



David B. Corbin (April 2015 files) for The Westfield Leader and The Times  
**VERY EFFECTIVE OFFENSIVELY...Raider senior Danielle Scheu, No. 14, finished with a .419 batting average, which included one home run and 13 RBI. Scheu was also effective on the mound.**

**LOCKHART LEADS TEAM IN OFFENSIVE CATEGORIES**

# Raiders Made Huge Strides In Softball, Finished 12-12

By ALEX LOWE  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times*

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School softball team finished 12-12 on the season. While the overall record may not wow anyone there are plenty of reasons to believe the program is looking at better days ahead in the not too distant future. The Raiders already feature one of the finest offensive players in the state and with a very young core of players gaining valuable experience this season, things should only get better.

The Raiders finished 9-5 against the competition in the UCC-Mountain Division, which was good enough for second place behind Rahway (10-2). The Raiders advanced to the second round of the Union County Tournament before dropping a 3-1 decision to Cranford, the eventual county runner-up. They also qualified for the state playoffs but were defeated by Bridgewater, 9-0, in the first round of the North Jersey, Section 2, Group 4 tournament.

"We were a very young team this year," said Head Coach Jess Hulnik. "We started as many as seven freshmen and sophomores. Despite being young, I feel like the team performed very well this season. I was most proud of the adjustments the girls made during the season and how hard they worked."

It certainly helps when one of your youngsters is a player like sophomore third baseman Kyra Lockhart. Already recognized for her talent, Lockhart is set to attend Alabama when she graduates down the road.

Despite being walked a team leading 23 times, Lockhart still led the team in most offensive categories. Lockhart finished with an impressive .641 batting average, had 41 hits, blasted five of the Raiders' seven home runs for the season and led the team with 41 RBI. The next most prolific run producer was freshman Jess O'Neil with 17 RBI.

Lockhart's accomplishments are made all the more impressive when you consider that she only had 63 at

bats for the season. This occurred as more and more teams began pitching around or intentionally walking Lockhart. Consider also that Lockhart remained patient at the plate, striking out only twice on the season, while amassing a whopping 1190 slugging percentage.

"Kyra led the team in several offensive categories," said Hulnik. "Hits, RBIs, OBP, slugging and bases on balls. When teams walked her with the bases loaded, not only is that a sign of respect, it is a testament to her ability to be a game changer."

The Raiders' offense was not all about Lockhart though. When the Raider bats got hot, they could really roast the opposing pitchers. The Raiders scored 10 or more runs in a game nine times this season, including 14 against Union, 20 against Union Catholic, 18 against St. Elizabeth and 22 against Roselle Catholic.

Yet too often the Raider offense followed these run scoring outbursts with disappointing performances in their next game. After producing 18 runs against St. Elizabeth, they managed just four in a loss to Summit. They followed a 14-run performance in a win against Union Catholic with just one run in a loss to Westfield. After their 22 run explosion against Roselle Catholic they scored just 1 in their county loss to Cranford.

"We just need another year of experience to gain a little more consistency," said Hulnik.

The Raiders got strong performances from several seniors this year. Pitcher/Outfielder Danielle Scheu batted .419

**Millburn Millers Win Group 4 Baseball Title**

The No. 14 26-6 Millburn High School baseball team defeated No. 19 Williamstown, 11-3, for the Group 4 Championship on June 6. Ryan Adelman, Max Birner, Nick Minter, Rich Schiekofer and John Serruto each had two hits for the Millers.

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with one home run and 13 RBI. She will be attending TCNJ. First Baseman Erica Waltsak batted .256 with 13 RBI. Waltsak is headed for Seton Hall. Valuable reserve players Danielle Hurtado (Pitt) and Rachel Butler (Delaware) also graduate this year.

Sophomore Julia DiGiacomo batted .333 with one home run and seven RBI. Another sophomore, Jess Waltsak, anchored the pitching staff. Waltsak logged 97 and 1/3 innings in the circle, while recording 89 strikeouts against 70 walks. She gave up 64 earned runs (4.6 ERA) and allowed opposing batters a .248 batting average.

