

ALEX WRONSKI ROLLS 237 IN CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Blue Devil Bowlers Capture Union County Championship

By DAVID B. CORBIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times
Blue Devil senior/leadoff bowler Alex Wronski rolled a 237 in the final game to lead the Westfield High School bowling team past Roselle Catholic for the Union County championship at Jersey Lanes in Linden on January 31. The Blue Devils finished with a total of 3,018 followed by Roselle Catholic at 2,898, Elizabeth and Linden at 2,835, Governor Livingston at 2,659 and Scotch Plains-

Fanwood with 2,570. "He has an uncanny ability to deliver when we need to set a tempo and send a message to the opposing team," said Blue Devil Head Coach Mike Tirone. The day before, the Blue Devils qualified as the top-seed for the finals by defeating Roselle Park, 2,915-2,557. Wronski rolled games of 221 and 231 and finished with a 645 series. Junior Jesse Embre rolled a 614 series and junior Eric Curialle bowled games of 213 and 221. Harrison

Mercado and Brett Ettinger had solid performances with series of 545 and 527, respectively. Elizabeth qualified second with a 2,869 total, Linden was third at 2,860, Roselle Catholic was fourth at 2,856, the Raiders were fifth at 2,626 and Governor Livingston was sixth at 2,624. "We have advanced to the finals (top six) all of the years that we entered, except for 2000. That would entail 21 years. We have finished in the medals (1st, 2nd or 3rd) in 18 of those years," said Tirone. "The counties have been the most difficult event for Westfield to win over the years. We have placed second and third in the counties and gone on to win the sections on many occasions."

In the finals, after two games, the Blue Devils were in second place and needed nine pins to overcome Roselle Catholic. After Alex Wronski's 237, Eric Curialle followed with a 192. Brett Ettinger rolled 226, Jesse Embre rolled 209 and anchor Harrison Mercado rolled a 211 for a team total of 1,075, the high game for the two-day tournament, while the Lions totaled 947.

"Mercado is as cool as they come under pressure. He has delivered under pressure against top-20 teams in every tournament. Harrison is a well-conditioned athlete that is as mentally strong as he is physically. Every team we bowl would love to have him on their team," said Tirone.

Curialle finished the day with a 632 total (1,216 two-day), Embre had 630 (1,244), Ettinger had 606 (1,133), Mercado had 584 (1,129) and Wronski 566 (1,211). The High Tournament Individual Bowler Award went to Lou Clemente of Roselle Catholic with totals of 708 and 687 for a quite impressive 1,395 total.

"The key moment was when the results after two games were announced and we were eight pins behind leader Roselle Catholic with one game remaining. It was the first time after five games that we were not in first place. I saw a determination in the demeanor of the team. They proceeded to start the third game with all strikes. As the game continued, their focus never changed, they were not to be denied on this day. They entered into another zone when they were challenged. I was very impressed with their fortitude," said Tirone. "Knowing they were behind seemed to get their attention in a very positive way."

To date, Wronski leads the team with a 205 average followed by Ettinger with 202, Mercado at 197, Embre at 196 and Curialle at 195.

"Our most consistent bowler has to be the team. Each person, who bowled in the tournament, is separated by just 10 pins. Embre did have strikes at several key junctures when our lead was being contested. All the bowlers were poised under pressure. It was an absolute team effort," said Tirone.



Fred Lecomte for The Westfield Leader and The Times
CONCENTRATING HEAVILY ON DEFENSE...Blue Devil senior Dan Pritsker, left, concentrates heavily on defense against a Roselle Catholic Lion opponent. Offensively, Pritsker banged a 3-pointer in the first quarter but the Lions pulled out a 48-46 victory.

VENEZIA SCORES 13, BONARD PUTS IN 12, LESSNER 8

RC Lion Basketballers Sting Blue Devil Hoop Boys, 48-46

By FRED LECOMTE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times
A 19-14, first half edge by the Lions made the difference as the Roselle Catholic High School boys basketball team hung on to defeat Westfield, 48-46, at the John "Butch" Kowal Scholarship Games in Rahway on February 3.

