



Fred K. Lecomte for The Westfield Leader and The Times

HARD TO BEAT THESE GUYS ...Blue Devil captains, left to right, are: Ben Thomas, Ryan Yarusi, Chris Mattes and Joe Simone who savored the taste of victory as UC champions are very hungry to repeat the feat and bring home the state title.

WF Blue Devil Boye Lacrosse Team Returns Talented, Defensive, Offensive Veteran Squad

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to have Ben Thomas, Chris Mattes, Joe Simone and Ryan Yarusi, all four-year starters with us this season, along with a strong group of backup guys. I think anyone on our team, if they don't say that we want to be in that state final with a chance to win as our top goal is not answering honestly. We believe that we have enough guys to be team oriented, have all the key positions filled and, if we stay healthy and play our best lacrosse, it's going to be hard to beat us."

Last year, the Blue Devils won the UC championship skinning Summit, 10-9, at Tatlock Field in Summit on May 22.

"That was one of the most exciting games I was in. It's always nice to beat a good team like Summit," said Benaquista. "A lot of guys stepped up playing hurt. We had a tremendous effort from goal to defense to offense. We stuck together and held them off

when they started coming back on us."

The Blue Devils humbled Vernon Township, 11-7, in the quarterfinal round in the NJSIAA Group 3 Tournament at Kehler Stadium in Westfield on May 26 before ending their season in the next round at the sticks of Randolph.

"It was a tough game. It seemed like we didn't have our legs under us and they beat us to the ball. We just did not bring our 'A' game that day," said Benaquista.

With the exception of graduates Ryan Sharkey, Mike Bialick and Tom Bottini, who now plays for Rutgers, the Blue Devils return an impressive cast of 20 seniors led by Thomas, Simone, Yarusi, C.J. Patella, Kevin Maus, Will Harbaugh and Eddie Kane.

"We have a bunch of other additions stepping up but it's a great nucleus of long sticks," said Benaquista.

Goalie Thomas figures to shine again as one of the better stoppers in the state.

"He has a lot of potential. He's very verbal with the defense, controlling slides and whatever defenses we are in. I think he's set up to have a great year," said Benaquista.

Westfield, tagged as one of the best defensive teams in the conference, will look to live up to its name.

"I definitely think it's not led by one person. It's a bunch of people. We can intertwine people, match up differently, we have speed, we have experience and I expect them to be solid this year. I expect our goal-against average to come down. I expect us to win games because of our defense and, like every sport says, 'defense wins championships.'"

With reference to penetrating the enemy line, the Blue Devils return excellent attackers including one of the best face-off players in the state in Mattes.

"He controls a lot of those ground balls off of the face-off, but we also need the wing play and everyone really helps us out there," Benaquista said.

Sparking the offense also include Simone, (who had a career high of 105 goals last season), Yarusi, Luke Baron, Kevin Meisel, Andrew Rosenberg and Pete Cornell, along with junior Harry Bernstein on attack, who, "does not see too many ground balls but he finishes most of the times," commented Benaquista.

The Blue Devils open the season against Vernon in an away game on April 4.

Sky Is Limit for WF Boys Tennis Team

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"I can say, unequivocally, that this has been the most competitive set of challenge matches in my entire career," expressed Kapner.

"Kevin has definitely taken a step up. Ravi has definitely taken a step up. I can already tell they are better players. Trimble is playing wonderful doubles. The competition is real tight. There have been two three-set matches of three-hour duration. That's not including Kevin and Ravi. It can only make us better. We were one match away. We lost to Bridgewater, 3-2, last year. If one of the three losses turns into a win, we are not only the section champ but, because Bridgewater went on and won, we are potentially the Group 4 state champions," said Kapner. "As far as we are concerned, the sky is the limit."

The Blue Devils will host JP Stevens, whom they beat in the section semifinals last year, on Tuesday, April 3, at 10 a.m.



David B. Corbin (2006 files) for The Westfield Leader and The Times

VERY STRONG AT DOUBLES...Blue Devil Jack Trimble, pictured, and doubles partner, sophomore Dean Thompson, advanced as far as the quarterfinals of the NJSIAA Doubles tournament last year.

Raider Baseballers Focusing On Team Speed, Consistency

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Senior Co-Captain and second baseman Adam Perez was very dangerous at the plate last season with a .356 BA, three home runs and 28 runs scored.

