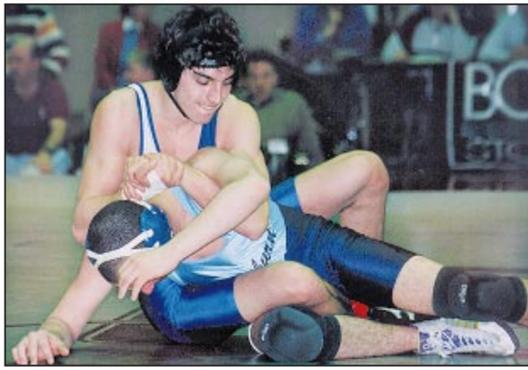


THE WEEK IN SPORTS



LOOKING FOR HELP...Raider senior quarterback Eddie Williams points at a snarling Linden Tiger and hopes that someone would block him.



THE REGULAR GRIND...Blue Devil Onur Tezucar grinds a Millburn Miller in the finals of the 147-pound class at the Region 3 Championships.



TURNING CARDINALS TO TURKEYS...The Blue Devil defense stops the 13th-ranked Plainfield Cardinals in their flight and defeats them 22-7.

SEASON HIGHLIGHTED BY GROUP 3 BOYS SOCCER TITLE

Raider Boys and Girls Display Remarkable Ability in 1997-98

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

Jubilant fans surrounded the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School boys' soccer team players when they won the Group 3 State soccer title by bricking Brick Memorial, 2-1, at the College of New Jersey in Ewing on November 21. But winning a state soccer championship was only one of the many accomplishments attained by the 1997-98 Raider athletes.

In addition to winning the state boys' soccer championship for the sixth time, the Raider boys finished with a 23-2-2 record, were ranked second in the state, and were ranked 12th in the nation of all high school boys soccer teams.

The Raider football team made an impressive turnaround from a 3-6 season in 1996 to a 6-4 season in 1997. The Raiders got off to a green start by winning their first six games and qualified for the State Group 3 Tournament.

Although having small numbers,

the Raider gymnastics team placed second to the Blue Devil girls in the Union County Tournament but later out-pointed them in the state sectional tournament in Union. The Raider girls' soccer team stunned the first-seeded Blue Devils, 1-0, in the opening round of the Union County Tournament and went on to give the very tough Union Catholic girls a run for their money in the finals at Elizabeth.

The Raider girls' tennis team had another fine year by placing third in the Union County Tournament and by qualifying for the State Group 3 Sectional Tournament. The Raider boys and girls cross country teams became increasingly more competitive and placed well in major tournaments.

The winter sports were highlighted by the celebration of 40 years of Raider Wrestling, the achievements of the Raider coed swimming team and by an outstanding season from the boys basketball team.

With a tough schedule, the Raider wrestlers finished with a 10-7 record, placed second in the District 12 Tournament and sent an amazing eight wrestlers to the Region 3 Tournament. The boys basketball team rolled off 10-straight wins, including an early season defeat of highly-ranked Union, and finished its season with a 16-7 record.

The big story of the winter was the Raider coed swimming team's first-ever defeat of the Westfield boys in the State North Public A semifinals. Earlier in the season, the Raider coed team defeated the Blue Devil boys in a regular season meet.

Remarkable achievements continued for the Raiders in the spring. The boys' track and field team opened the eyes of all the track coaches in the state by winning their fourth-straight Watchung Conference Crown and aing the Union County title for the fourth time in five years. The Raider boys went on to tie for first with

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SEASON HIGHLIGHTED BY 100 YEARS OF FOOTBALL

Devil Athletes Uphold Their Winning Tradition in 1997-98

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

Magic filled the air as the Westfield High School football team defeated the then 13th ranked Plainfield Cardinals, 22-7, on Thanksgiving Day in front of a crowd of more than 4,000 highly enthusiastic and hungry fans at Gary Kehler Stadium in Westfield. The victory capped a miraculous turnaround season of a Blue Devil football team which was in the process of celebrating its 100th anniversary. In addition to bringing back pride in a football program, the Blue Devils maintained their dominance in many sports throughout the school year.

In the fall of 1996, the Blue Devil football team had to withstand a dismal 1-8 season. In one short year, the Blue Devils turned the tables on their opponents and finished with a 6-3 record. As the 100th anniversary year progressed, so did the confidence level of the team. The Blue Devils opened their season by defeating Dickinson, 12-6, on September 27, then seized their 500th career victory by trouncing Cranford, 34-0, on November 1. After such a fantastic season, Head Coach Ed Tranchina was named as the Union County Coach of the Year.

The Blue Devil girls cross country team did some high stepping also by successfully defending their Watchung Conference and Union County titles. The girls' "Pac Attack" also ran their streak of unbeaten regular season meets to 27. The Blue Devil boys successfully defended their Watchung Conference Title and placed second to Cranford in the Union County Championship.

The girls tennis team captured the Union County title and made it to the semifinals of the State Group 4 tournament. Soccer has played a big role in Westfield sports and this year was no exception. Both the boys' and girls' teams qualified for the state sectionals and both knocked off rival Randolph before falling in the finals.

The Blue Devils gymnastic team continued with their dominance in Union County by winning their fourth-straight title. The Blue Devil field hockey team showed much improvement and qualified for the state sectionals.

In the winter sports, the girls and boys swimming teams continued with excellence. The Devil boys captured their 42nd-straight Union County title and the girls grabbed their sixth-straight title. The girls captured the North A swimming title and just missed winning the State Public A title.

