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THE WEEK IN SPORTS

Sports Section
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MINEO BREAKS SPF WIN MARK, GANO TOPS 100 WINS

Raider Matmen Hit 20 Wins, Regained District 11 Crown

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

Several firsts were recorded by the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School wrestling team this season. For the first time, the Raider matmen won 20 matches, for the first time, they competed in the sectional finals, and, for the first time, the Raiders had two individuals break the 100-career win mark in the same season. Additionally, they were the Watchung Conference champions and placed first in the District 11 (D11) Tournament.

Not only did the Raiders bolster their schedule but also they defeated powerhouses such as Hanover Park and Parsippany Hills before defeating a strong Voorhees team in the sectional semifinals to face off with Warren Hills where it came down to

the final bout, resulting in a 33-29 squeaker.

"It was the first time in school history that we got to that 20-win mark. The kids really get a kick out of it, trying to get up there," said Raider Head Coach John Scholz, the D11 Coach of the Year. "Beating Voorhees was huge. To come four points shy, we were excited for Warren Hills."

Senior Pat Mineo (145-lbs), a three-time Union County Tournament (UCT) champ (2007 MVP), four-time D11 champ and Region 3 champ, set an all-time SPF record of 124 career victories against only 19 losses, placed eighth in the state tournament and finished the season 36-4.

"Pat comes from a family of wrestlers. Great people! To win four district titles is an accomplishment. To

be the go-to guy almost every match is really big. To have 124 wins is a record, that is going to stay for a while," said Scholz.

Senior Sal Gano had a glorious season by winning the UCT title, his third district title and the region title at 125-lbs. He claimed his 100th career victory in the sectional final against Warren Hills and upped it to 108 against 27 losses, while finishing his season with a 35-2 record.

"He went undefeated all the way to states. Where he got his 100th win, up at Warren Hills, was nice. He goes under the radar but, when he takes off his glasses, he means business," said Scholz.

Senior Ricky Olsson realized his dream of competing in Atlantic City

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David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times
Bonard played mostly in the outfield but shortstop is his strongest position.

BONARD TO 'SET THE TABLE' AS LEADOFF BATTER

Blue Devil Baseballers Have Pitching Abundance, Speed

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

"Murderers' Row" - dubbed in March 30, 2006 issue - that introduced the "Big Bang" technique of crushing the ball shattered nearly every Westfield High School (WHS) baseball offensive record last year, won the Watchung Conference title and the Union County Tournament (UCT) title and finished 20-7. All, but one of "Murders' Row," have graduated but opponents should not consider this season's Blue Devils to be pushovers.

There may not be an abundance of long ball hitters but the Blue Devils do have speedy athletes who can create concern to opponents on the base paths and can cover a lot of ground defensively to go with a large stable of pitchers.

"We have a lot of guys, none of them are extremely overpowering but a lot of kids with some pretty good breaking stuff. They have decent velocity and I think, because of that, we are going to have to throw two or three guys every game," said Blue Devil head coach Bob Brewster. "We may go four innings, two innings, one inning, something to mix it up a little bit. What I do like is some of our kids have really good breaking balls. They will keep kids off-balance."

One of those who demonstrated good off-speed pitching last year was senior Peter Antonelli.

"He has worked very hard at creating a great changeup. Last summer, he would throw a changeup four or five times then, when he throws the fastball, he's got them looking for the off-speed pitch," said Brewster.

Junior Evan Shapiro, "Last year,

he was really coming into his own. He was 2-0 as a sophomore. He worked really hard over the summer. His movement on his fastball is really going to help us."

Junior Ryan Scanlon and senior Dan Melillo, "were the two mainstays of the JV staff last year and they both have nice curve balls," said Brewster.

Others in the pitching stable are: junior Mike Cappiello, seniors Zach Deegan, Dan Nuber, Jim Thayer and Mike Venezia, and sophomore flamethrower Chris Jenkins.

Venezia, an outstanding basketball player, is no stranger to the base-

ball diamond.

"Michael, two years ago, was the number one pitcher on the JVs. He was outstanding! This year, he is committed to baseball. The basics of his baseball abilities are well established. We are going to work on the little finesse parts. He is going to be very good for us," said Brewster.

