

Baseball Raiders Building Steppingstone for Future

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der control. Matt will give Henkels some time off. Let him get a breather, especially when we are playing back-to-back days. Matt is getting better and better at blocking balls. The one thing Matt has is a rifle for an arm," Coach Baylock said.

Senior Frank Degnan will play shortstop, and sophomore Christian Zazzali will play second base.

"Middle infield, we got both guys back, which is huge. It's a bonus. Neither of the guys pitch, so we don't have to worry about taking them out of their position. They work well together," Coach Baylock said.

When not on the mound, Raszka and Ciccarino will be at third base. Alleman and senior Anthony Krajcsik will be at first base.

The very young outfield will consist of D'Angelo in right, Marino and Korduba in center, and Maxwell in left.

"We have four outfielders in the mix with D'Angelo being the oldest. They are young, but they are good. Sometimes when you are young, you don't even think about the situation, and

they just go out and play. That's something we stress about in practice. 'Don't worry where you are. Just go out there and play.' It's baseball," Coach Baylock said. "As the season goes on, hopefully they will start gaining more and more experience."

The Raiders do expect some sparks to be flying off their metal bats. The designated hitter will be senior Brett Kovacs. Zazzali will lead off, followed by Degnan and D'Angelo. Henkels will bat cleanup with Krajcsik next, followed by Maxwell, Alleman and Razska. Marino and Korduba may bat in the nine spot.

"We are hitting the ball well. We are getting better every day. That's our goal. If we keep doing that, we will have the confidence to be in the mix when it comes to county tournament, state tournament time," Coach Baylock said.

The Raiders will host Middlesex this Saturday, March 31, at 11 a.m. then they will have a showdown with Westfield on Tuesday, April 3, and Cranford on Thursday, April 5, both at 4 p.m.



Devil's Den Putting History Into Perspective

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

Go around the state and ask sports-oriented people, "What's the first sport you think of when you think of Westfield High School?" and most will say swimming, tennis, soccer, cross-country and track. A lot of folks would say football or wrestling, with occasional periods of being pretty good in basketball. And golf, softball, lacrosse, bowling, field hockey and ice hockey might get mentioned, too.

(The state's all-time winningest Group 4 athletic program, by a wide margin, should be really good in a lot of things.)

But when you come right down to it, Westfield has been a baseball town, and likely always will be a baseball town. Going back to the late 19th century days of Drake's Park on the corners of Boulevard, Park and Summit, and Recreation Park (now Kehler Stadium), to those October Saturdays in 1903 when future Hall of Famers Christy Mathewson and Eddie Plank pitched against the local semipro team, and the days of the semipro Westfield A.A., the Westfield Cubs, Hawks and Merchants, the black Aces, Clippers and Bombers, and the Post 3 American Legion teams contending for championships while playing at Tamaques 2.

So it's pretty cool when a town steeped in that much baseball history

and tradition can still manage to have something historic happen. And this Saturday could be that day. That's when Bob Brewster Jr.'s 30th season as the varsity baseball coach at WHS kicks off at 11 a.m. with a home game at Bob Brewster Sr. Memorial Field against Jersey City Marist.

Brewster ('68) was an all-county catcher at WHS and played on county champion teams in 1966 and '68. He also played for both the Post 3 and Merchants teams of the late '60s. During his 29 years as WHS's coach his teams have accumulated 499 victories; they've had 26 winning seasons and just three sub-.500 marks; and don't forget the nine 20-win (or better) seasons, eight county and two sectional titles.

Reaching 500 victories will put Brew with some elite company. According to N.J. high school baseball guru Bob Behre, only 20 coaches in state history have reached 500 victories, West New York Memorial's still-active Tony Ferrainolo leading the way with 754. The most recent to reach the magic mark was North Hunterdon's since-retired Parker Snare, Brewster's college football backfield mate at Montclair State some 40 years ago. The Union County leaders, both retired, are Elizabeth's Ray Korn (651) and Union's Gordon LeMattey (641).

Perspective: To achieve 500 victories, a baseball coach would need to average 20 wins for 25 seasons.

More perspective: In the 29 seasons since Brewster became the varsity coach, his teams have a 499-260-3 record. In the 50 years before Brewster, 10 coaches combined for a 488-423-9 record.

Those coaches were: Bob Duncan (1933, 3-10), Blair Rogers (1934-35, 7-14), Brose Thompson (1936-39, 16-33), Joe Freeman (1940-45, 42-43), Noel Taylor (1946-58, 85-95-4), John Lay (1959-62, 41-36-3), Norm Koury (1963-67, 90-29), Dick Zimmer (1968-70, 43-25-2), Dave Cilo (1971-74, 54-38), Pete Lima (1975-82, 107-100).

