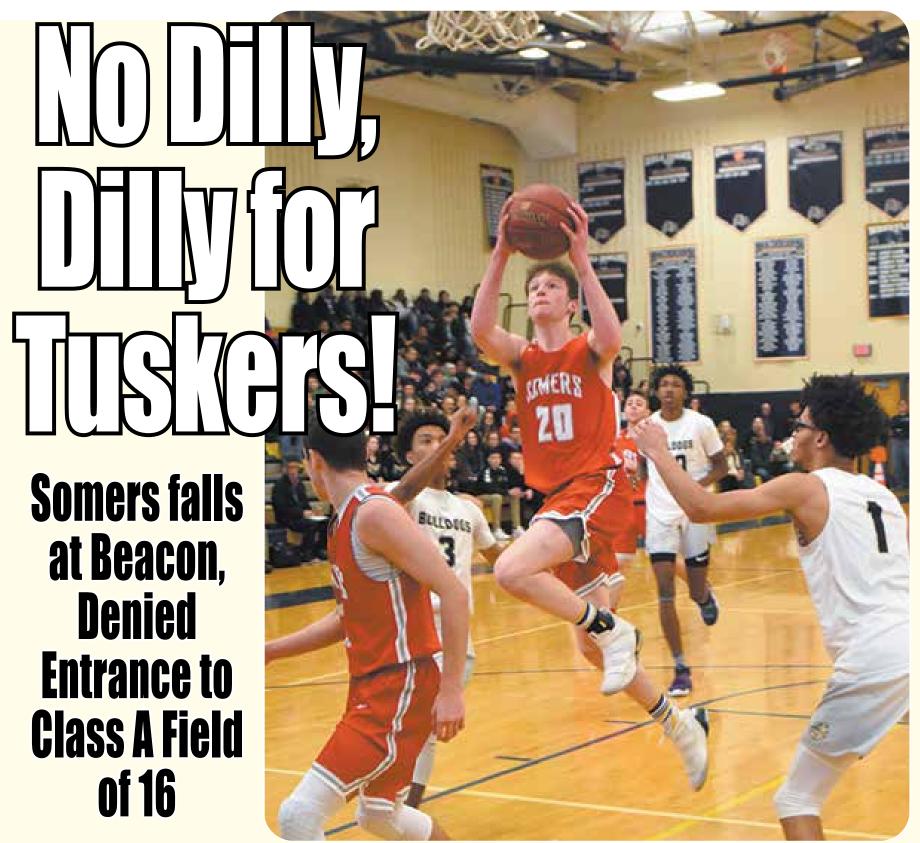
The Northern Westchester Examiner Sports Covering Putnam County and Northern Westchester Sports



RAY GALLAGHER PHOTO

Somers senior captain Dylan Berliner takes a good, hard run at the rack but his 20th-seeded Tuskers were on a short lease against the 13th-seeded host Bulldogs of Beacon and were promptly sent to the pit of misery during a 57-37 Section 1 Class A outbracket loss last Saturday, thus ending a sub-par 7-14 season. for the Tuskers... see Boys' Hoops Notebook

Grappling Notebook

Carano, Lundberg, Duke, Centrone, Scutari Crowned Section 1 Champs

by Tony Pinciaro

CARMEL seventh-grader P.J. Duke has been waiting for his opportunity to become a varsity wrestler.

He didn't have to wait long. Duke earned the 99-pound starting spot and began an outstanding first varsity season back in November.

Duke then won the prestigious Eastern States Wrestling Classic 99-pound title in January, becoming the tournament's first seventh-grade champion.

He finished his regular season undefeated and punctuated the Section 1 schedule by winning the Division I (large school) 99-pound championship Sunday at Clarkstown South High School. Duke became the first seventh-grader to win a Division I title since New York went to the large-school, small-school format for the 2003-04 season.

Duke, now 41-0 this season, earned his automatic berth, along with the other 14 sectional titlists, to the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Division I Wrestling Championships, Friday-Saturday, Feb 28-29, at the Times-Union Center in Albany.

Carmel finished seventh in the team standings to Fox Lane, which won its third consecutive team title.

