



Fred K. Lecomte for The Westfield Leader and The Times
HOOPS SISTER ACT...Raider girls basketball Co-Captains Emily Meehan, left, and Molly Meehan flank Head Coach Bruce Davis. The sisters and coach Davis plan to lead the Raiders to another standout season.

EMILY AND MOLLY MEEHAN NAMED CO-CAPTAINS

SP-F Lady Raiders Envision Successful Basketball Season

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

Added maturity, strength and size with the five returning veterans could make it very possible for the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School girls' basketball team to defend its Union County Tournament (UCT) title and, perhaps, be as good if not better than last year's squad.

Last year, the Raiders out-pointed rival Westfield, 43-36, in overtime to win the UCT title for the third time in four years and finished the season with a 17-9 record.

"I was just watching the tape the other night and I told the girls what a great job defensively they did. We probably played our best basketball towards the end and that is what matters," said Raider Head Coach Bruce Davis. "We have a tough schedule and we're in a very, very tough group and section this year. We're hoping to be a threat in the counties and go deep in the states."

Despite having graduated Allie

Zazzali, the UC Player of the Year, and the scrappy Lauren Mains, coach Davis feels his team will be strong upfront with Kaylin Jaichon, Emily Meehan and 5'11" junior Jackie Law, who averaged 10 points and 10 rebounds per game.

"She's moving a little further away from the basket with more of an outside game, which will be great because it makes her more of a threat and harder to guard. She's a very aggressive player, runs the floor well, rebounds and gets out. She can lead the break and brings a renewed confidence," Davis said of Law.

Jaichon, a 6'1" junior, will be the big girl inside. "She was our second leading rebounder last year and will be a force inside. She tries to take advantage of beating her big people up and down the floor. We need to pound the ball inside a little more this year, because it is going to be our strength. I expect her to be one of the dominating centers in the county," coach Davis said.

Offensively, the Raiders look for lots

of movement, screen sets and additional scoring from co-captain Emily Meehan. "She had a real good AAU summer season, really worked on her offensive game, is now more of a scoring threat and shows confidence. I have a lineup where I can go big if I want to. I can put three people in; Emily can step out and be the three. She can get movement and shoot way from the basket. Jackie can move away from the basket and score and that gives us a lot of size inside rebounding wise."

Co-captain Molly Meehan will be at the point guard and two-guard position. "Pretty good shooter from the outside and she can take it to the basket," said Davis.

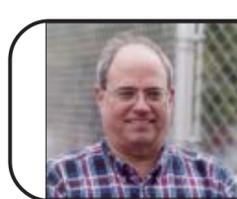
Laura Degnan, a 5'11" junior forward/guard, can shoot a good jump shot and can hit from three. "She's a good offensive rebounder as well. She runs the open floor well; maybe the fastest kid on the team," coach Davis said.

Kathryn DeCataldo will be sharing time at point guard. "Real good ball handler, good three-point shooter like her sister Liz was, has lots of court savvy, uses that on steals and getting to the right place at the right time," coach Davis said.

Coach Davis feels that Saxony Nielsen, "will be this year's Lauren Mains. The same type of a kid! Athletic, strong, real tough and maybe more of an offensive threat than Lauren was and willing to take on the other team's best player."

Other players include: senior Brianna Character, senior Kendra Spady and 5'11" freshman, guard Crystal Clark. Ebie Kaotz will see minutes as well.

"We're one of five in the top half of the conference so, as a result, we expect tough competition. We will have to play Shabazz and Irvington twice, so we may not get to 20 wins. Our goal, however, is to win every game when we step on the floor. Obviously we may take our lumps, especially early on when we try to feel our way around, but everyone will know we'll be around at the end," concluded coach Davis.



Devil's Den
G.K.'s Farewell Ceremony Smooth As a Perfect "4-2"

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

It's safe to say that there may never again be as much athletic talent from one high school assembled in one place at one time. Last Friday the young and old (and the in-between) came from near and far to the Presbyterian Church to say goodbye to Gary Kehler, the former WHS football, wrestling and golf coach, who had passed away a week earlier after a 4 1/2-year battle with stomach cancer.

Sitting next to me was Gerry McGinley, the white-haired former all-state footballer from the class of 1948. On my right was Dick Stotler ('66), all-county quarterback. In front of us were two-time Olympic wrestler Chris Campbell ('73) and the Rev. Ronnie Allen ('79). Behind us were all-county tackle Paul Harbaugh ('80), legendary swim coach Uncle Joe Della Badia and his quarterback sons Joe ('77) and Tom ('80). Every section of the jam-packed church was filled with similar "lineups."

The ceremony — everything was planned by G.K., of course — went off as smoothly as one of those game opening, "4-2" runs back in the '60s and '70s. It included some amazing singing by Jan Hedden ('70), and remembrances by son Doug Kehler, friend Roger Love, nephew Bob Kehler and son Glen Kehler. As could be expected, Love and Glen Kehler had the crowd rolling in the aisles with their stories. Love recalled learning the term "see the lights" during a gym-class wrestling lesson from first-year teacher Gary Kehler in 1957. "He told me I should stick to basketball," Love said. Glen recalled some of his father's favorite expressions ("the difference between champ and chump is 'U'") and told several side-splitters, including one about the frugal Kehler getting his wife Alice an electric can-opener for Christmas, and another about the first time Gary put his middle son Todd on a plane for a trip to Florida, giving him \$10 and telling him, "If the plane is highjacked to Cuba, get me a couple of cigars."

