

**RETURN SCORERS ROMAN, GANLEY, POWER, GESSLIN**

# Cougar Lady Laxers Return Plenty of Speed With Talent

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

The 2018 Cranford High School girls lacrosse team returns hoping to improve on a 6-11 record posted in 2017 that included a trip to the quarterfinal round of the NJSIAA North Jersey, Section 2, Group III playoffs. Once there, the Cougars were no match for Summit but the 2018 edition will be better for the experience. This year's team features a high number of young but experienced returning players, a handful of All-Conference honorees and a good supply of athleticism and speed.

"We lost four seniors so most of the team is returning," said third year Cranford Head Coach Samantha Berk. "We have talent and speed. We have a strong midfield line with a lot of experience. Our defense also has a lot of experience and Anna Horne, our goaltender, looks very strong. The girls all have a great bond on and off the field making for good chemistry on the field."

The Cougars feature a quartet of All-Conference honorees returning this season. Senior midfielders Maggie Roman and Abby Ganley, along with

super sophomores Grace Power (center) and Alyssa Gesslin (attack) give the Cougars a nice base of scorers around which to build their team.

Roman (31 goals, 17 assists) and Ganley (23 goals, 23 assists, 15 ground balls) anchor the midfield. As a freshman, Power was the unquestioned star of the offense scoring 43 goals and contributing 16 assists from her center position on the field. She scored three goals and had one assist in Cranford's thrilling 12-11 victory over West Windsor-Plainsboro in the State Tournament opener last season. Power figures to be a force in Union County for the remainder of her career.

Gesslin leads a deep group at the attack positions. As a freshman, Gesslin scored 23 goals and had 10 assists. Gesslin will be joined by seniors Caroline Kelly, Lucia Rinaldi, junior Ellie Rokicki and freshmen Delaney Bertrand and Karena Andreassen. These cats can definitely score but can they be good enough on defense to compete?

On defense seniors Laura Feeney, Erin Trojan, Brooke Mason and Britany Triano are in the mix, along with junior Sofia Prata. They will be joined

by incoming freshman Erin Esposito as Berk looks to configure her defensive alignments.

Key to the hopes of any defense is solid play by its goaltender. Cranford has junior Anna Horne returning between the pipes. As a sophomore Horne played every game posting a 6-11 record, while recording 220 saves and allowing 209 goals against.

Cranford sets up as a team to watch in the conference this season. Despite all the positive signs pointing to improvement this season, Berk knows that there are areas her players must improve in if they are to realize their potential.

"Staying organized on offense," says Berk. "We have a ton of talent but we need to start working and start playing up each other's strengths. I believe that will come as the girls start playing together more. Every day we want to get better as a team. We look at every day as a learning experience and we want to keep progressing throughout the season."

Cranford opened the season against another conference foe which could be much improved when they visit Scotch Plains-Fanwood on March 28.



BRINGING IT UPFIELD...A Lady Raider laxer brings the ball upfield during a scrimmage game with the Westfield Blue Devils at Gary Kehler Stadium last week. The Raiders envision better days on the horizon this season.

**BRETZ, DiLOLLO, MEHORTER, FRIAS TO LEAD CHARGE**

# Lady Raider Laxers Envision Better Days on the Horizon

By ALEX LOWE  
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On the surface, the 2017 girls lacrosse season was nothing to write home about for first year Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Head Coach Virginia Weber. The team posted a 5-13 record, which included first round exits in both the county and state tournaments. But if one dig a little deeper there are signs that the seeds planted last year could bear fruit in 2018.

The Lady Raiders lost just four players to graduation from last season's team and feature a surpris-

ingly high total of returning All-Conference performers for a team that won just five games. This indicates that the team has talent and that the rest of the conference knows it. Getting that talent to come together into a cohesive unit will be key in the hopes for a successful season.

The Lady Raiders will be led by All-Conference honorees Amber Bretz (sr., midfield), Sabrina DiLollo (sr., midfield), Kelly Mehorter (sr., defense) and Sofia Frias (jr., midfield). With an experienced group of returning players around them, there is every reason to think that Scotch Plains-

Fanwood could move up in this year's standings.

"We have a strong senior class we will look to as well as we hope to see impacts from a few freshman that have been brought up to the Varsity team, as well as transfer student Maggie Lapolla from Union Catholic," said Coach Weber. "The leaders on this year's team will come from Amber Bretz, Sabrina Di Lollo and Kelly Mehorter."

Bretz had a strong junior season in which she scored 25 goals, had two assists and collected 36 ground balls.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



BLUE DEVIL BOYS LACROSSE CAPTAINS...Pictured, left to right, are seniors Pat McIlroy, Nicky Bond, Jack McCauley and Jake Wornow, who have been selected team captains of the Westfield High School boys lacrosse team. The Blue Devils just opened their season yesterday, March 28, against the Delbarton Green Wave at Gary Kehler Stadium in Westfield and will travel to face Pingry this Saturday, March 31, at 11 a.m. for the Bristol Cup.

**McILROY, BOND, McCAULEY, WORNOW NAMED CAPTAINS**

# Blue Devil Boys Lacrosse Team Gets Ready for Plenty of Action

The Westfield High School boys lacrosse team has been preparing for an action-packed season that just begun on March 28 against the Delbarton Green Wave at Gary Kehler Stadium. This Saturday at 11 a.m. the Blue Devils will be hosted by Pingry in a battle for the Bristol Cup.

Last year the Blue Devils trailed Pingry, 5-1, in the third period until Devon McLane found a chink in Pingry's defensive armor and exploited it from that point onward with three goals and a pair of assists to eventually give the Blue Devils a 7-6 overtime victory. McLane scored the winning goal.

The Blue Devils, who finished with a 10-7 record, also recorded a stinging win over the Summit Hilltoppers for their third straight Union County Tournament (UCT) title. In that game, goalkeeper Jack McCauley made a

key save with two seconds remaining to preserve the victory. McLane netted a pair of goals and added an assist and midfielder Nicky Bond contributed a goal and an assist.

This season seniors Pat McIlroy (defender), Nicky Bond (midfield), Jack McCauley (goalkeeper) and Jake Wornow (midfield) have been selected team captains and the focus will be the team working as a single unit with a very stingy defensive mindset, although they do return several offensive threats.

Last year McLane led in scoring with 32 goals and 41 assists for 73 points. He also had 19 ground balls. Bond finished with a team-leading 35 goals and had eight assists for 43 points and added 12 ground balls. Wornow netted 33 goals and five assists for 38 points and scooped 11 ground balls. Attacker Matt

Rittendale, now a senior, scored 22 goals and added 11 assists for 33 points and scooped 16 ground balls and midfielder Griffin Aslanian netted nine goals and three assists.

In goal last year, McCauley finished with 117 saves and backup keeper Theo Dardia had 19 saves.

As it has been in the past, there will be no easy pushover games for the Blue Devils. After the Pingry showdown, the Blue Devils host the Columbia Cougars on Monday, April 2, at 4:30 p.m. then they go on the road to face Rumson-Fair Haven on Wednesday, April 4, at 6 p.m. A rugged home game against Ridgewood is on Saturday, April 7, at 11 a.m. then another road trip to do battle with Seton Hall Prep is slated for Wednesday, April 11, at 4:30. West Morris Central will visit Kehler Stadium on Saturday, April 14, at 2:30 p.m.



FINDING THE CHINK IN THE ARMOR...With his team trailing, 5-1, Blue Devil sophomore Devon McLane found the chink in Pingry's defensive armor to score three goals and add a pair of assists in a 7-6 Westfield victory (April 2017).

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