"I've been dreaming about this, a lot, because I've been coming to this tournament and looking at the wrestlers on the podium,' Duke said. "I wanted to make it a reality.

"It means a lot to me but there is still more to come. I want to keep it going and win a state title. I'm looking forward to the grind during the week."

Following a first-round forfeit win, Duke pinned his next three opponents, all within one minute and 12 seconds of the first period.

Leo Venables (113 pounds) finished third and Noah Orser (126) placed sixth.

PUTNAM VALLEY's Carano family sectional wrestling titles increased by one, to



SEAN VICTOR/SUSAN DULLEA PHOTOS

Carmel 7th-grader PJ Duke stands atop podium for first of many Section 1 titles to come Saturday at Clarkstown South High.

three overall, as PV junior Will Carano won the Section 1 Division II 160-pound championship Saturday at SUNY Purchase.

It is Carano's second consecutive sectional title, which gives him bragging rights over his father and coach, Will, a sectional champion for Mahopac in the mid-'80s.

Teammate Hunter Lundberg won the 126-pound title for his first sectional championship as Putnam Valley finished fourth behind champion Pleasantville.

The Tigers finished with 12 top-six placefinishers. Shane Appell (145 pounds) and Dave Ordonez (132) were also finalists. Ordonez upset the top seed in the semifinals to reach the final.

Carano and Lundberg qualified for the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Division II (small school) Wrestling Championships, Friday-Saturday, Feb. 28-29, at the Times-Union Center in Albany.

"Winning my second section title felt good and it reassures me that what I'm doing in the practice room and on my own is working," Carano said. "And it gives me some good confidence for the states.

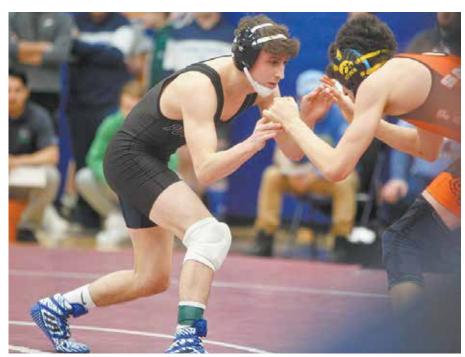
"I was super excited that Hunter got his first section title. I'm pretty sure he came in second the last two years and he's been putting in a lot of work during Putnam Valley practices and practices at Empire Wrestling Academy, so when he won he 100 percent earned it. I was also proud of the team. A lot of them are young and inexperienced, but they competed well."

Lundberg, who closed out his regular season winning the Peter Caruso (Mahopac) Tournament 126-pound title, pinned his first two opponents. Lundberg, seeded second, added the exclamation point to his day with an 11-2 major decision of first-seed Alex Santana of Pawling.

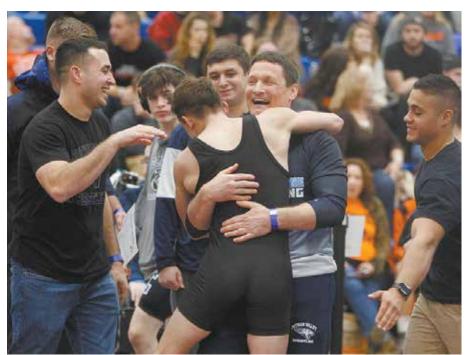
"Hunter's win was pretty special," Putnam Valley coach Will Carano said. "Hunter has always been a good, tough competitor who found that link of being relentless and finding composure. Hunter was composed from the beginning to the end and that was the difference.

"We have a young team and our goal was to get them to coalesce behind the goal trying to earn bonus points. That's what we

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Put Valley wrestler Hunter Lundberg en route to 126-pound D-II sectional title Saturday at SUNY Purchase.



PV wrestling Coach Will Carano and staff celebrate Hunter Lundberg's Section 1 D-II championship win Saturday at SUNY Purchase.

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Longtime, legendary Croton-Harmon wrestling Coach Sam Occhipinti will step down at year's end but not before he and son, David, logged another champ at Croton.

needed to be competitive with Pleasantville, Edgemont and Nanuet. We had some good matches and some big matches from some young guys. Overall, we were right where we thought we would be and it was a great thing."