Brian Godfrey led the 9-8 Lions with 18 points and Matt Henn put in 13. Senior Mike Venezia finished with 13 points in the second half and senior guard Tom Bonard rolled in 12 points to lead the 10-7 Blue Devils. Sophomore Mike Lessner torched the net with eight points. Sophomore Tony Dilorio swished in five of his six points, including a three-pointer, in the fourth quarter. Senior Santo Nardi sank four points, including a shot from downtown. Dan Pritsker hit a three-pointer in the opening quarter.

"We did not come out ready to play. They played tough, they got every loose ball, every rebound and they shot well," said Venezia. "We did not come back hard enough, it became late and they won the game. I owe

them credit because they came out hard and we didn't."

The Blue Devils jumped out to a 5-0 lead with the assistance of Nardi's three-banger and two hits from the foul line by Bonard before Lion Godfrey pushed in a three-point jumper. Throughout the rest of the quarter, Pritsker buzzed in a 3-pointer but the Devils were flat on their shooting.

In the second quarter, the Blue Devils began to settle down and played relatively even; however, due to some poor defense and shooting, the Lions jumped to a 19-14, halftime lead. In the quarter, Bonard nailed a two-pointer, Lessner bucketed three points and Dilorio added one.

A balanced attack and an effective defensive effort throughout most of the second half extended the Lions' lead to 10 points but the Blue Devils raised their level of intensity. The ball found its way into the hands of Venezia who came to life with a three-pointer. Lessner, off an assist by Bonard, swished a jumper to cut the lead to five. Later in the quarter, Venezia

dropped in a lay-up, Lessner sank a 3-point jumper and Nardi clicked in a foul shot to make the score 32-27.

Early in the fourth quarter, the Lions extended their lead to nine. Tight man-to-man pressure, steals and turnovers, however, by the Devils late in the quarter made the score 43-41. Venezia pumped in six points, Bonard connected from three-point range and Dilorio banged in five points.

With time running out, Bonard responded with a 3-pointer and Venezia stuffed the net off a rebound to knot the game at 46-46. Then with seven seconds remaining, Henn connected with the winner for the Lions.

"We came out stepped it up in the second half and tried to play our defense. Offensively, our shots did fall but we need to work on our defense, come out stronger and more aggressive," said Nardi.

"They hustled hard, we did not box out as well as we should have and that was pretty much the game," added Venezia.

Roselle Catholic	11	8	13	16	48
Westfield	8	6	13	19	46

WANTED FOR THEFT



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times
BE ON GUARD...In three years of varsity play, Blue Devil juniors Erin Miller, left, and Gab O'Leary have committed a combined 348 acts of theft (steals as of February 4). Miller has 213 thefts and O'Leary has 135.

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

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"We went ahead by four points and that's why we tried to slow it down a little bit. We wanted to take quality shots," said Marino.

All of those quality shots in the final moments came by way of free throws and Miller, who finished with 20 points, drove toward the basket, drew the fouls and hit all six of her free throws to finish 10-for-12 from the line.

"Sometimes that's what you have to do! Put the ball in the hands of your highest scorer! Make some things happen! But she doesn't play selfish and that's what is important," said Marino.

Miller dished out four assists and sophomore Tara Handza (6 points) contributed three.

Despite a slightly shaky first quarter, the Blue Devils gained composure to out-rebound the Vikings, 33-18, and to total 11 steals. Miller (3 steals) pulled nine boards, while Venezia and Katie Cronen each had

seven rebounds and two steals. Gabby Jakub had five rebounds and Gab O'Leary committed three steals.

Arielle Belk and Taryn Barnes, who finished with eight points, each scored four points in the first quarter as the Vikings took a slim, 12-11, lead. Miller hit nine points in the quarter.

"We were rushing our game in the first quarter. We were too busy rushing the game and not waiting to get people open and really setting good screens. Scoring nearly ground to a halt in the second quarter but the Blue Devils sank six and the Vikings netted five to knot the score 17-17. The third quarter offered even less with Westfield inching to a 22-21 lead entering the final quarter.

Viking Colleen Sweeney finished with six points and Jess Riddick scored three, while Reina Castro and Shannon Deegan each had two points.

Union Catholic	12	5	4	4	25
Westfield	11	6	5	11	30



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