

The Northern Westchester
Examiner
Sports
Covering Putnam County and Northern Westchester Sports

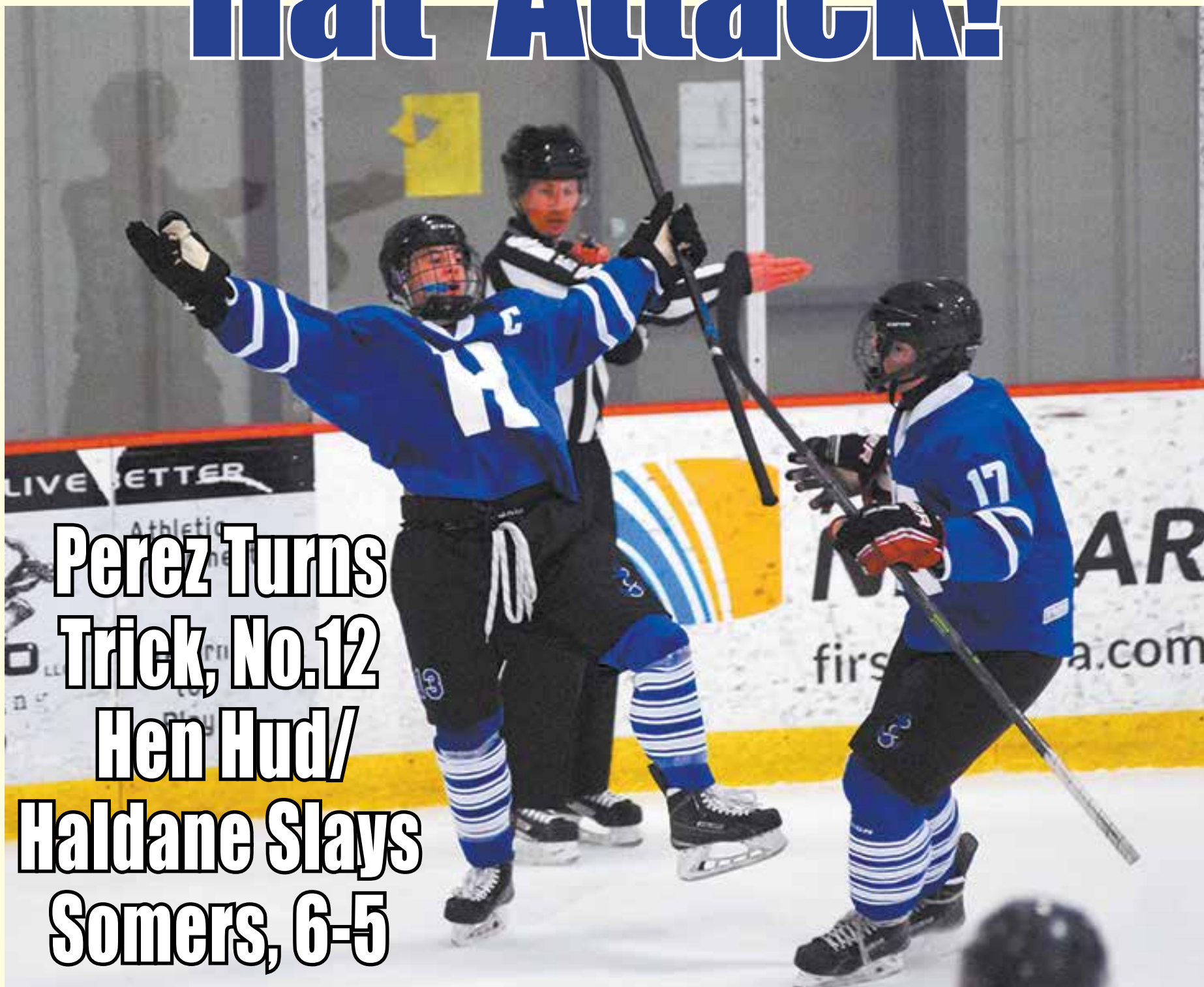
February 16 - February 22, 2016

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

SPORTS SECTION

Hat Attack!

