



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times
CHECKING HIS TROOPS...Blue Devil Head Coach Jim DeSarno goes over punt protection with his players during practice on August 24.

Blue Devil Footballers Look To 'Keep Momentum Going'

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Last year, the Blue Devils got some fine mileage from now senior Co-Captain/tailback Malcolm Allen, who rumbled 774 yards on 135 carries and had six TDs. His biggest day came when he rushed 204 yards and had two TDs against Shabazz. Much more can also be expected from junior speedster Ricardo Johnson, who stunned Union last year with two 90+-yard kickoff returns for TDs.

"Malcolm is better than he was last year and Ricardo is also better. They both are fast and they both are tough. The best part about it is Ricardo is a little tougher than you think and Malcolm is a little faster than you think," said DeSarno.

Senior Joe Vall-Llobera has been adjusting to the tight end position, seniors John Wilt and Adam Bergo will be the split ends and junior Chris Sheehan will be the flanker.

"It's a whole new group. We moved Joe 'V' from fullback to tight end. He's done a good job catching the ball. Chris is getting his first chance on the varsity. These guys got to step up and show us something, give us the confidence to throw the football. We like them so far. They are working real hard and we are happy with their progress," said DeSarno.

Last year's offensive line struggled a bit early in the season learning the new offensive scheme. This year, senior veterans Tom Wansaw at tackle and Co-Captain Scott Newman at guard, with the addition of senior Pat Stanley and junior Eric Moran, appear to be adjusting well.

"We have a new offensive line that needs to come together. We are not

there yet. They have an understanding. We didn't have to spend as much time teaching the system. They have an idea, when we bring a play in they remember it from last year. They understand the terminology," said DeSarno.

All four co-captains, three-year starter John Dugan (end), Ryan Scanlon (tackle), Newman and Allen (inside linebackers - ILB) will lead the defense.

"Dugan was a big play guy for us. He had some big sacks and knocked down some passes," noted DeSarno.

Vall-Llobera, Sheehan and senior Mike Wikander will be the outside LBs. Junior TJ Mroz will play ILB and seniors John DiIorio and Donnie Martinez will play end and tackle, respectively. Johnson and senior Dan Sellert will defend the corners and senior Charlie Read will be the free safety.

"The older guys have to really step up and bring the younger guys along. We weren't happy with our defense last year, particularly back defense. We are really trying to get better at that this year," said DeSarno.

Scanlon will assume the kicking duties and Vall-Llobera will do the punting.

"Joe is a really good punter and Ryan is good with the extra points but we got to get a little bit better on our kickoffs. It's important to us," commented DeSarno.

The Blue Devils travel to Linden for the season's opener tomorrow, Friday, September 7, at 7 p.m. The home opener will be against Cranford on Saturday, September 15, at 1 p.m.

SRS. ROUDEBUSH, FALLON TO LEAD

Blue Devils Look to Youth For Success in Volleyball

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

Finishing with a 25-4 record in 2006, the Westfield High School girls senior-dominated volleyball team was one of the toughest and highest regarded talented teams in the state. This season, the Blue Devils will look to youth to fill those vacated shoes.

The Blue Devils captured their first Union County championship since 1998, defeating rival Union Catholic, and captured the Watchung Conference title before falling in an evenly matched-up battle with Southern Regional in the quarterfinals of the NJSIAA Group 4 State Tournament.

According to Westfield Head Coach Beverly Torok, "We had strong hitting, strong setting and All-State player Anna Koehler as our libero. We'll miss that very much."

Add to that the departure of outside power hitter and go-to player Erin Roudebush in the front and back row, outside hitter Tara Daly and setter Molly Williams, both four-year letter winners.

"We do have a pretty strong tradition here in volleyball and we are looking forward to our new cast of players, while finding the right niche for everyone," Torok said.

This season the small Blue Devil team will return just a handful of veterans and lots of new bodies who are making quick progress. Senior Olympia Gaglioti will be one of the starting setters, while juniors Gabrielle Jakob and Jennifer Ditzell may be considered as the other setters.