Presently, the prospects for filling the first base position are Melillo, Venezia and Cappiello. Senior Kevin Hennessey is set for second base and senior Captain Tom Bonard will play shortstop. Shapiro, Venezia and

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David B. Corbin (2007 Region 3) for The Westfield Leader and The Times
SECURING THE REGION TITLE...Raider senior Pat Mineo, top, sees that he is awarded three points for a nearfall to secure the 145-lb Region 3 title. Inset: Mineo raises his arms after clinching a place in the "Elite 8" at Atlantic City.

DUNNAN, LASPATA, BROWN NAMED TEAM CAPTAINS

Pitching May Help Blue Devils Be UCT Softball Contenders

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

This season, the Westfield High School softball team, with a wealth of strong pitching to go with solid defense and decent hitting, is ready to improve upon last year's 14-10 record and biting at the bit to avenge a narrow come-from-behind loss to North Hunterdon in the North Jersey, Section 2, Group 4 semifinals.

While the Blue Devils did graduate four-year varsity starters Kristina Fietkiewicz and Mary Kate Flannery, along with Jillian Olsen, Jessica Moskowitz and Jen Urcivoli, they do have an abundance of young pitchers that show good potential.

"Because of the strong finish last season, I really hope that a lot of our younger players are going to carry that momentum over to this season,"

said Blue Devil Head Coach Tara Pignoli. "You really cannot substitute talent for experience."

Offensively Pignoli stated, "Constantly keeping pressure on the defense is really important. As a coach I want them to hit line drives and ground balls and I have some kids who can hit with power. I don't have the speed and the bunting that we had with MaryKate but we do have some speed and certainly will bunt, since that has always been part of our game."

Senior Tri-Captain Lindsay Brown, a lefty who recorded a 1.61 ERA, an 11-8 record, including four shutouts and received First Team All-Watchung Conference honors as a first year varsity player last year, will have a strong mound presence.

"It's clear she worked very hard in the off-season. She's throwing the

ball hard, she's very sharp, hitting her spots. Lindsay should do a really nice job," said Pignoli. "Our biggest question with her is 'can she hold off a really strong team for seven innings,' but because we have so much good pitching, she doesn't necessarily have to."

Pignoli has high expectations with sophomore pitcher Alyson Moskowitz, who had a 1.06 ERA and pitched her heart out in the sectional final game in a really tough situation last year. Sophomore Cyndil Matthew, primarily used as the desig-

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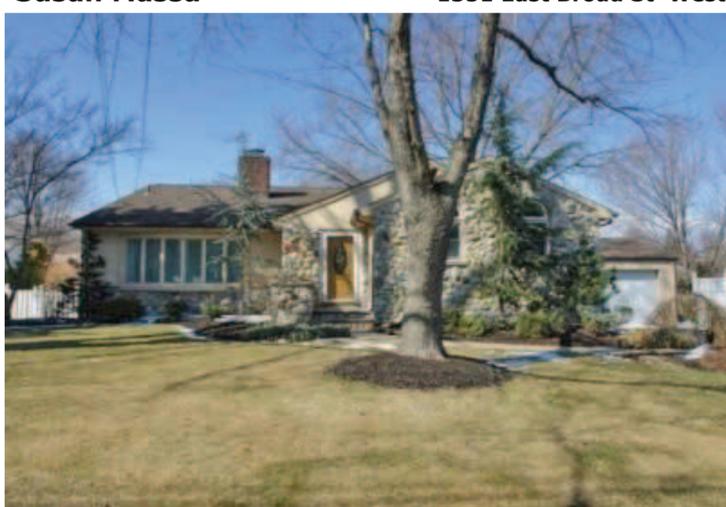
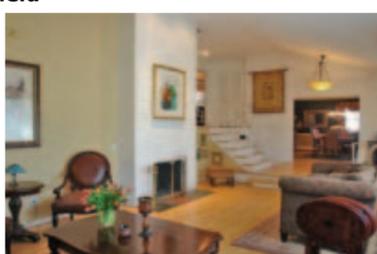
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elizabeth.bataille@burgdorff.com

Cathy Splinter
Sales Associate
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