**Perez Turns
Trick, No.12
Hen Hud/
Haldane Slays
Somers, 6-5**



RAY GALLAGHER PHOTO

Hen Hud senior Vinny Perez (13) scored a hat trick and celebrated one of his three goals with Vladimir Siriia in the 12-seeded Sailors' 6-5 victory over No.5 Somers/North Salem in last Sunday's Section 1 Division II opening round action at the Brewster Ice Arena. Hen Hud/Haldane advanced to today's quarterfinal round against No.4 Rye.... see hockey Notebook

No.2 Putnam Valley Grinds Past Irvington, Pleasantville

Tigers Reach Class B Final 4 for 4th Year in Row; Ossining Ousted in OT

By Ray Gallagher
Examiner Sports Editor
@Directrays

It wasn't that Putnam Valley lacked the determination to be a good basketball program from 2000 to 2012. It was more the fact that the Tigers lacked a year-round commitment to the game; the kind of commitment that, oftentimes, has to be dragged out of student athletes who simply hadn't found success in that realm of competition. Getting the youth of Putnam Valley to love the game of basketball was no easy task.

Enter, third-year Coach Mike McDonnell, a demanding mentor who just grinds each and every day. That grind is contagious. It has promoted a change of culture, a belief in winning, that has turned PV from a one-time laughingstock to a perennial contender for the Section 1 Class B gold ball.

"These guys, especially these five seniors who have been with me for some time now, they have truly bought in and play some of the most unselfish basketball I've ever seen," Coach McDonnell said of Charlie Pagani, Kevin Gallagher, Harrison Deegan, Joe Spinola and Anders Spittal. "It doesn't matter what their role is, they just grind and grind and grind. They get after every loose ball, every rebound. I feel really good about them moving forward. They are ready to do whatever it takes."

That grind, and selfless attitude, was on full display last Saturday in the second-seeded Tigers' 76-51 quarterfinal romp



RAY GALLAGHER/RICK KUPERBERG PHOTOS

Put Valley F Charlie Pagani eyes up two points in Tigers' Class B quarterfinal win over P'Ville.

of No.10 Pleasantville as the Tigers advanced to the Westchester County Center Final 4 for an unprecedented fourth-straight season. The Tigers (20-2) will take on third-seeded Blind Brook, winners in 16 of the last 18 games, in Wednesday's semifinals at 6:30 p.m. The Tigers defeated the Trojans, 57-47, to conclude the regular season.

That grind brought Pleasantville to a screeching halt in the third quarter when McDonnell's Tigers, leading 34-26 at the half, saw senior C/F Spinola return from first-half foul woes to help trigger a game-clinching 18-11 run. Spinola finished with 13 points and 10 boards, but it was senior swingman Deegan, who beat a box-and-one repeatedly, who led all scorers with 20 points while covering the Panthers' top scoring threat. Pagani dropped 15 points, including three first-quarter 3's while Gallagher dished six assists and set a mean tempo throughout.

"Joey was an animal when he got back in there," Coach McDonnell said. "Charlie came out hot and gives us great balance when he gets his looks. We were ready for the denial of Harrison, they were going to box-and-one him and face guard and not let him get free, so until Harrison really got going,

Charlie points were big. Then, once Harrison got it going on both ends, it was just one of the best games I ever seen him play... a complete game at both ends of the floor. When he plays like that, and the others play to their capabilities, that's a winning formula."

In a 40-34 opening-round win over Irvington; for whatever reason, Putnam Valley just couldn't get it going. If not for an outstanding first-quarter effort from Pagani, the Tigers would not have built up a 12-4 lead that the Bulldogs were clawing back at all night. Deegan

led all scorers with 13 points and Spinola had all eight of his points in the second half, including a critical 3-pointer with three minutes remaining.

The Tigers did not contest the perimeter as well as they have in the past, allowing Bulldog sniper Daniel DeMatteo to nail four 3's, but PV's defense, which has been beyond outstanding all season, was rock solid in the fourth, holding Irvington to just five points.

"I was proud that the boys showed their competitive grit on a night where we never seemed to find any rhythm," McDonnell said on a night when PV broke the record for wins in a season. "We needed that scare. It was us up, but championship teams find a way. Defense can propel a struggling team to victory, and

this was one of those night where we've held teams under 40 points for the thirteenth times this year."

And it's just one of many reasons the program is still plugging along, in search of the elusive gold ball they were so close to in 2014 when the Tigers were nipped in the championship game by Woodlands, the defending two-time Class B sectional champions who face No.1 Briarcliff in the other semifinal proceeding the PV/Blind Brook game...