With a host of underclassmen set to return next year, including O'Neill (.291 BA, 17 RBI), Angie DiGiacomo (10 RBI), Eryka Robinson (.297 BA, .914 fielding pct.) it is easy to see why the Raiders figure to be on an upward trajectory.

"I'm excited about next year," said Hulnik. "We were young this year but still had our best record in the conference since it changed six years ago. There is a lot of potential in the group we have coming back."

**GL Highlanders Seize Group 2 Baseball Title**

The Governor Livingston High School baseball team picked the right time to present Head Coach Chris Roof with his 300th career victory with a 10-4 thumping of 22-7 Bernards to claim the Group 2 Championship at Toms River South on June 6. Mike Falk, who finished with four RBI, provided most of the damage with a two-run double in the first inning and a solo homer in the third.

Dan Belfer pitched 5 and a third innings for the 28-6 Highlanders, striking out seven, walking two and hitting a batter, before being relieved by Nick Cocchia. Ryan Zucker rapped an RBI double, while John Tedesco and Belfer each added an RBI single in the four-run fourth inning. It was GL's third State Group title.

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**FERRETTI, PALAZZOLA LED COUGARS AT THE PLATE**

# Cougars Played in UCT Final, Finish Softball Season 10-8-1

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

Little may have been expected at the beginning of the season from this year's Cranford High School softball team but the Lady Cougars showed consistent improvement, stunned a few highly thought of teams and advanced to the Union County Tournament (UCT) championship game where they dropped a one-run, 4-3 decision to the Governor Livingston Highlanders.

The Lady Cougars, who dropped an 8-7 decision to the Westfield Blue Devils early in the season, came back to defeat the Blue Devils, 4-3, in the quarterfinal round of the UCT. They also defeated a strong Elizabeth squad, 9-5, in Cranford and stunned the AL Johnson Crusaders, considered the No. 1 team in Union County at the time. The Cougars finished with a 10-8-1 record.

"I am very proud of the hard work the girls put in this season. From day one, these girls bonded and their camaraderie allowed them to take their play to the next level. The girls improved on both their physical and mental aspects of the game," Cougar first year Head Coach Heather Bormann said.

Junior catcher Morgan Ferretti became the most dangerous Cougar at the plate and finished with a .382 batting average (BA), with 26 hits, including seven doubles and a triple. She also led the team with 14 RBI and 20 runs scored. Once she began flying around the bases, she had a "no-stopping" attitude. Behind the plate, she was as tough as nails and weathered several scrapes and bruises.

"Morgan Ferretti did an outstanding job both at and behind the plate for Cranford softball, using her captain skills to lead by example," commented Coach Bormann.

Junior Julia Palozzola turned in a .315 BA with 17 hits, including four doubles and a triple, scored 13 times and had nine RBI. She also drew

eight walks. Junior Jen Shore rapped 11 hits, including a pair of doubles, scored 12 runs and added eight RBI. She also walked five times and was hit by pitches three times. Sophomore Jill Skalski had 14 hits with a double for a .264 BA, scored 14 runs and had eight RBI. She walked six times and was hit twice.

Junior Candice Durant poked 11 hits, including two doubles, had eight RBI and scored four runs. Senior

The Cougars' pitching also improved very well as the season progressed and presented a fine 1-2 punch on the mound. Senior starter Theresa Wetherell, in 86.2 innings, finished with a 7-7 record and a 3.15 ERA. She recorded 82 strikeouts and walked 47. Freshman Brenna Dolan would relieve in the later innings and finished with a 3-1 record and a 1.50 ERA in 37.1 innings. She fanned 25 batters and walked 12.



