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David B. Corbin for *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times*
BLUE DEVIL VARSITY SOFTBALL TEAM... Pictured, left to right, are: front row; Elena Scarano, Julia Criscuolo, Cali Chambliss and Aditi Jain; middle row, Sarah Seitz, Chrissy Ferraro, Natalie Tupper, Gabby Panarese and Taylor Barber; top row, Lizzie Fox, Audrey Peterson, Liz Connolly, Tiffani Gregory, Shannon Schaefer and Olivia Pecora.

CHAMBLISS, CRISCUOLO TO MAKE SPARKS WITH BAT

Blue Devil Softballers Look To Live Up to Expectations

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

Expectations are high with this year's Westfield High School softball team that, although featuring five freshmen in the starting lineup and beginning with a 1-6 record, revved into high gear during the second half of last year and beat several strong teams to advance to the Union County Tournament championship game before losing to Governor Livingston.

The seventh-seeded Blue Devils knocked off second-seeded A.L. Johnson, 3-1, in the quarterfinals and third-seeded and defending champion Cranford, 4-2, in the semifinals before dropping an 8-1 decision to top-seeded Governor Livingston in the championship.

"Last year was a product of hard work paying off at the right time. We got better and better as the season went on. The county tournament was the perfect opportunity to display how far we have come. This year we definitely have expectations to live up to, and I think these girls are ready," Blue Devil Head Coach Caitlin MacDonald said.

Sophomore shortstop Cali Chambliss was a superb fielder and just as good at the plate. Last year as the leadoff hitter, she led the team with a .434 BA, rapping 26 singles, six doubles, a triple and two home runs.

"She is definitely a Division 1 athlete in the future if she wants to be. She's smooth. She makes routine plays look easy, and she makes the awesome plays look easy," Coach MacDonald said.

Sophomore Julia Criscuolo, who played centerfield last year, has moved to second base. Last year she had a keen ability to read the pitcher and had a .400 BA.

"It just so happens to be where we need her this year. She stepped up and did the job really well. Her bat is back and better than ever. We are looking for her to have a really big year too," Coach MacDonald said.

The Blue Devils have the luxury of having two fine sophomores, Elena Scarano and Shannon Schaefer, on the mound. Last year, Schaefer, a right fielder, showed poise on the mound and had an earned run average of 1.13. Elena Scarano, a third baseman, also demonstrated that she was quite capable on the mound.

"Although they are both sophomores, both have experience. Their innings were exactly equal going into the county tournament when Shannon got injured. We are going to depend on both of them. They offer unique styles. We have toyed around with Elena doing a little bit at the beginning of the game. We have also played around with going two-and-two. They are both stellar athletes and both will be in the lineup regardless of whether they are pitching or not," Coach MacDonald explained.

Sophomore Lizzie Fox and junior Tiffani Gregory will be behind the plate filling the vacancy of Emma Crossland, who had graduated.

"She [Crossland] is going to be missed because of her leadership skills. Lizzie has thrown out a couple of runners in scrammages and she has gotten a bunch of hits. Tiffany and Lizzie both offer unique styles. Their strengths and weaknesses balance out," Coach MacDonald said.

Senior Audrey Peterson will play

first base, and senior designated player Taylor Barber and junior Aditi Jain will also be vying for the third base position.

Junior Sarah Seitz will occupy leftfield, and sophomore Chrissy Ferraro will play centerfield.

"Our outfield is strong. Sarah does

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Blue Devil Matmen Shatter WHS Records

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victories or more, and three of them, seniors Mike Kalimtzis and Ellis Opoku, and junior Colin Barber surpassed the 30-win mark. The Blue Devils placed six in the top-3 in the Union County Tournament (UCT), eight qualified for the Region 3 Tournament and two qualified for the NJSIAA Tournament in Atlantic City (AC).