OSSINING HIGH was the place to be last Wednesday; what with the three-time defending NYS champion girls rising to the occasion in the opening round of the Section 1 Class AA tournament first, followed by the nightcap between Coach Casey's 5th-seeded Pride and visiting No.12 Carmel.

The Rams (11-11) gave the Pride everything they had but fell short, 66-59, in a game where Ossining's length prevailed over Carmel's grunt. Ossining senior F Obie Toppin topped out with a game-high 24 points, 12 boards, four assists and five steals. There was nothing the kid couldn't do as the Pride advanced to face No.4 host Saunders in Saturday's quarterfinal clash where --- with Ossining was on the brink of its first County Center appearance in 34 years -- the fourth-seeded Saunders Bulldogs put up a 54-48 roadblock to end the Pride's finest season in many years.

Against Carmel, Ossining sophomore Alan Griffin — the son of former NBA player Adrian Griffin — glided effortlessly for 21 points and 10 caroms while adding



Put Valley F Joe Spinola goes for two in win over P'Ville.



Ossining's Jay Criss takes a run at Carmel's Ryan Train in Pride's win over Rams last Wednesday.

Sports

Boys Basketball Notebook



Putnam Valley G Kevin Gallagher leaves a Panther in the dust in Tigers' win over Pleasantville.



Ossining's Alan Griffin soars to rack against defense of Carmel's Ryan Haughney in Pride's Class A opening-round win over Rams.



Putnam Valley G Anders Spittals goes for two in Tigers' quarterfinal win over Pleasantville.

three assists. AJ Stokeley (11 points, 5 rebounds) provided the Pride a third knockdown threat.

"All credit to my teammates; without my team I wouldn't have the opportunities I did tonight, the dunks and 3's I got," Toppin said after the win over Carmel, in which he took over in the second quarter, pouring in 12 points to give the Pride a 37-31 advantage at the break. "I just want to say thanks to my team and the coach. We still need more discipline in our game,

though. Carmel came to play with a lot of energy and intensity today and definitely got better since the first time we played them."

Carmel — which was soundly beaten by Ossining by 18 points back in December — buckled but never quit. Senior forward Ryan Train, who was held to just five points over the first three quarters, longed for one last shot and got the Rams going down the stretch, scoring 11 of his 16 points in the fourth. He converted an and-one layup with 5:19 left to bring the Rams within six, 51-45. Rams Matt Haughney (16 points) and Brian Harlin (13 points) kept Carmel in the game throughout.

Against Saunders, in one of the wildest finishes a hoops fan could ever expect: there was a go-ahead layup by Saunders in the waning seconds, followed by a premature storming of the court by the Saunders fans and the subsequent near-decision by the refs to call a technical on the crowd. Then, came a last-second foul to put the Pride, trailing by two points, at the line for three free throws and a chance to win, and that was before overtime, which the Pride forced when Kahseem Trotter hit two of three from the stripe.

Indeed, there was a sense of insanity in Saturday's Class AA quarterfinal where the winner would go on to face top-seeded Mount Vernon.

Saunders took over in OT and punched its ticket to the County Center for the second straight year under Coach Anthony Nicodemo, who won his 100th

game amidst a wild, if not calamitous (for Ossining) scene.

Toppin finished with a team-high 12 points for Ossining while Stokeley and Griffin both knocked down 11, but it wasn't enough to prevent All-NYS Saunders senior Derrick Felder (game-high 25 points) from advancing.

"The loss will take a while to get over," Pride first-year Coach Mike Casey said. "Our players battled so hard and we are so proud of them. It was nice to see the community to come out in full force, at Saunders, too, and support our boys. That was a great atmosphere! The players deserve all the credit for our season, they committed to playing summer and fall league last year and I feel that was key with some of the newcomers. The boys should be proud of themselves. They've accomplished so much this year."

NWE/PUTNAM FAB FIVE POLL

(Section 1 teams only)

No.1 PUTNAM VALLEY — Coach McDonnell's state-ranked (No.8) Class B Tigers (18-2), seeded No.2 in the tournament, will need two near-perfect efforts to hoist the gold

ball for the first time in school history #ThisIsDoableBoys

No.2 OSSINING — Coach Casey's Class AA Pride (17-5), the No.5 seed, took a quantum leap this season, but can they sustain this level of play with the premier Catholic school programs



Ossining's AJ Stokeley gets an easy two in win over Carmel.