It's not easy anymore to find coaches willing to give 25 seasons of their life to coaching, although with Brewster, George Kapner, Jack Martin, Thom Hornish and Mike Tirone on staff, it seems WHS is a good place for coaching longevity.

The opening schedule is anything but easy. After Marist, there's SP-F on Tuesday, Union on Thursday, North Hunterdon a week from Saturday, then Bridgewater-Raritan on Monday and Cranford the next day. Still, it shouldn't take long for the Brew Crew to get that 500th victory celebration out of the way. Graduation did take 14 seniors, including several studs, but having senior veterans James O'Rourke (cf), Jon Gribbin (3b), Mike Mondon (p), Brett Ryan (ss), Matt Varakian (lf) and Mike Coletta (1b) back is a huge plus.

For the rest of the lineup, Brewster can look to guys from last year's jayvee (13-6, county finalist), freshman (18-2) and Post 3 American Legion (9-5) teams. Sophomores Tyler Bowman

(2b) and Mike Ionta (c) and juniors Quinn Dursee (rf), Liam Devin (rf-dh) and Jake Greenberg (dh) figure to round out the starters; senior Taylor Friss will handle third when Gribbin pitches or moves to short when Ryan is called to the mound. Junior Kevin Galasso joins Mondon, Ryan and Dursee among the starters, with a deep bullpen including seniors O'Rourke, Gribbin, Rich Malacrea, Tom Malley, Even Friedman, Alex Graf and Nate Mitchell, plus junior Eric Demers.

Through the first four scrimmages, the Blue Devils outscored their four victims by a 49-7 margin.

Brewster's 499 wins are the most for any WHS coach in a single sport. Ironically, the only other WHS coaches with over 400 wins in one sport are both active. Kapner has 462 in boys tennis and Tirone had 407 bowling victories going into this season.

Kapner passed the 1,000-victory mark for his career last fall, and has 1,007 career W's during a career that's seen him coach boys and girls soccer, girls basketball, boys swimming and boys tennis.

BASKETBALL UPDATE

One of my only regrets of the winter was not getting to see the girls hoops team. It sure sounds like coach Joe Marino has the makings of another really, really good team, maybe even as soon as next winter. Carolyn Maguire will be missed, as will the other seniors. But having a healthy Alexis Kardias back, with Carly Friedman and this year's heralded freshmen - Lily Scott (who apparently wears my college No. 20), Jackie Knapp and Jamie Miller - figures to make Marino's club one of the most exciting at WHS in 2012-13.

Daryl Palmieri's first year with the boys finished with an 8-17 record, but there were a bunch of games that could've gone the other way. Don't be too surprised if next winter there's a reversal of that record. "Despite our record, we were a very dangerous team," Palmieri said.

Seniors Ozan Yucetepe (311 points), Nate Mitchell and Aswad Turner all had big years. Meanwhile, underclassmen like Keegan Hess (67 assists, 43 3-pointers), Scott Toresco, Dylan Elliott, Mike Andronis, David Kane, Henry Smith, Danny Mitchell and Sean Elliott give Palmieri nine very solid returnees next winter. "There were times we had three sophomores and two freshmen on the court," Palmieri said. "We return a good nucleus and are already looking forward to next year."

WRESTLING UPDATE

An odd season saw what looked like a senior-dominated team lose three returning starters to season-long injuries, and ended up with an underclass-dominated team setting a school record with 20 victories and notching a nice win over a Franklin team in the state team tournament. (That same Franklin team had a mid-season win over Group 4 champion Phillipsburg.) Graduation losses will be steep, with 30-plus-win guys Mike Kalimtzis (110 career) and Ellis

Opoku moving on, along with Mike DeLouisa, Kieran Cline, Nick Knepner and Ozan Oral, who combined to go 81-48 and provide several clutch victories. (Also graduating are veterans Troy Skibitsky, Keith Peterson and Luke Gibbons, who all missed the entire season with injuries.)

But Glen Kurz's club appears to have plenty of firepower coming back - Colin Barber (33-6), Kyle Kania (27-13), Brian Bulger (25-9), Matt Barber (20-16), Nick Velez (18-10), Nick Rotondo (17-2), Johnny Fuller (16-10), Anthony Aldana (12-15), Nick Kalimtzis (6-5) and Brian Farrell (5-10).

IN PASSING

Back in the mid-1960s, two (three?) of the best words of those sunny summer morning of late teen (pre-real world) years was hearing Jock Heatley, the caddy master at Echo Lake, say "C'mon Broooooce" and giving me a couple of nice big, healthy golf bags to tote. One day there was a big-time foursome going out that included the club pro at the time (it might've been Bob Moser), his assistant, the club champion and New York Giants running back Alex (Big Red) Webster. All the big loopers wanted in on it, guys like Don the Fireman, Hogan, Jimmy Bonzo, and all the rest of Echo's loveable loopers. Can't recall who got the other bags, but one of the two Jock gave me was Webster's.