The Blue Devil bowling team also had a fine year by winning the overall Watchung Conference title, placing second in the North Sectional Tournament and by finishing ninth overall in the state tournament. The Blue Devil girls basketball team qualified for the states, won their first round against Plainfield, lost in the quarterfinals to powerful, 22-2, Bloomfield and finished their season at 15-5.

Several individual accomplishments also highlighted the winter season. Senior Mike Baly once again had an outstanding wrestling season, finishing 25-4, and finished his high

school career with 91 wins. Junior Onur Tezucar caught fire and won the District 11 wrestling title, the Region 3 title and placed fifth in the New Jersey State Wrestling Tournament in the 145-pound class. Junior Ronnie Kashlak had a marvelous ice hockey season, leading the state in scoring throughout the majority of the season and finally finishing second as the Blue Devil ice hockey team qualified for the states.

Dominance in girls volleyball and girls softball highlighted the spring season. The girls volleyball team not only successfully defended their

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BLUE DEVIL GOLFERS FINISH 18-0

Coach Soviero Retires After Stellar Career

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

The 1998 Westfield High School golf team did the appropriate thing for Head Coach Joe Soviero. They gave him a perfect 18-0 record as a retirement gift. In addition, this season the Blue Devil golfers won the Watchung Conference and the Union County Titles and went on to capture the District 4 Championship.

Soviero amassed an incredible 196-23-1 record in his 14 years as the Blue Devil's head golf coach. He directed the Blue Devils to a 14-2 season in his first year in 1985, and in the very next year, he had his first of four undefeated seasons, finishing at 11-0. Under the guidance of Soviero, the Blue Devils also finished 15-0 in 1989 and 14-0 in 1993.

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JIM BUCCOLA AMASSES A .602 BATTING AVERAGE

Raider Boys Highlight Season With Share of Conference Title

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

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School baseball team performed admirably throughout the season plus came on strong and won the final three games, including a season-finale, 6-3, win over Cranford, to finish with a 14-5 record. In addition, with the win over Cranford, the Raiders earned a share of the Watchung Conference Title. A major reason for the Raider's success was the superb hitting of senior catcher Jim Buccola.

Buccola led the Raiders with a

sizzling .602 batting average, going 34-for-55, and led the team with seven round-trippers. Buccola also was first in RBI with 35 and was first in doubles with six. Also, Buccola was second in runs scored at 23. Buccola's fine catching skills and superb blocking abilities at the plate made him a super-quality catcher.

Senior Delmar Patterson took second-place honors in batting, going 21-for-51 for a .412 batting average. Patterson scored 19 runs, recorded nine walks, stole three bases and had 12 RBI. Senior Donald Patterson had

a .356 batting average with 16 hits, including three home runs and three doubles. Don Patterson had 13 RBI and scored nine runs.

Senior shortstop Luke Cerchio was third in batting with a .409 average. Cerchio had 18 hits with two home runs, a triple and two doubles. Cerchio had 10 RBI, stole two bases and scored 18 runs. Cerchio also pitched three games and finished with a 3-0 record.

Gewirtz, the Raiders' ace pitcher, finished with a 6-4 record with 71 strikeouts and allowing only 13 walks. Offensively, Gewirtz batted .393, going 22-for-56, with 24 RBI and tied Doug Bishop for the team lead with 25 runs scored. Aside from being tied for first with Bishop with five doubles, Gewirtz smashed two homers, thumped three triples and stole three bases.

Bishop, the team Captain, went 21-for-57 with a .357 batting average, led the team in steals at five and led the team with 16 walks. Bishop hit three home runs and drove in 14 runs. In the final Cranford game, Bishop had two solo home runs. Defensively, as a second baseman, Bishop would literally throw himself in front of the ball to prevent it from reaching the outfield.

Senior Adam Baumwoll, as a pitcher, recorded 12 strikeouts in 19.67 innings and allowed no home runs. Offensively, Baumwoll had 15 hits, scored 18 runs, blasted one homer, cracked two triples and one double, had two stolen bases and drove in 12 runs.

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KEEPING VITAL STATISTICS...Raider "stat" girl senior Stacy Walsh recorded all of the necessary statistical information for the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School baseball team.



EXCHANGING PLEASANTRIES...Westfield High School Head Golf Coach Joe Soviero, right, exchanges jokes with Scotch Plains-Fanwood Head Golf Coach Steve Ciccotelli, left, prior to the start of the Union County Golf Tournament at Echo Lake Country Club in Westfield.

May Scholar Athlete				
 Subs, Deli & Catering 221 South Ave Westfield 233-0430	 261 South Ave Westfield 232-1919	 109 E. Broad St. Westfield 233-5609	 789-0140	 Taylor & Love 436 South Ave Westfield 654-6666

RONNIE KASHLAK...Junior Captain of the golf team. Has already won the Scholar-Athlete Award for the month of December for his excellence in hockey. His awesome talent on the golf course nearly speaks for itself. With Kashlak's leadership the Blue Devils' finished undefeated at 18-0 and captured the Watchung Conference and Union County titles. Kashlak shot an amazing two-under par 34 at Echo Lake Country Club to help the Blue Devils zoom past previously undefeated South Plainfield, then 12-0. Ron parred the same course to lead the Blue Devils past Brearley. The Scholar-Athlete is chosen by a panel of judges from the Optimist Club of Westfield.

- Educational Achievement
- Athletic Achievement
- Good School Standing
- Leadership
- Enthusiasm



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