Putnam Valley's Harrison Deegan finishes tough portion of conventional 3 in win over P'Ville.

continued on page S-6

Sports

Girls Hoops Notebook

Putnam Valley, Ossining, Haldane County Center-Bound

By Tony Pinciario

When the Putnam Valley varsity girls' basketball season began, there was plenty of potential for a program that was steadily rising.

The Lady Tigers have been building annually, led by a core group of seniors – Reena Olsen, Alyssa Stockinger, Alex Knight and Stephanie Wagner -- who brought the program out of the abyss this season.

Led by the four seniors and with a huge hand from eighth-grader Kelli Venezia, Putnam Valley earned their first Final 4 berth since 2007 in the Section 1 Class B Girls' Basketball Tournament at the Westchester County Center.

Venezia, who scored a team-high 16 points, helped seventh-seeded Putnam Valley eliminate second-seeded Briarcliff, 48-43, to earn a semifinal matchup with third-seeded Woodlands, Tuesday, 3 p.m. The other semifinal has No. 4 Valhalla playing No. 1 Irvington.

"It's crazy," said the Cornell-bound Olsen. "I don't even know if we were expecting this ourselves. We are all so excited. We went from winning one and two games and now we're at the County Center. We worked ridiculously hard to rebuild the program and Coach Lenhard has been at the front of that. We've worked especially hard the last couple weeks for the postseason and it has paid off."

Even though it was the underdog against Briarcliff, Putnam Valley was not



JEN SCARDUZZIO PHOTO

Ossining's All-NYS star Shadeen Samuels will lead the Pride to County Center battle.

intimidated. Venezia, who was promoted to varsity two weeks ago, did not shy away from the moment.

"We all secretly wanted her to come up because we knew she could help us," Olsen said. "Watching the JV games, we saw all the potential she had. She's aggressive with the ball and getting to the hoop. It seems like we've been playing with her for years, instead of two weeks, because we are so comfortable with her."

Olsen, who finished with 14 points and 18 rebounds, said the team was prepared for Briarcliff and it was reinforced at halftime.

"We spent hours collectively breaking apart film on Briarcliff so we were ready for everything they threw at us," Olsen said. "We had the lead at halftime against the number two seed and that's when we realized we could win the game."

Along with Venezia's 16 points, Stockinger added nine points and 13 boards.

Putnam Valley opened sectional play with a 43-33 triumph of Pleasantville as Olsen led the way with 17 points and seven rebounds. Stockinger chipped in with 12 points and Catherine Mazza netted seven.

OSSINING is returning to the Final 4 for an eighth consecutive year and 12th time in the last 15 seasons under coach Dan Ricci.

The top-seeded Pride will play fifth-seeded New Rochelle, Thursday, 8:15 p.m. in one semifinal. It will be preceded by No. 6 John

Jay-East Fishkill-No. 2 North Rockland at 6:30 p.m.

Ossining defeated Clarkstown North, 92-48, in the first round before completely dominating Our Lady of Lourdes, 90-27, in a quarterfinal. Ossining opened the season with a win against Lourdes and beat the Warriors in the 2014 and 2015 Section 1 Class AA title games.

"We played Lourdes at the beginning of the year so we knew them very well," said Shadeen Samuels, who finished with 29 points. "We had a lot of time to prepare for them. They're always a good team so we were prepared for them."

Freshman Aubrey Griffin also scored 29 points for the Pride. Griffin, along with classmates Jaida Strippoli and Kailih Harris, have been prime-time players for Ossining this season. They will be making their first final-four trip to the County Center.

"We played in the Slam Dunk Tournament in December so that will help the younger players because they know what it feels like to play on that court," Samuels said. "This is the playoffs and it will be a different vibe. They will have to get used to a different crowd feeling."

Samuels has spoken to the younger players about what to expect and how important this is to the team, especially the seniors.

"I told them that we can't underestimate any team and if we play like we're capable of playing we will be fine," Samuels said. "We also stressed to them that this is the seniors' last year and we want to win it and go all the way. We can tell that they want it for us and they are working harder for it."

Junior Marissa Lisikatos and her **HALDANE** teammates return to the County



Put Valley senior C Reena Olsen goes for two points in an impressive quarterfinal performance in win over Briarcliff.

Center where the third-seeded Blue Devils meet second-seeded Hamilton in a Section 1 Class C semifinal, Thursday, 6:30 p.m. The other semifinal follows with



RICK KUPERBERG/RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS

Put Valley's Morgan Winogradoff battles for position in paint in Tigers' quarterfinal win over Briarcliff.