David B. Corbin (April 2015 files) for The Westfield Leader and The Times  
**TOUGH AS NAILS...Cougar junior catcher Morgan Ferretti was tough as nails behind the plate and had the scrapes and bruises to prove it.**

Vienna Stivala slashed 15 hits, including two doubles, for a .288 BA, scored eight runs and had six RBI. Senior Bonnie Caldwell went 7-for-15 (.467 BA) with three doubles and a triple, while adding eight RBI and two runs scored. Junior Rebecca Scott had 10 hits for a .286 BA, scored eight times and had three RBI.

Sophomore Tessa Ferentinos had nine hits, scored nine runs, stole three bases and had five RBI. Freshman Taylor Reitzel had a BA of .258 with 14 hits, including a pair of doubles, scored eight runs and had seven RBI. Freshman Alex Pachkowski finished with a single, two RBI and a run scored.

"Theresa did an outstanding job on the mound and will be missed in our season to come. Brenna Dolan did a great job on the mound closing several games and I look forward to having her around for the next three years," Coach Bormann said.

With just one senior in the starting batting order and Wetherell, in addition to one reserve player graduating, next year the Lady Cougars will be fielding plenty of experienced players.

"I am looking forward to have ten varsity players returning next season and look to continue to be contenders in both the county and state tournaments," Coach Bormann said.

## Sr. Strength Helped Raiders Tally 21-8 Record

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40 runs scored and 14 stolen bases, and added 11 doubles and nine RBI.

"His 53 hits are a record for us as far back as we have records. He embraced his move to the leadoff spot, and no one could have been better. He's also the hardest-working baseball player I've been around," Coach Higgins said.

Pitching ace Chris Gibbons finished with a 6-3 record with a 2.29 ERA in his 55 innings on the mound. He struck out 43 and walked 21. Offensively, Gibbons, who will play at NJIT, hit .384 with 27 runs scored, 18 RBI, nine stolen bases, seven doubles, two triples and two home runs.

"Chris was an ace in every sense. He beat every team in our tough division once. He's an overall exciting player to watch on the mound, in center, at the plate, and on the bases," Coach Higgins pointed out.

Kevin Maxwell, who will play football at Middlebury, Vt., exercised the "Big Bang" theory at the plate, especially near the end of the season. With his .405 BA, Maxwell banged 13 doubles and three home runs, led the team with 28 RBI, and added 27 runs and 11 stolen bases, while striking

out only three times.

"Kevin Maxwell finished as hot as anyone around. Kevin personifies hustle and intensity in the way he plays," Coach Higgins said.

Matt Marino, who will play at the University of Scranton, was another senior with clout, rapping eight doubles and three home runs and finishing with a .367 BA, 25 RBI and 21 runs scored.

"Matt worked tirelessly with Coach JR Luccarelli on some mechanical improvements, and with my father [Joe Higgins, Sr.] on his approach in his at-bats. He was consistently one of the most dangerous hitters in the county," Coach Higgins said.

JT Beirne proved to be very solid behind the plate with his catlike reflexes and toughness. Beirne also had a .295 BA with two doubles, nine runs scored and eight RBI.

"JT returned from a wrestling injury nine games in to resume his gritty leadership behind the plate. A catcher teammate of mine once told me that as a catcher, you want people to know you're back there. JT constantly receives praise from opposing coaches and even umpires in the way he blocks, handles pitchers, and ap-

proaches the game," Coach Higgins noted.

Pitcher Christian Isolda finished with a 5-1 record and a 1.71 ERA in his 28.67 innings and recorded 28 strikeouts, while walking seven and hitting three. At the plate, he had a .282 BA with four doubles, 15 runs scored, six RBI and six stolen bases.

"Christian battled an arm injury all year, but was able to rack up some pretty impressive numbers on the mound and was a productive hitter and solid leftfielder. Christian is a model kid who we'll miss dearly," Coach Higgins emphasized.

Third baseman Alex Eckert had a .306 BA with two doubles, 10 RBI and eight runs scored. Pitcher Brendan Kelly, in 53.67 innings, finished 4-1 with a 2.35 ERA, while striking out 24, walking seven and hitting nine.

