

ETTINGER QUALIFIES FOR INDIVIDUAL STATE TITLE

Blue Devil Bowlers Capture Fifth Section Title in 6 Years

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

The Westfield High School bowling team advanced to the Group 4 State Championship by winning the NJSIAA North II Sectional Championship for the fifth time in six years. This, however, was the first year that bowling has been divided into groups. In the past, all groups had to bowl off and the top three would advance to the state finals. Westfield had advanced 14 times since the 1989-90 season. Eight of those had been as the champion and the other six were as second or third place finishes.

Under this group format, instead of 15 teams vying for the state title, 40 teams will be included.

"The difference is we only have to bowl against 10 teams in Group 4, explained Blue Devil Head Coach Mike Tirone. "Then the winner of Group 4 will bowl the winner of Group 1 and the winner of Group 3 will bowl

the winner of Group 2 in a Baker format. Then the winner rolls off for the overall championship (also in a Baker format)."

The Blue Devils easily won their group section with a three-game total of 3,027, the highest total of the 30-team tournament. Linden was second with a 2,882. Morris Knolls was the Group 3 champion (2,928), Jefferson (2,922) won Group 2 and Roselle Catholic (2,940) was the Group 1 champion.

Blue Devil junior Brett Ettinger rolled games of 237, 207 and 248 for a 692 series - third among all individuals. Junior Eric Curialle and senior Harrison Mercado had 637 and 634 series, respectively. Alex Wronski and Jesse Embre shared the leadoff position and bowled a combined 505 series. Bryan Elsasser and Arley Rojas shared the fourth position and had a combined 559 series. Curialle had a high game of 253 and Mercado had a high game of 246.

"Each team member, at one time or another, made critical shots to help hold off the runs that other teams were making to overcome us," said Tirone. "I was impressed by the composure our athletes portrayed under pressure situations. It's not easy to repeat championships but the team has been able to do just that."

Westfield totaled 1,037 in Game 1 as Curialle bowled his 253 and Ettinger had a 237. Mercado had a 213 to give the team the early lead. In Game 2, despite a 246 by Mercado, 207 by Ettinger and a 200 by the Elsasser/Rojas duo, Westfield totaled 985 and was holding on to the lead with a 2,022 total. As has been the pattern all season, the third game took all hope away from the competitors as the Blue Devils rolled a solid 1005, led by Ettinger's 248.

Ettinger's series qualified him for the individual state championship. The cut-off for the individuals was 640. Mercado, who qualified the past two years (689, 696), just missed with his 634 total. Curialle missed by just three pins.

"When the competition gets to this point, every pin is extremely important, not to mention that it is necessary to make every one pin spare," commented Tirone.

Ettinger will be going against 50 other individuals for the state championship. The individual champion format was started in 2000 by the competition committee of the NJSIAA. In 2001 Matt Rothstein won the competition (WHS, class 2001), and his record six-game total of 1,500 is still the high individual record to date.

"Matt had an incredible 749 series in the team competition at the state finals to advance to the top 20, then he shot a 751 series in the head-to-head competition for the 1,500 total," noted Tirone.

The State Finals will be held at Brunswick Zone Carolier Lanes in North Brunswick on February 19. Teams will start bowling at 9 a.m. to determine the Group State Champions. The individual competition will start when the teams are finished.

As with most lanes, "It's never going to be the same shot. We have to know what adjustments to make. I force them to practice different shots. We use inside shots and cross-lane shots. The kids can usually find the shot quickly. In order to be the best, you have to be able to make changes. The oil patterns force you to make the changes," cautioned Tirone.



TRYING TO SCOOT AWAY WITH A SWITCH...Blue Devil Andy Castrorao, front, attempts to reverse Miller Eric Rice in the 152-lb bout. Rice scored an escape, a penalty point and a takedown in the third period to grab an 8-4 decision.

