRINGING A CARDINAL DOWN TO EARTH... Blue Devil John Dugan, wearing No. 58, latches on to a Cardinals and brings him to the turf in last year's Thanksgiving Day game. Plainfield won 9-0



DEDICATED AND TIRELESS... After taking over as Field Hockey Head Coach in 1983, Maggie McFadden took tremendous joy in teaching the finer points of the game. McFadden will retire at the end of the year after accumulating a 179-162-70 record.

never gave up. Recalling several memorable games, McFadden noted, "We played Kent Place sometime in mid-October. It was just 2-0 with three minutes left and the kids played their hearts out. Unfortunately near the very end of the game we gave up two goals and that was a little disap-

defenseman Leigh Weissman and goalkeeper Katherine Taylor.

"Leigh and Maureen did a great job keeping the team resilient and working hard. Mau did a very good job bringing the ball down and distributing to the other shooters and that's why she leads the team in assists with

Westfield Blue Devils Want to 'Gobble' Plainfield Cardinals on 'Turkey Day'

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Matt Daly and Mike Mroz each ran for two touchdowns (TD), as the Blue Devils gobbled up 331 yards on the ground, and quarterback Ryan MacDonald fired two TD passes. Mroz also had 11 tackles.

In 2001, in Westfield, the game went right down to the wire when quarterback Louie Mercer burst onto pay dirt on a fourth-and-goal with 45 seconds remaining to give the 8-3 Blue Devils a 24-21 victory. On a trick play, at the beginning of the game, Mercer pitched to wide receiver Jay Cook who then tossed a 55-yard TD strike to tight end Brian Butts. Cook also blocked a punt and recorded his seventh interception of the season.

"He (Cook) had been bugging me to use that play since the beginning of the year," said Athletic Director Ed Tranchina, the Blue Devils head coach at that time.

Quarterback Jan Coccoziello became one of the heroes in the 7-3 Blue Devils' 14-6 victory in 2002 when he scrambled all over the field to finally complete a 49-yard TD run with 5:27

remaining in the game. Coccoziello also fired a 13-yard TD pass to running back Bart Walsh.

The Cardinals were dominant in the decade of the 50s, winning 11 straight from 1949 to 1959, which included four shutouts. After the arrival of coach Gary Kehler, the Blue Devils owned the Cardinals from 1968 until 1981, winning 15 straight meetings, including devastating triumphs in 1969 (45-0) and 1970 (49-6).

In their string of three victories this season, the Blue Devils appeared to have found the handle on their running game, especially with the efforts of Malcolm Allen and the pleasant surprise of sophomore Ricardo Johnson.

"We have been running the ball pretty well. It's nice! We have had good tailback play all year, Ryan Yarusi before he sprained his ankle and Malcolm, then he sprained his ankle, and now Ricardo came in. They all run hard. That's the key to our running game," said DeSarno.

This season, the Cardinals have been nursing their wounds with a 1-8

record but wide receiver/running back Reggie Dixon is one of the fastest runners in the state and could be devastating if not contained.

"We won't see anybody as fast as him. He's as fast as they come in the whole state. He's one kid we are concerned with. We are going to try to figure out a way to control him, try to keep him in front of us as much as possible," said DeSarno who added, "We have a lot of seniors who haven't beaten them. This one's got the tone, traditional rivalry all set. The kids are motivated!"

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