



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times
EMBRACING THE VICTORY...Raider senior center back Alyssa Riporti and Head Coach Kevin Ewing give each other a hug after winning the Union County Tournament championship at Kean University.

Raiders Surprised Themselves, Win UCT Crown

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Cunningham, a four-year varsity player, handled most of the free kicks and finished with nine goals and nine assists.

"We needed her leadership to control the midfield. She had a number of big goals for us. She's a good solid, tough player," Coach Ewing said.

Harper, also an effective player on the basketball team, used her aggressiveness and powerful shot to net seven goals and add nine assists.

"She's a tremendous athlete. She just got more confident as an outside mid this year. You don't see too many outside midfielders, who are that athletic and good enough to play up front for us. She's fast and has a dangerous shot," Coach Ewing said.

The Raiders also fielded the "Treachorous Three", senior forward Kelly Yeager, and juniors Tori Balianico (forward) and Jodi Cornwell (midfielder), who terrorized opposing defenders. Balianico, also a star on the track team, with an assist from Yeager, scored the winning goal in the UCT game against Cranford. Balianico led the team with 19 goals, while contributing eight assists. The trio also received AS and UC recognition.

"Tori had a decent amount of playing time for us last year, but she got to step up this year. She got a lot of

minutes and scored a lot of goals for us. She's tough to cover. She's one of the best forwards in the state and probably the best in Union County. Obviously her speed was a huge advantage," Coach Ewing said.

Cornwell added to that three-pronged attack and finished with four goals and led the team with 12 assists.

"The last two years, she played defense for us. We moved her up to midfield to use her speed, and she was more than outstanding. They were all fast together, and they learned how to play well together as the season went along," Coach Ewing said.

Yeager, who played in the back last year, stepped forward and notched 13 goals and four assists.

"Kelly didn't get a lot of playing time last year. We moved her up front because she's so aggressive. She scored a bunch of goals for us. She just keeps going. She comes from a football family and has that mentality when she steps on the field," Coach Ewing said.

The Raiders not only had a strong group of multi-sport athletes in the forward and midfield positions and with Riporti, but freshman Christina Rodgers has proven her value as a defender and received UC recognition.

"We encouraged the girls to get involved in a lot of different sports because of the overall athleticism, competitiveness and endurance. Christina Rodgers is probably the best freshman in Union County. She's such a good athlete. She played in the back but also could play the mid[fiel]d," Coach Ewing said.

In addition to Rodgers, the Raiders also fielded a relatively new defensive squad with junior Evelyn Logie along with senior Angela Rastelli and freshman Andrea Leitner, who shared the goalkeeping position.

"We had some new kids back there. Angela Rastelli and Andrea Leitner split time all year. They were both new and inexperienced. There was a lot of pressure on them and they did a great job. Evelyn played almost every minute," Coach Ewing said.

Next year, the Raiders may be eyeing another county title even as early as preseason.

"We have seven starters returning. We have a number of juniors coming back. [center midfielder] Sarah Dilorio played a lot of minutes. With Christina Rodgers and Evelyn in the back and Paige Heiden. Hopefully, the kids keep working to improve so we can have a successful season next year," Coach Ewing said.

Lady Blue Devils Fought Injuries, Finish 12-5-2

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before sectional tournament time. Co-captain Karli Sottung, who will be playing for the U.S. Naval Academy next year, suffered a high ankle sprain in the final regular-season game, and was unable to play in the sectional tournament, as was junior starting goalkeeper Kiera Loftus (high ankle sprain). Junior Judy McDonald (MCL sprain) started the first 15

of the girls who were injured did not return for the remainder of the season. I think if we were healthy, this team would have been a dangerous team in the county and state tournaments. Girl for girl this is probably one of the more skilled teams we have had in the last few years, but when the 'BIG' games arise skill is important, but you need the experi-

ence and leadership that only a seasoned veteran team can bring, and unfortunately that is where we ran into trouble. However, I am proud of the product we put onto the field each and every game. The girls on

the team, no matter the age, learned to adapt to the injuries and played a good brand of soccer," Coach Schmidt said. Although she spent a large portion of this season, playing in the defensive center due to all the team injuries, Sottung, usually a center midfielder, still managed to score six goals.



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times
CHARGING RAPIDLY DOWNFIELD...Blue Devil forward Taylor Morgan, No. 9, rips the ball downfield as Raider Kathryn Cunningham, No. 10, pursues. See more photos at www.goleader.com/BallyhooSports.

games; missed the Union County Tournament game against Cranford and everything afterwards, as did sophomore Sarah Broughton.

"Unfortunately the injuries we incurred weren't small injuries. Most

According to Coach Schmidt, his team's best game was the first game against Governor Livingston. "This game was under the lights and at the time GL was undefeated. The girls played some of their best soccer that night. It was exciting," he said.

Fortunately, despite having so many seniors sidelined with injuries, a host of talented underclassmen took up the slack as best as they could.

Freshman Hannah Liddy led the team with 10 goals and eight assists. Freshman forward Taylor Morgan netted five goals and added three assists. Junior Lil Scott, who had five assists, received added experience playing the center back position in addition to her attacking position.

"We will be returning 19 players next year, including all three goalkeepers. The coaches and I are already looking forward to the beginning of the 2014 season," Coach Schmidt said.

Blue Devil Boys Place 4th At Cross-Country MOC

The Westfield High School boys cross-country team placed fourth with a total of 191 at the Meet of Champions in Holmdel on November 23 then finished in 11th place with a total of 360 at the Nike Northeast Regional in Wappingers Falls, N.Y. on November 30. The Lady Blue Devils' varsity placed 23rd in a field of 35 teams and the JV squad finished 20 in a field of 26 teams at the Regional.

At Holmdel, the Blue Devil boys averaged 16:37 and five of the seven runners turned in personal-best (PB) performances on the course. Matt Luppino finished 12th with a PB 15:51. Matt Russo crossed 49th with a PB 16:30 and Phil Edwards finished 53 with a PB 16:32. Ryan Siegel placed 93rd with a PB 17:03 and Andrew Stockwell finished 103rd at 17:11. Dalton Herzog had a PB 17:30 to finish 121st and Mike Esler finished 140th at 17:52.

At Wappingers Falls, Luppino came in 32nd at 16:30. Russo was 45th at 16:48 (PB) and Edwards was 55th at 16:58 (PB). Siegel crossed 135th at 17:49, Stockwell finished 143rd at 17:52, Herzog took 149th at 17:56 and Esler finished 167th at 18:08.

For the varsity girls, Gabby Stravach finished 66th at 20:05, followed by Erica Fischer, who was 109th at 20:37. Meghan O'Dwyer took 125th at 20:46 and Caroline Stocking finished 159th at 21:14. Anna Tanji finished 172nd at 21:27 and Gabrielle Brennan finished 176th at 21:34.

Charlie O'Brien led the Blue Devil JV squad, finishing 63rd at 21:54. Kathleen McCutcheon crossed 118th at 22:43, Noelle Blackford crossed 132nd at 23:01 and Rachel Hayden finished 192nd at 24:22. Jackie Napolitano crossed 195th at 24:28 and Rita Murphy crossed 234th at 25:45.

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