Senior Caroline Fallon returns as

outside hitter and powerful senior Paige Roudebush may slide to an outside position. Senior Laryssa Borkowsky will be counted on as one of the main defensive players, along with junior Kimberly Townsend. A force to be reckoned with and an integral part of the offensive attack is junior Katherine Payne in the middle. Several freshmen, yet to be named, are seeking varsity playing time.

Defensive and passing, according to Torok, is something that the Blue Devils concentrate on heavily. "It is extremely important that, no matter what play is happening that the other team is doing to you, you have to pass the ball, so we work on it a lot. Laryssa is really taking to picking up the balls. She moves very well. She dives very well. She can read the ball and we're looking towards her to be our pass maker."

As to Westfield's chances for the county championship, the conference and the state tournament, Torok said, "It is a tough act to follow and we are going to experience some learning curves. We have a tough schedule this year, which will challenge us. We open up with one of the best teams in the state, Hunterdon Central and Mendham is also nothing to look past. Then of course we're in the American Division, which includes playing the better teams twice in our conference, including Scotch Plains. I have faith progress will continue and we've been improving daily in practice and working our attack into precision. It's going to be one game at a time; we're not looking ahead to anything."



Fred K. Lecomte for The Westfield Leader and The Times
LOOKING TO BECOME THE BEST...Westfield High School varsity volleyball players Laryssa Borkowsky, Caroline Fallon, Olympia Gaglioti, Paige Roudebush, Julia Partenope, Jennifer Ditzell, Gabrielle Jakob, Katherine Payne and Kimberly Townsend will seek to uphold the tradition of working towards the common goal of winning the county, conference and state tournament titles.



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times
GEARING UP FOR THE SEASON...Senior Dan Strauss, right, and the Blue Devils gear up for the season opener during a scrimmage with Summit.

GRALLA, O'BRIEN NAMED CAPTAINS

Junior Dominance Spears Blue Devil Soccer Boys

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

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the best of times, it was tournament time described the flow of last year's Westfield High School boys senior dominated soccer team's season. How this season will flow may be determined by the adjustment of the large junior class that led the Blue Devils to the Union County Junior Varsity title last year.

Last year, the Blue Devils won their first three games then went into a 0-5-2 slide before breaking out with an 8-0, winning streak just prior to tournament time. That winning streak was snapped by Union, 3-2, in the Union County semifinals. However, within a week, the Blue Devils roared back to defeat the Farmers, 3-2, and ended the season with a 13-7-2 record.

"We started out great. Everything was wonderful. We had a couple of injuries, lost a couple of games and went into a downspin. We rearranged the entire lineup and the system. We responded to that immediately," said Blue Devil Head Coach George Kapner. "Most of that team has graduated and this year we are junior dominated. A great bunch of kids! They have worked super hard in pre-season."

The Blue Devils scrimmaged Summit at Kehler Stadium on September 1 and were to test their skills against Pingry on September 4 and Chatham today, September 6.

"That will give us a great deal of understanding of what we need to do

as we go into the regular season," Kapner said.

Filling the positions vacated by graduating seniors Chris Mattes, Kevin Hennessey, Jon Ramalho and Nick Barba, who were selected First Team All-Union County Coaches Poll could be of special concern.

"You replace a team. You don't replace individuals. We are trying to find the best group of kids in the best places and the best system. That's the purpose of pre-season," said Kapner. "We have juniors all over the field. Most of them don't have varsity experience. They won the (JV) county tournament. I'm very pleased where these guys are."

Leading the Blue Devils into the flow of things at the forward positions are juniors Tom McManus, Mike Forghash, Mike Lessner (a goalkeeper last year) and Matt Isabella. At midfield, senior co-captain Matt Gralla and senior Dan Strauss will be working with juniors Mike Irving, Vlad Bouhouer and Andrew Flood.

The defenders are expected to be seniors Brandon Heroux, Chris Franks and Mike Rediker, and juniors Pat Tresnan, Nick Brezza, Zach Connolly and Todd Saunders. Waiting to come off the injured list are juniors Kevin Murphy and Justin Ramalho. Junior Malcolm Opoku will play striker and senior co-captain Greg O'Brien and sophomore Adam Fine will assume goalkeeping responsibilities.

The Blue Devils will also get a true test with a trip to Scotch Plains-Fanwood for the season opener on Monday, September 10.

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