Put Valley 8th-grader Kelli Venezia soars for two of game-high 16 points in Tgers' quarterfinal win over Briarcliff.

Sports

Girls Hoops Notebook



Somers F Megan McHugh goes to the rack in season-ending loss to Pearl River.

No. 1 Keio playing No. 4 North Salem.

Reigning Class C champion Haldane enters the semis with a deceiving 10-10 record. Lisikatos said it is not indicative of the team's play this season.

"I think as the season has gone on, we've gotten better and better as a team and we're definitely ready for the postseason," said the four-year varsity player.

Many of Haldane's losses have come against Class AA and Class A teams. However, Haldane coach Tyrone Searight has his team play a difficult schedule to



Somers freshman Hannah Angelini ensures that brighter days lie ahead for Somers after loss to Pearl River last Friday.

prepare the girls for the final four and state play. It is a challenge the girls look forward to.

"When you play the bigger schools, the play is quicker and you have to step up your game," Lisikatos said.

Lisikatos said since the regular season concluded, Haldane has been scrimmaging against larger schools. That, plus the intensity in practice increases on a daily basis.

"We've seen our progress in practice, which is definitely going to prepare us," Lisikatos said.

Lisikatos has been a regular at the County Center since she was in elementary school. First, as a fan, and as a player since eighth grade. It is something she always looks forward to.

"We always talk about how exciting it is, especially for the new girls to play on the big court," Lisikatos said. "It's always so much fun and I love it."

BREWSTER overcame a rough first half to beat Pelham, 51-41, in a Section 1 Class A first-round game. Trailing by five at halftime, 28-23, Brewster dialed up the defensive intensity in the second half.

"The one thing we needed to focus on was defense," Brewster coach Mike Castaldo said. "We pride ourselves on the defensive end and giving up 28 points in two quarters was unacceptable. In the second half, we held Pelham to 13 points, including four in the third quarter."

"We tied the game at 30 on a huge offensive rebound from senior Virginia Wheatey and on the next play, Frannie Merkel got a defensive rebound and went coast-to-coast for a layup and we never gave up the lead."

Dayna Medina and Maggie DePaoli each had 11 points. Merkel finished with nine points, 17 rebounds and six rejections and Jess Miele added nine points and 10 rebounds.

Rye defeated Brewster, 59-35, in the quarterfinal round as Castaldo said Rye's defense was the best his team faced all year.

"We have played some great defensive teams (Somers, New Rochelle and John Jay-East Fishkill), but Rye was the most impressive," Castaldo said. "They did an excellent job of doubling Frannie and Katie Popp and Maddy Eck are just as good defensively as they are offensively."

Brewster finishes with a 17-5 record and a very proud coach.

"This has been an unbelievable year," Castaldo said. "I am so proud of how the girls played all season. It was an honor to coach them."

SOMERS, the No.2 seed, suffered a shocking 42-38 loss to No.7 Pelham in Friday's quarterfinal. Liv Lipski scored 18 points in Somers' opening-round 47-36 win over Hen Hud. Gabby

Rosenzweig added 12 points **MAHOPAC** began sectional play with a 49-46 victory over Arlington. This came after a 26-point loss to the Admirals in the regular-season's final week.

Amanda Geyer led the 'Pac with 17 points and Carly Pease added 13.

"It was a team effort with Siobhan Hynes, Allison Reilly, Claire Felix and Amanda Carney rebounding and defending in the post," Mahopac coach Chuck Scozzafava said. "It was a close game from start to finish with a lot of lead changes. After getting beat by them by 26 just last week, I was very proud of the team's ability to recover from such a one-sided loss. I felt we did a better job of rebounding and on defense."

New Rochelle, seeded fifth, defeated Mahopac in a quarterfinal-round game, 52-39, on Saturday.

"We were down 14 in the second half, but had a run at the end of the third quarter to cut it to two, but they came back and hit two 3s to go up eight," Scozzafava said. "The girls played hard and battled the whole game."



Brewster's Katie DePaoli goes up for two in Class A opening-round win over Pelham last Tuesday.

Geyer finished with 12 points and Pease added seven as Mahopac finished with a 12-10 record.

PANAS ran into a buzz-saw in the first round as Pearl River defeated the Panthers, 59-33. Panas finished with a 13-8 record.

"This is the best record the team has had in years and the girls did a great job," Panas coach Matt Evangelista said.