"Brendan improved tremendously to become a workhorse. He logged 53 innings and led us in appearances. He beat Bridgewater-Raritan, who was ninth in the state at the time. He's an unflappable competitor with 'wiffleball' stuff," Coach Higgins said.

Pitcher Garrett Zito, who was occasionally used as a pinch runner, recorded a 1-1 record with a 3.84 ERA. The other seniors, Connor Danik, Jeremy Scialdoni and Tyler Geissel, also saw some time on the field.

The Raiders also made good use of some underclassmen. On the mound, Jack Defouw recorded a 5-2 record and a 3.15 ERA in 40 innings and struck out 18, while walking 10 and hitting six. Tyler O'Brien had a .264 BA with three doubles, 10 RBI and five runs scored.

"We lose a lot, but we also return some key pieces. Jack Defouw was a strong starter, who will return to anchor our pitching staff. We'll also look to Vin Conti and Timmy Geissel, who showed their promise. George Leichterling returns to play centerfield and bat in the middle of the lineup. Tyler O'Brien has seen a great deal of action over the last two years, and will return to be a leader in his senior year at third base and maybe even a little second," Coach Higgins said.

Two sophomores, Peter Yarem and Peter Warren, made a big impression. Yarem had 20 hits with a .313 BA, 18 RBI and 13 runs scored. Warren batted .321 with two doubles, a triple, 11 runs scored and eight RBI. Warren is expected to play shortstop next year and Yarem will be behind the plate.

"These two guys have tremendous potential. They jumped in as sophomores and were not only productive, but they showed they belong playing with a veteran team against tough competition. These two guys are real baseball kids," said Coach Higgins. "We can't wait to see what they can do over the next two years."

## Cougars Clinched Lax Crown

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nate possession time, along with pace and flow of a game."

Luke and Mark received First Team All-Conference and First-Team All-Group 2 recognition and both were selected to play in the Gill Gibbs New Jersey All-Stars Senior Showcase game. Mark's play also landed him on the overall All State/All-America Team, the first ever Cranford player elected to such an honor.

"Mark's offensive production was record-breaking for us. He not only ranked among the leaders of the state in scoring all season, [sits 4th overall], but he also was the state's leading scoring midfielder by a wide margin, which really shows his ability to distribute the ball in traffic," Coach Reinoso noted.

Junior attack man Richie Hurley had a breakout season with 57 goals, 17 assists and 33 ground balls. Hurley received All-Conference Second-Team honors.

According to Coach Reinoso, "[He was] very cunning with and without the ball. He was able to locate weaknesses in the opposition's defense and exploit them down low around the goal mouth. Possessing excellent hands, he was lethal in transition situations."

Sophomore midfielder Connor Fitch rapped in 42 goals, added 10 assists and scooped 39 ground balls. He was selected to the Second Team

All-Conference. Attacker Mark Pawlick notched 29 goals, 11 assists and 22 ground balls. Attacker Nick Colucci finished with 18 goals, 23 assists and 17 ground balls. Midfielder Mike Palumbo finished with six goals, five assists and 19 ground balls.

Coordinating very well with the offense that scored 266 goals as compared to 192 goals last year, the Cougar defense, including senior goalkeeper Ryan Shupp, permitted only 160 goals (Statistically one of the best in the state). Defender Dan Fay, a four-year starter, also had 25 ground balls and junior Mike Kleiman had 22.

"Our defense was one of the stingiest around. Fay was our most versatile defensive player, playing both long stick midfield, and close defense. He was usually matched up with the oppositions' best offensive players, and did a great job against them," Coach Reinoso said.

Fay was voted to the All-Conference First-Team, All-State Group 2 Second-Team and was also selected to the Gill Gibbs New Jersey All-Stars Senior Showcase game. Kleiman was named Third Team All-Conference.

This season Shupp recorded 204 saves and was voted to First-Team All-Conference honors as well as Third-Team/Honorable Mention for All-State Group 2.

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