

Raider Matman Sal Gano Seeks 100th Victory vs. Warren Hills

THE WEEK IN SPORTS

Sports Section
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Blue Devil Boys Capture 50th Union County Swim Crown

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

It's doubtful any parents of the current Westfield High School boys swim team members were alive when the school started its unsurpassed dominance of Union County. In fact, it was around the time Elvis Presley and rock 'n' roll were becoming household names that the WHS swimming dynasty began.

The Union County Championships were first held in 1938 and '39, at Rutgers University's bandbox pool at that time, and Westfield won both of them led by Dave Manning and Paul Fitzgerald. After two years without a meet, there were individual championships held in 1942 and 1943 before the meet was postponed because of the war. When the county meet was restarted in 1954, Plainfield won its only title. After WHS won again in 1955 and host Pingry (then located in Hillside) won in 1956, the stage was set.

Starting on February 22, 1957 when Bob Reddell and Terry Bentley won the first two events, Westfield was on its way. Over the next 51 years, including last Friday night, WHS has captured a surreal 50 county championships, losing only in 1999 when a powerful Scotch Plains-Fanwood team rode two amazing relay anchor swims by Dave Russ and a disqualification call on Westfield's captain for an illegal cap for a narrow victory. Enter first-year coach Jeff Knight

... joining the legacy of coaches that started in 1957 with Joe Kursar, and continued through Walt Clarkson, "Uncle Joe" Della Badia, Chuck Gantner, Perry Coultas, Chris McGiffin, George Kapner and on to the present day.

"We did what we came to do, swim fast and get the trophy," said Knight, after WHS piled up 342 points (runnerup SP-F had 227) and won eight of 11 races.

Senior P.J. Harley, junior Matt Green, sophomore Chris DeLaFuenta and freshman Matt Meserole were the big performers, but WHS got strong swims across the board, including seniors Phil Anton (fifth 200 IM, second 100 breast), Luke Baran (fifth 50 free), Colin Sullivan and Rob Whitehead, junior Matt Blutfield (fourth 100 breast), sophomores Matt Morgan, Max Blum (fourth 500 free) and Evan Paulan, and freshmen Mike Oster (fifth 200 free, 100 free) and Andrew Cordiero (fifth 500 free).

Harley won the 200 freestyle in 1:48.01 and the 500 free in 4:46.29, both lifetime unshaved bests. He also swam on the winning 200 and 400 freestyle relays, which both did season best times.

Green was a surprise winner over a strong field in the 50 free that included SP-F Mike Miller, Cranford's Sean French, Baran and Summit's Jason Toffey and Jason Pepe. Miller clocked 22.58, a personal best, and later was touched out by Union

Catholic's Brian O'Donnell in the 100 free, despite a personal best 50.45.

DeLaFuenta was touched out by Oratory's Brendan Floyd in the 200 individual medley, but his time of 2:02.58 was a lifetime best. "Dee-Lah" came back to repeat as the 100 butterfly champion, winning in a fast 54.45 over two tough opponents, Oratory's Alex Morrison and SP-F's Miller.

Meserole finished sixth in the 100 fly, but came back to win the 100 backstroke in a personal best 56.45, edging Morrison and 2006 champ Baran.

Westfield winning relays were: Meserole, Anton, Blutfield and Baran on the medley; Harley, Oster, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 16**



RIGHT ON A VIKING'S TAIL...Raider Pat Doliber, center, tails Viking Brian Guterl then makes his move with five laps to go to win the two-mile run.

David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times

DOLIBER WINS 880, ROWBOTHAM WINS 60H, ALLEMAN WINS SHOT PUT

Vikings Grab First, Raiders Grab Second In Union County Boys Track & Field Meet

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

Three years ago, the Union Catholic High School track program was nothing more than another team entry in the Union County Tournament (UCT). Under the guidance of Head Coach

Mike McCabe, things have changed dramatically when his Viking boys, with a strong effort across the board, finished with a team total of 57 to outdo Scotch Plains-Fanwood (52 total) for their first UCT Boys Indoor Track and Field title at Dunn Center in Elizabeth on January 31. Westfield finished fifth with a total of 21.