Carlyn Mucci led Panas with 18 points and Danielle Merante added 13 points.

John Jay-Cross River held off a persistent **LAKELAND** team in a 59-54 Section 1 Class A first-round win.

Colleen Walsh led Lakeland with 21 points and Alexa Cole had 11 as the Hornets finished with a deceiving 5-16 record.

"We had a very competitive schedule and I don't think our record reflects how good of a team we really are," Lakeland coach Miranda Lustig said. "We don't have any seniors so we are looking forward to having everyone return next year."



Brewster F Frannie Merkel eyes up two points in Class A opening-round win over Pelham.

No.12 Hen Hud/Haldane Goes Bracket Busting, Shocks No.5 Somers

By Ray Gallagher
Examiner Sports Editor
@Directrays

No.12 Hendrick Hudson/Haldane meant business from the start, and if No.5 Somers/North Salem wasn't so sure



RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS

Hen Hud-Haldane F Michael Harmancin eludes back-check of Somers-NS F Michael Garrity in Sailors' 6-5 upset of Sabers.

about that, they knew, too, when senior D Anthony Percacciolo, who loves to throw his weight around, just leveled Somers



Hen Hud-Haldane's Mike Harmancin makes sliding poke check on Somers' Jonathan Henning in 6-5 Sailor win.

sniper RJ LaSpina off the game's initial faceoff. He also added a goal.

The tone-setting hit helped propel the Sailors to a 6-5 win in the opening round of the D-II Section 1 tournament last Sunday night at the Brewster Ice Arena where senior F Vinny Perez made the ice his stage. Perez bagged a hat trick and freshman Joe Fareed scored the game-winning goal with 2:22 left in the third. Rugged sophomore F Brett Hanson scored a goal and dished an assist, his re-direct gave the Sailors a 5-1 lead late in the second period and zapped a lot of steam from the Sabers. Michael Harmancin set up three goals for the winners.

"We kept shifts short and sweet tonight," sophomore F Brett Hanson said

after potting his 17th goal of the season. "All we did was keep pushing. We knew we had it in us to beat them, but we just had to show it. Every time they would score we became motivated to get out there and put one right back in. We were just concentrating on the task at hand. Now we have that over with we need to come out strong against rye and get the big upset. Vinny was amazing, there's no other way to put it."

The Perez hat trick, which gave

him 13 goals for the season, enabled Hen Hud/Haldane (9-11-1) to advance to the quarterfinals where the Sailors will face No.4 Rye (12-8) for a Final 4 berth. Somers/North Salem's record-setting 14-5-2 season came to a disastrous conclusion despite the heroic, third-period efforts of the LaSpina brothers, who finished with a hand in four of the five Sabers goals. RJ LaSpina had two goals and two assists while freshman Brandon had a goal and two assists. Michael Garrity added a pair of tallies for the Sabers, who saw their six-game winning streak end at the wrong time, partially due to some off-ice issues that shredded their normal lines.

"It was just an awful start and we dug too big of a hole to get out of," said RJ LaSpina, who finished his senior year with 22 G and 22 A. "We knew they would be tough, but we just couldn't execute."

In other D-II playoff action, No.7 YORKTOWN (10-10-1) saw its season come to an end at the hands of No.10 Fox Lane in a mild 4-2 opening-round upset. Cian Keohane (19 G, 17 A for the year) scored twice for the Huskers, who had a tough time solving Fox G Abie Ives (35 saves). Yorktown sniper Liam Donnelly finished his sterling career with 20 G, 28 A this season.

Fox Lane will face No.2 Brewster in today's quarterfinal at 8 p.m. at BIA.

Suring No.5 MAHOPAC will visit No.4 Scarsdale Wednesday in D-I quarterfinal action at the Ice Hutch, seeking their first Final 4 berth since a 4-1 semifinal loss to Suffern back in 2011.



The LaSpina brothers, RJ and Brandon celebrate Brandon's tally, set up by RJ, in 6-5 loss to Hen Hud-Haldane Sunday at BIA.



Hen Hud's Quinten Evangelou (L) celebrates a Brett Hanson (R) goal in Sailors 6-5 win over Somers.

No.2 Putnam Valley Grinds Past Irvington, Pleasantville

continued from page S-3

like Stepinac, Kennedy, Iona and other preps offering what they can tender to the premier underclassmen within the Pride program?