It'd be impossible to name all the people who were there. But, with apologies to anyone who is overlooked and/or wasn't recognized, here's a last-names listing of the Who's Who in WHS sports that was there (in many cases, there were multiple family members):

Adelaar, Allen, Assmann, Baldwin, Bender, Betz, Bodmer, Bowers, Brand, Braun, Brewster, Brown, Byrne, Campbell, Carroll, Chambliss, Ciarrocca, Clark, Cosenza, Costello, Davies, Davis, DellaBadia, Demarest, Dooley, Duncan, Elliott, Forsberg, Goski, Gottlick, Harbaugh, Hearon, Hedden, Hely, Henry, Husch, Higgins, Howarth, Jackson, Jester, Jordan, Kalbacher, Kelly, Kennedy, Kessler, Ketcham, Kinsella, Knobloch, Kole, Kowalczyk, Lay, Leifer, LiSoeoy, Love, MacDonald, Mannino, Massa, McDermott, McDevitt, McDonough, McGinley, Merrill, Miller, Monninger, Morash, Morris, Murphy, Mutz, Napier, Nardi, Palmer, Reid, Ripperger, Sampson, Selert, Stiefken, Stotler, Sullivan, Tebbets, Tomalonis, Treut, Varnum, Valenti, Whedon, Yarusi, Yacilla, and Zitch, along with a dozen or more members of the '07 WHS football team and its coaching staff, and dozens of current and former WHS teachers and coaches, and old-timers John D' Andrea, Dave Cilo and Pete Lima.

In addition, former NFL player and Westfield resident Bill Ard, the

Lady Blue Devils Down Columbia Cagers, 67-56

Erin Miller pumped in 34 points, including 18 in the fourth quarter to push the Westfield High School girls basketball team past Columbia, 67-56, in Westfield on December 17.

The Blue Devils were down 44-37 entering the fourth quarter before exploding for 30 points. Miller sank 14 of 15 from free throw line in the quarter and hit 22-for-25 in the game. She also had seven rebounds, seven assists and six steals. Stephanie Slodyczka put in 14 points and hit all four of her free throws and Gabrielle O'Leary had nine points (7-for-9 from the line), three steals, three assists and three rebounds.

Columbia	11	13	20	12	56
Westfield	13	13	11	30	67

NJSIAA's Bob Baly, and famed New Jersey coaches like John Allen (Seton Hall Prep), Frank Bottone (New Providence), Jerry Moore (Somerville/Elizabeth), Ted Monica (Madison), Mike Sheppard (Seton Hall University), John Wagner (Roselle Park) and Warren Wolf (Brick) were all there, along with SP-F's Len Zanowicz, Gene Schiller and Rob Harmer, and Union's Bill Parsons.

After the meet-and-greet with the family and an hour or so of hanging around and remembering the great (not just good) of times, the crowd started to disperse — some to waiting planes, others to drives home, some over to visit Kehler Stadium again, and more than a few hung around for a while at some of the local watering holes.

As he got up to leave 16 Prospect for Newark Airport and his plane ride home to San Francisco and his life as a corporate lawyer, Chris Campbell said, "I'll tell you one thing, that man (Kehler) led one helluva life."

Many hours later, as the lights went out inside the Jolly Trolley and the final arguments wound down about who was the best team and who was the best player and what was the best game ever, it was time for the stragglers to head home. Walking to our cars, Joe Della Badia said, "This was such a great day. Just a great day."

And then we got into a discussion about whether Mike Venezia ('07) was a better basketball player than Timmy Goski ('73). It had almost escalated into who would win a 2-on-2 game between Venezia and Bob Felter (my pick) against Goski and Boo Bowers (Joe's)... before we said our goodbyes and promised to get together again sometime soon.

I wonder if there will ever be another day quite as great.

BY THE NUMBERS

In honor of the late Gary Kehler, the Devil's Den presents a list of the best player(s) to wear certain football numbers on the jerseys during the period 1961-82. (Note: under Kehler, nobody wore single digit numbers, or numbers in the 90s.)