"Our guys ran smart and tough throughout the meet. They really wanted to win the meet after we passed up on the county relay's to run the Group 1 State Relay meet. Coming up three points short of the state title left a bad taste in our mouths and this was a great opportunity for us to rebound. I couldn't be more proud of every kid. When I started three years ago we had 10 boys on the team," said coach McCabe.

Although the Raiders grabbed first in three of the nine events, the Vikings placed second in six of the events and speedster Garrett Ellis, a junior, played a running roll in three of them. Ellis finished second in the 60-yard dash with a time of 6.7 behind Plainfield's Reggie Dixon who tied the meet record with a time of 6.3. Viking teammate Mike Suarez added team points by crossing fifth at 6.8.

Ellis also crossed second in the 440-yard run in 54.7 behind Paul Jones-Burden of Rahway who finished with a time of 54.1. Viking senior James Pierce finished fifth in the event at 56 seconds. Ellis also ran the leadoff leg in the one-mile relay event, in which the Vikings - Ellis, sophomore Shariff Stubbs, Pierce and senior Julian Phillips - finished sec-

ond with a time of 3:47.3 behind Rahway that recorded a time of 3:46.2. Raiders Kyle Grizzard, Mike Katz, Ken Azard and Kyle Rowbotham finished fourth in the mile relay with a time of 3:54.8.

The Vikings' most productive effort came in the 880-yard run when Ryan Kilkenny crossed second with a time of 2:10.7. Mike Sprague was fourth at 2:12 and Russell Kenney finished sixth at 2:16. Blue Devil Alex Tarlow gave it a good kick to

finish third in the event with a time of 2:11.6.

"I am happy with my time. I think my coach is happy," guessed Tarlow. Sprague finished second in the one mile with a time of 4:46.9 followed by Raider Mike Ragan at 4:47.9. Blue Devil Evan Friedman, who finished fifth at 4:58.5, got edged at the line by Cranford's Ed Baker (4:58.2).

Raider junior Pat Doliber pulled off a big victory in the two-mile run, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 14**

MILLER NETS 20, 9 REBOUNDS; VENEZIA BUCKETS 7

Lady Blue Devils Jump Ahead Of Lady Viking Cagers, 33-25

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

Patience paid off midway through the fourth quarter as the Westfield High School girls basketball team finally broke free from a nip-and-tuck game then controlled the tempo the remainder of the quarter to defeat Union Catholic, 33-25, in Westfield on February 1. Bringing home a victory was especially crucial to the Vi-

kings since they were on the bubble of qualifying for their 31st straight sectional berth under Head Coach Kathy Matthews, whose career to date record stands at 587-190.

"They are an excellent team and she is a great coach," said Blue Devil Head Coach Joe Marino. "Their defense is very good. We knew it was a matter of time that when we got some people open we could score some

points. We had to focus on our defense. It was a scrappy game. They had a lot on the line today. They put a little extra effort into that game today, which we knew they were going to do. It was a challenge and we managed to pull it out."

With the 13-5 Blue Devils clinging to a slim, 22-21, lead in an extremely defense-minded struggle, junior guard Erin Miller drew a foul, hit her first free throw and missed her second but she grabbed the rebound, only to miss the lay-up. Freshman teammate Diana Venezia, who finished with seven points, rushed in, pulled down the rebound and responded with a successful lay-up to give the Blue Devils a workable four-points of elbow room. From that point, with less than three minutes remaining, the 8-10 Vikings were forced to change their tactics. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 15**



PUTTING THE BALL IN GOOD HANDS...When the score is close, the basketball usually gets into the hands of Blue Devil Erin Miller, No. 11.

David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times

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