



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times

ATTEMPTING TO GET SOME BACK POINTS...Blue Devil Troy Skibitsky, top, attempts to pull Raider Mike Steinfeld to his back with an underhook in the 140-lb. bout.

Blue Devil Matmen Top SPF Raiders, 50-27

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145 lbs. Raider Sean Cannon showed his true grit when he stepped up from his 145-lb. spot to face Christian Barber, ranked fourth in a state at 152 lbs. Barber performed a series of takedowns and added three two-on-one tilts to claim a 20-3 technical fall in 4:20. Barber converted a Russian setup to an arm drag for his first takedown. He also added a back-trip takedown and a smooth leg-sweep takedown.

"Christian wrestled well. I respect Cannon for coming up and going after him. A lot of people have been running away from Christian, so we respect him for going after him and giving him a match," Coach Kurz said. "We think that Christian is on that level right now when he's opening up, it's going to be hard to stay with him."

"He will go out there. He will scrap with anyone. He wrestles tough, and he will do what he can," Raider Head Coach John Scholz said of Cannon.

At 160 lbs., Blue Devil Brian Bulger scored a pair of double-leg takedowns and two escapes to defeat Luke Vuono, 6-0, then Westfield's lead increased to 32-0 when Erik Gozdieski pinned Sam McQuoid with a half nelson body press in 1:32 at 171 lbs.

Sebastian Rosen got the Raiders on the scoreboard when he caught Mike Deluisa with a lateral throw in 1:01 at 189 lbs, then Raider Luke Mineo, trailing 2-1 to Luke Gibbons at 215 lbs., turned a third-period reversal into a pin in 4:56 to make the team score, 32-12.

Raider heavyweight Anthony Tufaro tightened the score to 32-18 when he took Kyle Kania to the mat with an ankle pick takedown and pinned him in 1:21.

"I have been practicing it for a while. Pretty much this whole year! I have been trying to hit it on a lot of

kids. It wasn't working, but now I got it. I will be doing that a lot more," said Tufaro, who indicated that he practices the move on Mineo in practice, "but he never lets me get it. He knows it's coming."

"He hit it that first time, and he lost it then he went again and went right for the pin off that," Coach Scholz said. "Anthony wants to show that he is one of the top heavyweights in the county."

WHS Students Step Up

Something special happened at the Westfield/Scotch Plains wrestling match. Before the match, there was difficulty starting the tape for playing the National Anthem. As a result, a large contingent of Westfield High School students stepped up to the plate and sang the "Stars Spangled Banner" in its entirety.

It was very inspiring!
Thank You!
Dave Corbin

Blue Devil Mike Kalimtzis used a double-arm bar to pin Sid Nirmal in 32 seconds at 103 lbs. Blue Devil Nick Velez received a forfeit at 112 lbs, then Raider Mike Lettieri recorded two takedowns and an escape to grab a 5-3 decision over Anthony Aldana at 119 lbs. Blue Devil Pat Currie recorded a double-leg takedown then pinned Matt Harnett in 1:23 at 125 lbs.

"What stands out are all the points that we gave away. We gave them 27 points. That's disappointing. We are still not putting together a full team effort. We have some individuals, who are doing a very good job, but until we stop getting pinned, until we stop winning by six and not going for bonus points, until we stop making

these dumb mistakes, we are just going to be an average team. It's that simple. We need 14 kids to come do their job," Coach Kurz said.

"I liked the match-ups. I thought we were physical. There were a couple of areas we gave up bonus points. I was happy to get the 27 points. A couple of things we need to work on, but the kids are coming along," Coach Scholz said. "Coach Kurz is doing a great job with their program. The kids were ready for tonight, and I wish them the best for the rest of the year."

Devil's Den County Wrestling, Swimming Tournaments Spice Up the Action



By BRUCE JOHNSON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

It's county tournament time. This weekend it's wrestling, Saturday, at Union High School. With Brearley as the favorite, and with WHS having already lost close matches to Roselle Park and Cranford, is it possible for the Devils to finish higher than fourth?

WHS has won eight county championships. But six of them were the tourney's initial six years (1976-1981) under coach Gary Kehler, and 1990 and 1992 under Don MacDonald. Mike Kalimtzis is the lone returning champ for WHS. Other WHS county champions this decade include Ethan Powell and Lee Tomasso, both in 2003 (Tomasso was tourney MVP), and Rob Mench in 2004.

A week from Saturday is the county swim meet, scheduled for the second straight year at Rutgers (girls start at noon, boys at 4 p.m.).

Barring a bus accident, the WHS girls will win their 19th in a row, and 28th overall in the 34 years of the meet. Seniors Becky DeLaFuenta and Anna Fetter, along with freshmen Sarah Cronin and Catherine Baldwin are top guns for coach Jeff Knight.

The big event of the winter will be the boys county meet, where WHS puts its current 11-year streak on the line against a powerhouse Scotch Plains-Fanwood team that already owns a huge dual-meet win over WHS. SP-F is also the only team to outscore WHS at counties since 1957, having

ended the Devils' 42-year county win streak in 1999. WHS has won 56 of the 59 county meets; the other non-title years were 1954 (second to Plainfield) and 1956 (third behind Pingry and Plainfield).