REICHBACH PULLS OUT COME-FROM-BEHIND WIN

Blue Devil Wrestlers Defeat MXS Bulldogs, Fall to Millers

By DAVID B. CORBIN
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Westfield High School sophomore Sam Reichbach turned a near disaster into victory but his team, after defeating the Malcolm X. Shabazz Bulldogs, 60-21, was crumbled, 46-16, by the Millers from Millburn in a trimet in Westfield on February 9. With a number of forfeits, the 10-10 Blue Devils won four of five bouts against the Bulldogs but dropped six of the 10 bouts against the Millers.

Bulldog Mike Watson claimed a 10-4 decision over John Falzon at 145-lbs then Blue Devil Andy Castrorao pinned Corey Bell in 44 seconds with a far arm cork at 152-lbs. After Mark Boyd recorded a 45-second fall at 160-lbs, Blue Devil freshman Willy Johnson turned the tables on 215-lb Alonzo Johnson with a 2:23 fall. In the final bout against the Bulldogs, Blue Devil Nick DeFreitas scored a pair of takedowns and a nearfall before cranking Shaquan Harrison with a corkscrew in 3:27.

The strong Millers were not quite so benevolent and it appeared they were going to be downright malicious when 140-lb Sam Collingwood rocked Reichbach with four takedowns and a nearfall to grab an 11-3 lead. Reichbach gathered his

senses, added an escape, a takedown and a nearfall to cut Collingwood's lead to 11-9 entering the third period. Now, Reichbach became the takedown artist and also demonstrated his strength from the top position, recording a takedown and two more nearfalls to emerge with a 16-11 triumph.

"I thought to myself, this is my last home match and I want to make this a good one. I was a little hesitant on the shots but I decided to open up.

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COMING BACK IN A BIG WAY...After trailing 11-3, Blue Devil Sam Reichbach, top, came roaring back to claim a 16-11 victory at 140-lbs.

Blue Devil Bowlers Roll Over Bulldogs, Kearny Cardinals

The Westfield High School varsity bowling team defeated Shabazz, 7-0, with 2,919 total pins on February 6 then went on to blank Kearny, 7-0, (3,036-2,767) on February 8. The victories upped the Blue Devils' record to 24-1.

Brett Ettinger led the team against Shabazz with a 226 high game and a 617 series. Harrison Mercado (232 high game) rolled a 613 series and Alex Wronski (238 game) rolled a 604. Jesse Embre (586 series) and Bryan Elsasser (499 series) completed the varsity total.

In the JV match, Westfield also won, 7-0.

"Varsity member Eric Curialle bowled on the junior varsity to help have all varsity members have enough games to qualify for conference individual awards. He responded with the high series of the day and the high game (253, 656)," commented coach Mike Tirone.

Also leading the JVs were Trevor Yee, Matt Marcus, Arley Rojas, Dan Liebowitz, Justin Frazier Wright, and Matt Pogue.

The Blue Devils completed their conference schedule with an overwhelming performance over a strong Kearny opponent.

"The games were close", commented coach Tirone.

In Game 1, Westfield shot its high game of the year to overcome Jay Fatura (256 game) and his Kearny teammates. Alex Wronski (205), Eric Curialle (214), Brett Ettinger (259), Bryan Elsasser (189) and Harrison Mercado (246) were responsible for the 1,113 score to 908 for Kearny.

Wronski shot a 266 and Curialle a 225 to lead the Blue Devils to a 1,032-966 win in Game 2. Game 3 came down to anchorman Mercado needing a strike. Westfield held an 871-870 lead until Mercado shattered all the pins for the win.

The Blue Devil JVs won, 7-0, to end their season, 21-1. Rojas rolled games of 244, 268 and 200 for the high series of the day of 712. Yee (200, 209) had a 598 series and Embre (225, 577) were both heavy contributors to the win.

Coach Tirone said, "Our JV team had an outstanding season. They all have been dedicated to improvement and as the statistics prove they have improved. What a joy to coach such a fantastic group of hard workers."

Moving up to assist the varsity in postseason play will be Yee, Rojas and Embre. "All three are capable to step in if needed. I have complete confidence that they will do what might be necessary in a close match."

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