"Adam is a fireball! He gets everyone going, is upbeat and works really hard. He puts the ball in play, doesn't strike out much, makes pitchers work, makes things happen, makes the defense work and he has the power to hit the ball out of the ballpark," said Baylock.

baseball. You can tell he was brought up in a baseball household," said Baylock.

Senior speedster Jeremy Antoine will play right and Maroney or Binkiewicz are expected to occupy leftfield. Freshman Ricky Shevlin will play third and sophomore Nick Bonadies may see time at second.

With a wealth of speed, the Raiders could be expected to be terrors on the base paths. Perez and D'Annunzio will hit in the 1-2 spots. Dinizio and



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HEALTHY AND READY TO GO...Raider senior pitcher Greg Bayard had a great summer and should be very effective on the mound this season.

Junior James Dinizio will add experience behind the plate as well as clout at the plate. Last year, he smacked four homers and finished with a .423 BA.

"Last year he had some signs of greatness and some signs of him being a sophomore but that was the story of last year's team. He had a great summer and I am expecting great things from him. He should be one of the better catchers in the county," said Baylock.

New in the lineup is freshman Joe D'Annunzio who will use his speed and range to rove centerfield.

"Joey is very mature for his age, played varsity soccer and knows what it takes. He picks things up very quickly. Right now, he is by far our best outfielder. His family knows

Mineo will work the 3-4 spots, Maroney and Bayard may hit in the 5-6 spots and Shevlin, Binkiewicz, Antoine could interchange with the remainder of the players for the 7-8-9 spots.

"Of the nine starters, probably seven of them can steal a base at any time. In my four years, this is probably the fastest team I've ever had, which is something, I hope we can use to our advantage," said Baylock. "I think we are better than we were last year. We talked about finishing games and playing seven full innings. With the senior leadership with Mineo, Bayard and Perez, that's going to carry us through and help those young guys. Last year it was a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde thing. I think we are going to be more consistent this year."

All-Union County Boys Swimming:

The Westfield High School boys swim team dominated the *Star-Ledger* All-Union County (UC) First Team list with seven selections out of the 11 events. Blue Devil P.J. Harley was named UC Swimmer of the Year, Westfield (ranked No. 9 in the state) was named UC Team of the Year and Matt Meserole was named Freshman of the Year.

ALL-UC FIRST TEAM (LOCALS):
50 free: Matt Green (W)
100 free: Brian O'Donnell (U Cath)
500 free: Harley (W)
100 fly: Chris DeLaFuente (W)
100 back: Meserole (W)
200 free relay: Westfield
400 free relay: Westfield
200 medley relay: Westfield

ALL-UC SECOND TEAM:
50 free: Mike Miller (SPF)
500 free: Matt Miller (SPF)
100 back: Luke Baron (W)
100 breast: Phil Anton (W)
200 IM: Zach Peart (SPF)
400 free relay: SPF

ALL-UC THIRD TEAM:
200 free: Mike Oster (W)
500 free: Matt Morgan (W)
100 fly: Matt Bluffield (W)
100 back: Ryan Walker (U Cath)
100 breast: Colin Sullivan (W)
200 free relay: SPF
200 medley relay: SPF

All-Central Jersey HS Boys Bowling:

Westfield High School senior Harrison Mercado was selected to the *Star-Ledger* All-State Third Team and the All-Central Jersey First Team in boys bowling. Blue Devil junior Brett Ettinger was named to the All-Central Jersey Third Team and coach Mike Tirone was named Central Jersey Coach of the Year.

High School Wrestling All-Watchung Conf.:

FIRST TEAM (LOCAL ONLY):
112: — Tristan Bundy (SPF)
125: — Sal Gano (SPF)
130: — Colin Mackay (Westfield)
135: — Ricky Olsson (SPF)
140: — Mike Ridge (SPF)
145: — Pat Mineo (SPF)
152: — Trevor Cannon (SPF)
160: — Mark Boyd (Westfield)

SECOND TEAM:
119: — John Barnes (Westfield)
152: — Andy Castrorao (Westfield)
160: — Dave DeNichilo (SPF)
171: — Joe Bachi (SPF)
215: — Keith Baker (SPF)
Hwt: — Joe Blaes (SPF)

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