No.3 HEN HUD – Coach Hirsch's Class A Sailors (13-8), the No.8 seed, lost to No.9 Harrison, 62-43, and bailed on a shot at their first Final 4 since 1991. We don't mind the loss as much as the separation #Yikes! Sailor senior Jesse Breeding rode off into the Montrose Sunset with a game-high 17 points and senior Nick Marra added eight points, including a pair of

3-pointers. #OnToLax

No.4 BREWSTER – Coach Nelly's Class A Bears (12-10), the No.13 seed, didn't have enough magic in their bag of tricks to withstand No.4 Lourdes in a 57-48 opening-round setback.

No.5 YORKTOWN – Coach Downes' Class AA Huskers (12-10), the No.15 seed, had little to no answer for No.2 Fox Lane big man, Matt Redhead, who went for 25 points and 14 boards. Still, a 12-win season and a win over Ossining was quite productive in Downes' 2nd stint; does he

return for a 3rd? #OnToLax

No. 5A CARMEL – Coach Venditto's 12th-seeded Class AA Rams (11-11) kept getting up from Ossining best punches, and there wasn't an ounce of quit in this team all season.

HM SOMERS – Coach DeCintio's young, 23rd-seeded Class A Tuskers (7-14), despite losing 59-52 to No.10 Pelham, got all the experience they needed this season to make a legit run over the course of the next two years. #OnToLax

HM CROTON – Coach Thom's 12th-

seeded Class B Tigers (9-12) could not extend the legendary career of their outgoing coach, who personified class for nearly four decades. Gonna miss ya, coach!

HM MAHOPAC – Coach Simone's 13th-seeded Class AA Indians (11-10) were seriously undermanned and stunningly knocked from playoff contention by No.20 Arlington, but despite a pair of 3-game skids and no Dan Foley all season, the Indians still managed 11 W's with a rookie coach cutting his teeth. #OnToLax

Sports

Putnam Valley's Winter of Excellence Forges On!
Record-Setting Campaigns at Somers, Brewster, too



By Ray Gallagher
Examiner Sports

Thank you, boys and girls; student athletes from Ossining to Brewster and all points in between. Thanks for getting me through another bitter winter, thanks for providing me with something to do while I impatiently await the spring thaw and a far-flung NY Knicks championship. When the 2016 winter sports campaign began in our neck of the woods, we didn't know what to expect, but what we got was something to behold; things like record-breaking campaigns that nobody saw coming.

From Putnam Valley to Brewster in Putnam County, to Somers and Ossining in Northern Westchester; records were being broken at an awe-inspiring pace.

The Putnam Valley boys' basketball program, a veritable laughingstock just five years ago, set a new school record with 19 wins in a 40-34 playoff win over Irvington last Wednesday and then re-established that mark at 20 with a 76-51 win over Pleasantville on Saturday. This, just hours after the 7th-seeded Lady Tigers made good on their first County Center Final 4 appearance since 2007 by stunning No.2 Briarcliff, and while a school record five of Coach Will Carano's PV wrestlers prepped for the D-II NYS tournament in Albany next weekend after placing second at sectionals on February 13th.

Seriously, Putnam Valley? I can't remember a better collective winter (boys & girls), and I've been keeping close track of y'all since you crashed the Section 1 circuit with some extremely modest results back in 2000.

It took nearly a decade for the boys to gain solid footing outside of lax, but I'd say my cries, and those of many others in the early 90s, for a high school you could call your own have been more than justified by the student athletes at PV High.

"The winning attitude has changed everything," said senior third-year varsity point guard Kevin Gallagher. "We don't play to just have fun and participate anymore; we're expected to win and that's what our goal is no matter who we play or where we play them. It started with guys like (Zack) Coleman and Jelanie (Bell-Isaac) setting the tone a couple of years ago, and our grade has just continued the tradition. Coach Mike (McDonnell) puts

everything he has into our program and expects us to give everything we have. He pushes us every day and we respond."

And PV girls' Coach Nick Lenhard has done likewise with his unit, including

my fellow seniors and I wanted to leave behind as part of our legacy."

The bright-eyed Olsen did a double-dip, finishing with 14 points and 18 rebounds, but it was 8th-grader Kelli Venezia who

and girls' hoops team each setting regular-season records for excellence. Somers senior RJ LaSpina has had some help from his friends, but make no mistake this was RJ's hockey team, a unit that produced a school record 14-4-2 regular season, but saw their season end in a shocking 6-5 opening-round loss to Hen Hud/Haldane on Sunday at the BIA, which, incidentally, is why we play the games.