"When a team goes 20-6, they did something to earn those wins. They put in a good amount of work in the off-season. We had a lot of kids, who bought into what we tried to teach. If you would have told me 10 or 15 years ago that we would have a team that's going to be 20-6, I don't know if I would believe it," said Blue Devil Head Coach Glen Kurz, who added, "When you send two kids down to Atlantic City, that's an accomplishment. Up and down the lineup, you had a lot of kids, whose success can't necessarily be measured in terms of if they make it down to Atlantic City.

Kalimtzis, an NJSIAA qualifier in 2011, stuffed three District 11 titles and two UCT titles under his belt in his four-years of varsity and finished this season with a 34-5 record to bring his career total to 110. He also won at the Roselle Park Invitational (RPI) this season.

"You have a senior, who was a three-time district champ, two-time county champ and 100+ career wins, that's speaks a lot. Those things don't happen by accident. Mike was not only an outstanding wrestler, but he meant more to us than just a win. He was a great leader," Coach Kurz said.

Opoku competed most of the season at 145-lbs and placed third in the UCT and first in the RPI but dropped to 138-lbs and captured first in the district and third in the Region 3

tournament to advance to AC where he lost in the opening round to finish with a 31-10 record.

"Ellis was a pleasure to have on the team. He came to us not knowing a whole lot. He did know how to work hard, which was more than half the battle. He built himself into a very competitive wrestler. I'm hoping that he chooses some where to go where he can continue this sport," Coach Kurz said.

Barber placed third in the UCT, the District and the Region 3 tournaments at 152-lbs to qualify for the NJSIAA tournament where he lost in the first round, 6-5, to finish 33-6.

"Colin! As good as his record was and he made it down to Atlantic City, I still think that Colin is even better than that. He's got one more year to show us what he's really capable of. All of his losses were tight losses. He's very motivated to take that next step," Coach Kurz said.

Senior Nick Knepper won the RPI at 220-lbs then placed third in the district at 195-lbs to finish with a 23-11 record.

"Nick, making it to the top-six in the region with his first year in the varsity lineup, that doesn't happen by accident. He put the time in," Coach Kurz said.

Senior Kieran Cline placed second in the district at 182-lbs and finished with a 26-12 record. Senior Mike DeLouisa won the RPI at 170-lbs then dropped to 160-lbs to place third in the UCT and finished 17-10.

"Mike put in a lot of off-season time to make himself a competitive wrestler. Our sectional match at Franklin came down to him, and he got it done for us. Not too many kids have an opportunity to seal a sectional match for their team," Coach Kurz noted.

Junior heavyweight Kyle Kania won the RPI, placed third in the UCT and pulled a major upset of Raider

Anthony Tufaro to place second in the district. He finished with a 27-13 record.

"Kyle placing fourth in the region, I think that's going to leave a sour taste in his mouth and will have him working hard to come back to have that great senior year," Coach Kurz said.

Junior Brian Bulger took third in the district at 170-lbs and finished 25-9.

"Brian showed some signs of what he is capable of. He's somebody we are going to be leaning on his senior year," Coach Kurz said.

Junior Nick Rotondo placed second in the UCT at 138-lbs and finished with a 17-2 record. Junior Anthony Aldana finished 12-15 at 113-lbs. Freshman Nick Kalimtzis competed at 106/113-lbs and finished 6-5.

Sophomore Matt Barber recorded key victories against Rahway and Brearley, placed third in the district at 132-lbs and finished 20-16.

"Matt! Huge year! The opportunity came about, and he pounced on it. He came through in huge matches, pinning Disko in the Brearley match. It seemed like every time there was a tossup match, Matt came in and won, but a lot of times he pinned the kid," Coach Kurz said.

Sophomore Nick Velez finished 18-10 at 126-lbs.

"Other than the district tournament, Nick was wrestling well," Coach Kurz said.

Freshman John Fuller, who recorded a key victory against Brearley, finished 16-10.

"John, winning 16 matches! That's a great year! We knew he had the work ethic. He's mentally tough, and the technical stuff is going to come," Coach Kurz said.

Five varsity matmen will graduate, so the search to fill those vacant slots will soon begin.

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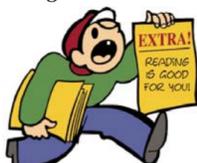
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