The memories of that loops are that Webster regularly out-drove and over-putted the other three, and the hole that still stands out 4 1/2 decades later was No. 4. It's a 490-yard par-5 with a dogleg left and the players drive from up on a hill.

The good players can maybe reach over the initial hill with a 300-yard poke. Webster takes his driver and mashes the ball so far that it looked like it might reach Springfield Ave. If he'd sliced it, the ball might've landed in the pool at Nomahegan. But he played it perfectly. The other three players, knowing the hole, had eased up with their drives to avoid the sand trap on the right and place them strategically for an easy long iron to the green; Webster used a freakin' sand wedge for his second shot! And then proceeded to three-putt and lose the hole.

But it wasn't the wedge or the putts that I still remember, or the times he was two or three clubs "under" what the pros used, it was that drive on No. 4. I've talked about it dozens of times when recalling those beloved caddy-ing days of yore and I'm still in awe of it. So it was very sad to see in a recent Sports Illustrated the Alex Webster had passed away on March 3 at age 80.

Melvin Michaels, a former WHS assistant principal, passed away on Feb. 17 at age 92. Michaels coached cross-country at WHS from 1946-51; his 1946 team included county and state champion Ed Hoos, while his 1948 team - featuring junior star (and future Hall of Fame coach) Walt Clarkson - won the first of the team's 30 Union County championships. Michaels coached spring track from 1947-53.

The Devil's Den appears in *The Westfield Leader* on the first and third Thursday (and the fifth, if there is one) during the school year. Contact us with comments, complaints and suggestions at bj1019@aol.com. And remember, win or not, Whs4evr!

Blue Devil Track Boys Focus On Enhancing Performance

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great job, as [Coach] Billy Mellott does with the jumpers, [Coach] Sam Haimann does with the throws, and this year [Coach] Chris Tafelski is working with the sprinters. We broke things down a little bit differently, so we can have more fulltime coaching in each of the areas," Coach Martin said.

One area that is still in the developmental stages is the shot put with several underclassmen vying for the strongest shove, but senior Joe Rinaldi has looked strong in the javelin and the discus. Freshman Sean Brennan has also shown promise in those events.

"The weight events, Joe [Rinaldi] had a good junior year. He switched from being a pole vaulter to javelin. We have a lot of enthusiastic young kids. Sean Brennan, who is a freshman, has a good upside," Coach Martin said.

The Blue Devils always seem to excel at the mid-distance and dis-

tance events (800, 1,600 and 3,200). Comprised entirely of members of last fall's cross-country team that won its third straight Union County title, second straight North Jersey, Section 2, Group 4 title, third straight Group 5 title and placed third in the Meet of Champions, the Blue Devils should be solid as a rock.

Seniors John Kirma (co-captain) and Dave Carville, junior Dan Lizzi and sophomore Matt Luppino will head up groups in the 800 and 1,600. Senior Jack Leahy will compete in the 3,200 as well as the 1,600.

"Our distance kids are pretty solid. We hope they have a good season as they did in cross-country. If we stay healthy and keep everybody motivated, we will have a good solid season," Coach Martin said.

The Blue Devils will open their season at the Kearny Relays on Saturday, March 31.

Probitas Verus Honos

SPF Boosters to Hold Dinner, 50-50 Raffle

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Blue Raider Athletic Boosters will hold its annual - and very popular - 50-50 raffle and dinner on Friday, April 27, at the Scotch Hills Country Club in Scotch Plains. The event starts at 6:30 p.m.

Proceeds from the event benefit the Booster Club, which provides scholarships, awards and athletic items to Scotch Plains-Fanwood High. For tickets, which are \$100, and more info, contact Ava McNamara at (908) 232-2967 or Keith and Karen Benovengo at 908-232-2354.

WESTFIELD PAL FOOTBALL CHEERLEADING TRYOUTS

Calling all girls entering 5th - 8th grade in Fall 2012!!
Cheer at the Sunday home football games this Fall at Kehler Stadium!



Tryouts for open spots: Tuesday, April 10th 7pm at Edison cafeteria

Practices @ Surgent's Wednesdays 7:30-9 (May 2-June 20)
Senior Squad Cheer Camp 6/25-6/28 ~3-7pm @ Surgents (7th/8th Grade)
Junior Squad Cheer Camp 7/16-7/20 ~3-7pm @ Surgents (5th/6th Grade)

Contact Michelle DiFilippo in advance @ mdifi@aol.com or 789-1282 for registration form with detailed information and applicable fees.



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