12 Dwight Davies and John Brown, 14 Joe Monninger, 15 Bud Mueller and Dick Stotler, 16 Bob Davis and Dean Boylan, 17 Skeeter MacCloskey; 21 Rick Adelaar, 22 Charlie Clark and Owen Brand, 23 Ed Galauski, 24 Bill Bryant, Rudy Brown and Chuck Hood, 26 Jay Isbrecht, 27 Jim Kovacs, 28 Kevin Bonner, 29 Ron Hall, Paul Byrne and John Byrne;

30 Jim O'Neil, 32 Eddie Morton, 33 Jim Catron and Don Knobloch, 34 Frank Kelly, 36 Leroy Gallman, Doug Murphy and Frank Jackson; 39 Chip Demarest;

40 Dwight Winn, 41 Bill Backus, 42 Butch Woolfolk, 43 Glen Kehler, 44 Joe Wiendl, Jerry Hendershott and Jim Reid; 45 Marty Howarth and Bob McNally, 46 Keith Davis and Mike Giacone, 47 John Greene, 48 Harry Beane and Mike Mangan, 49 John Ackerson;

50 Jim Minno and Bob Thiel, 51 Jim Coy, 53 Ted Raabe, 54 Bob Skinner and Pete Murphy, 55 Jon Gordon, Bruce MacKay and Ira Thorne, 56 Rick Mazza, 57 Charlie Widmer, 58 Bob Harvey, 59 Greg Weiss;

60 Dave Morash, Steve Hoppin and Gerry Glassey; 61 John Kerr and Mike Fenlon, 62 Flip Light, 63 Bob Duels, 64 Mike Dorne and Mark Lemko, 65 Jim Zitch, 66 Bill Dunham and Rick Sampson, 67 Joe Hagy and Adam Beckett, 68 Tom Gilday, 69 Bob Van Kueren;

71 Chris Vejnaska and Chris Harvey; 72 Jim Lincoln, 73 Jim Hohlitzell, 74 Jim Howard, Bret Schundler and Chris Drabin, 75 Jim Hely and John Iglar, 76 Pete Parken, 77 Mike Schundler, Don Ciliotta and Mark Ciliotta, 78 Paul Jackson; 81

Devils of the Week
Craig Esposito,
Jimmy Bender
Ice Hockey

Neil Chamberlain, 82 Bill Taylor, 83 Steve Bodmer, 84 Rick Baldwin and K.C. Knobloch, 85 Bill Napier, Bruce Jester, Jim Tyler and Steve Scioscia; 86 Rick Schadle, 87 Tom Pfeiffer, Mark Jackson and Scott Selert; 88 Frank Ritter, Kent Baldwin and Dave Jackson; 89 Greg Allen.

DEN JEOPARDY ANSWER

Annapolis, Auburn, Boston College, Boston University, Bowdoin, Brigham Young, Bucknell, Case Western Reserve, Clemson, Colby, Colgate, Connecticut, Cornell, Drexel, Fairfield, Fordham, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Lafayette, Lehigh, Monmouth, New Hampshire, NYU, Notre Dame, Penn State, Princeton, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Richmond, Rowan, Rutgers, St. Bonaventure, St. Lawrence, Seton Hall, Scranton, Stevens Institute of Technology, Susquehanna, Tufts, Tulane, Ursinus, Vanderbilt, Villanova, Virginia, Virginia Military Institute, West Point, Yale.

BASKETBALL UPDATE

Wow, what a nice come-from-behind 67-56 win for the WHS girls on Monday against Columbia. Down seven (44-37) entering the fourth quarter, the Devils scored 30 points, including 18 by Erin Miller, the four-year standout who finished with 34 points, nailing 22 of 25 free throws. Gabby O'Leary added nine points, including seven of nine FTs. And senior Stephanie Slodyczka scored 14 points and grabbed seven rebounds before fracturing her wrist and will be out for two weeks.

IN THE GENES

Will Brewster, the son of former WHS quarterback/catcher Roger Brewster ('83), was a key member of the Team Bama U-11 basketball squad that won the 2007 AAU Super Region Tournament with a 61-53 victory over Inner Strength (Atlanta). Will Brewster, who had 15 points in the title game, is also the grandson of Bob and Marge Brewster of Westfield. The sixth grader is ranked by hoopscooponline.com as the 20th best small forward and 121st player in the class of 2014! (Ranking sixth graders?)

Two key members of the Delaware Valley Regional wrestling team this year will be sophomore Trevor and senior Conor Stiefken, the sons of former WHS state champion Kurt Stiefken ('72). Trevor was 3-1 last year at 119, while Conor was 10-15 as an undersized heavyweight.

IS IT JUST ME ...

... or does anybody else realize the WHS boys swim team could enter the Three Stooges in an upcoming meet, say in the 200 IM or 100 breast: Mo (Matt Morgan), Larry (Zhang) and Curley (Matt Gelmetti).

... or is anybody else wondering how the Star-Ledger had 6-4 Elizabeth ranked third in union county, two spots ahead of 7-4 WHS? The Blue Devils beat them head-to-head, at their field, and also went deeper in the state tournament.

DEN JEOPARDY QUESTION

What are the colleges attended by WHS boys swimming graduates over the last 15 years, 1993-2007?

DEVIL OF THE WEEK

This week's free subs from Al the Owner at Westfield Subs (261 South Avenue East) go to Craig Esposito and Jimmy Bender. A senior captain on the WHS ice hockey team, Esposito had three goals in a 9-1 victory over SP-F in the opening round of the Cron Tournament; Bender chipped in with two goals and three assists.

The Devil's Den appears every Thursday in The Westfield Leader during the school year. Contact us with comments, complaints and suggestions at GO DEVILS!

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