There is a good chance that SP-F could win all 11 events, led by Dan and Mike Naplitano, Greg Baliko, Joe Dunn, Dan Pesin and Ryan Gajdzisz. It will be a WHS vs. SP-F dual meet, for the most part, although Summit has its strongest teams in years and will have a bearing on the outcome, as will Gov. Livingston.

For WHS, its hopes rest in placing its top two in each event ahead of SP-F's second, and to place their third ahead of SP-F's third, as often as possible. If the Raiders are able to win all three relays, that would be an 18-point advantage, which is huge. (Remember that SP-F swept the three relays - two with come-from-behind anchor swimmers by Dave Russ - when it beat WHS by 19½ points in 1999.)

With all the firepower both teams have up top - the six Raiders mentioned above, plus WHS's Jack Lorentzen, Nick Boyle, Larry Zhang, Brennan Haley, Matt Daniel and Tyler Lessner - the meet will likely be decided by the "other" guys. That would be Jason Schaub, Mike Pesin, Ryan Henkels, Mike Rizzo, Keith Monteiro, Jeff Peart and Nick Sorace for SP-F, and Alex Bond, Matt Trinkle, Kevin Oster, Ryan Hobson, Max Shin, Connor Moore, Tim Walsh, Luke McGrory and Dan Myers for WHS.

31 YEARS AFTER

As most of these guys approach the ripe old age of 50, let's take a look back nearly 31 years, to the night of March 1, 1980, when the WHS wrestling team which beat Morristown, 29-22, to win

the North 2 Group 4 title. That was the first year of the state sectional championships, which were changed to state Group championships in 1982.

The biggest wins were by junior Neil Palmer and senior co-captain Vin Hurley. Palmer, who came into the match with an 8-9 record, won a 4-3 decision over Pete Caruso, who was 15-2 prior to the match. And at 135, unbeaten Hurley took a 6-0 decision from Greg Scarano, a 1979 region champion.

Weight-by-weight results:
101 soph. Chris Jones lost decision
108 soph. Matt Shields won by fall
115 jr. Neil Palmer won 4-3
122 soph. Brian Deegan lost by fall
129 sr. John Pinto won by default
135 sr. Vin Hurley won 6-0
141 jr. Phil Gottlieb won 16-1
148 sr. Paul McDonough won 10-7
158 jr. Jesse Shubitz lost decision
170 jr. Dan Iannacollo won 7-0
188 jr. Lowell Higgins lost by fall
Hvy soph. Mike Giaccone lost decision

WRESTLING UPDATE

Rebounding from tough losses to Roselle Park and Cranford, the Kurzmen took a seven-match win streak into last night's bout with Brearley. The fourth win in that streak was a 50-27 trouncing of SP-F. The victory improved WHS's record vs. the Raiders to 30-21-3.

The match started at 135 and Ellis Opoku, Troy Skibitsky, Colin Barber, Christian Barber, Brian Bulger and Erik Gozdieski provided a 32-0 lead.

Following that big win, WHS (9-2) swept Saturday's tri-match against South River, Highland Park and Piscataway.

BASKETBALL UPDATE

Maybe the Devils should schedule all their games outside the Union County Conference. After beating Roselle Catholic, WHS was 5-4 overall, but 2-4 in UCC play. One of the wins was an overtime road victory at Hunterdon Central, which had knocked Columbia out of the Top 20 recently.

The girls, meanwhile, have fallen again on hard times, the latest loss coming against Oak Knoll last weekend. We hope to have more on that game in a future Den.

R&R HALL OF FAME

Nothing against any of the people who were recently voted into the next induction class of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, especially the great Darlene Love, but ... how does the J. Geils Band not get in? And Alice Cooper, Dr. John and Neil Diamond, among others, do? No problem with Tom Waits, though not sure he's a rock and roller.

Considering that the Hall's voters have previously overlooked the Moody Blues, Peter Gabriel, Warren Zevon, Rush, and Stevie Ray Vaughn, maybe there shouldn't be too much surprise. But c'mon, there was never a better live show than the J. Geils Band (check out the youtube.com video of One Last Kiss). And Peter Wolf was as good as it will ever get as a lead singer/frontman.

DEN'S TOP FIVE

This week it's country and western artists, individual or group, thanks to Faithful Reader Jeff from Pittstown, whose list is:

5. Merle Haggard
 4. Rascal Flatts
 3. David Allan Coe
 2. JJ Cale
 1. Waylon Jennings
- Also, this C&W top five from FR Keith Hertell:
5. Loretta Lynn
 4. Johnny Cash
 3. Dolly Parton
 2. Hank Williams Sr.
 1. George Jones

Country and Western is not a hot button on my SiriusXM dial, but here goes:

5. Moon Mullican
 4. Rodney Crowell
 3. Hank Williams Sr.
 2. Webb Wilder
 1. Johnny Cash
- (Next time: best Academy Award-winning movies, since 1950 - again, thanks to Faithful Reader Jeff of Pittstown.)

The Devil's Den appears in The Westfield Leader on the first and third Thursday of each month during the school year. Contact us with comments, complaints and suggestions at bj1019@aol.com. And remember, win or not, WHS4evr!



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GOING HEAD HUNTING...Raider Luke Mineo, front, reaches for Blue Devil Luke Gibbons' head in the 215-lb bout. Mineo was successful and recorded a fall in 4:56.



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