While Coach Kristi Dini's second-seeded, state-ranked (No.17) Tuskers (19-3) came up short of the Class A Final 4, the career of one Gabby Rosenzweig came to a screeching halt. I will miss her tenacity on the court, but thankfully she's got one last lax run in her.

Brewster had a record-setting regular season and had gone nuts in girls' hoops (17-5), knocking off Pelham, 51-41, in the opening round of the Class A tournament before falling to red-hot Rye Saturday. And Brewster hockey (17-2-1) is just getting started after setting a school record for the best winning percentage (the 2012 team was 17-3). Good luck



RICK KUPERBERG PHOTO

The Put Valley girls revel in the moment of their first Final 4 clinching since 2007 after upsetting Briarcliff last Saturday.

four starting seniors Reena Olsen, Alex Knight, Steph Wagner and Alyssa Stockinger, who were very much a part of the two-win Tigers of 2014 and an even bigger part of the 7th-seeded 2016 Tigers, who ended a nine-year County Center drought with a thrilling 48-43 win over No.2 Briarcliff last Saturday. The road to hoe was tough, make no bones.

"The past few years have definitely been frustrating and difficult but it has really taught all of us about team work and dedication," said Stockinger (9 points, 13 boards against Briarcliff), a four-year player who schlepped through three years of hell and three coaching changes before Lenhard stabilized the situation in the fall of 2014. "We're not the most skilled team, but what wins us our games is the passion and love we have for them. Briarcliff was definitely the most fulfilling win of my years on this team; we defied the odds. No one thought we could win this game, everyone had us out of the final four, some even had us losing to Pleasantville in the first round. So, now Putnam Valley isn't that team that everyone can already put down as a win in the record books, because we're here for the fight and we want that gold ball as much as anyone else left. Coming from the bottom to this surreal season is how

stole the show with a game-high 16 points. Indeed, the future of PV girls' hoops is bright.

"Alex, Stephanie, Alyssa and Reena have displayed a mental toughness that will serve them throughout the rest of their lives," Lenhard said. "They never quit, they just continued to try and find a way to get it done. (Assistant) Coach Rena Finsmith and I feel both proud and privileged to have coached these young ladies."

The spirit of Somers High was also on full display this winter with the ice hockey

this week, fellas.

Hats off to these program and many others for demonstrating a level of excellence not often seen in recent years...

Now, you never want to shortchange the accomplishments of a particular program, but the state-ranked (No.1) Ossining girls are just getting started. Coach Dan Ricci's top-seeded, three-time reigning NYS champion Pride (20-2) won't be a story until they hoist the gold ball and get after an unprecedented fourth state title, or, God forbid, they don't. Then, we'd really have a story.

See y'all at the County Center this week... come support the locals.



THE SHRUB OAK ATHLETIC CLUB
FINAL SPRING REGISTRATION
FOR SOFTBALL AND BASEBALL
SATURDAY FEB. 27 10am-1pm
Copper Beach Middle School Cafeteria

BASEBALL/SOFTBALL

Boys: Ages 5-16 Girls: Ages 5-16

BASEBALL - BOYS

Bantams
Ages 7-8

Minors
9 & 10

Majors
11 & 12

Pony
13-16

SOFTBALL - GIRLS

Bantams
Ages 7-8

Minors
9 & 10

Majors
11 & 12

Pony
13-16

Instructional League: Boys: Ages 5 & 6 • Girls Ages 5 & 6

Birth or Baptismal certificates are required for all new registrants. All returned checks will be subject to a \$25. bank charge.

Baseball Fee: \$140.00 • Softball Fee: \$140.00 • (Family Membership Fee: included in fees)

For further information

Softball Director-Mike Houlihan 962-7099 • Baseball Director: Vinny Fiorillo 962-7099

Tree Toppin!

Ossining
Senior Leads
Pride Past
Carmel;
Ousted in
Quarters



RAY GALLAGHER PHOTO

Ossining senior Obie Toppin was popping and dropping tomahawk slams in the fifth-seeded Pride's 66-59 Section 1 Class AA opening-round playoff win over No.12 Carmel last Wednesday, but the Pride fell short of their first County Center Final 4 bid in 34 years when they suffered a 54-48 overtime loss to No.4 Saunders in Saturday's quarterfinals... see Boys' Hoops Notebook