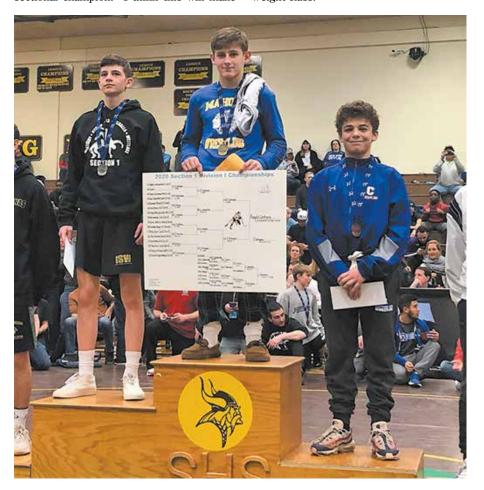
Carano will be making his second trip to the state championships and understands what needs to be done.

"From last year, I learned how the tournament runs from the prospective of someone actually wrestling in it," said the two-time sectional champion. "I think this will make

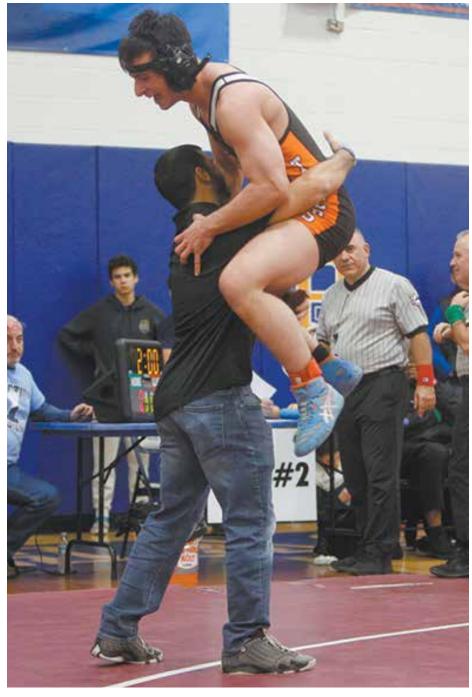
me better because I'll be more prepared and I'll know everything that's going to happen, so now I can focus on wrestling."

One year after a runner-up finish in the 99-pound weight class, **MAHOPAC** sophomore Angelo Centrone stamped his automatic bid to the state championships by winning the Division I 113-pound title.

Centrone will be making his second consecutive trip to Albany for the state championships. Last year, Centrone earned a wild card and finished fifth in the 99-pound weight class.



Mahopac's Angelo Centrone stands atop podium after winning 113-pound sectional championship Saturday. Carmel's Leo Venables (R) placed third.



Croton wrestler Edison Scutari celebrates his 195-pound title win with assistant Coach David Occhipinti at Section 1 D-II tournament.

"It's a good feeling, but it's only part of my goal as I hope to achieve a state championship," said Centrone, who is now 41-2 this season and 87-8 overall.

Centrone had an easy first day with two forfeits. He finally faced competition in the semifinals and finals, pinning both opponents.

He now will begin preparation for Albany knowing full-well what to expect.

"I know the type of environment and the competition," Centrone said. "It's going to be a dog fight, but I have two weeks to prepare myself and my goal is to win it."

Mahopac finished sixth and also had Tyler Roa (160) take third and Brock Fitzpatrick (170) was sixth.

CROTON-HARMON's Edison Scutari (195 pounds) also won his first sectional title after trailing early in the match, sending retiring Tiger Coach Sam Occhipinti off with one last champ.

HEN HUD finished 10th in the Section 1 Division I Championships and had four placefinishers, highlighted by senior captains,

Beckett Herman (132 pounds) and Michael Tosi (195), both finishing third. Kerann Belviu (152) placed fourth and Nick Cepeda (145) was sixth. Herman, Tosi and Belvu all advanced to the championship semifinals. Herman was 39-4 this season, Tosi went 35-7 and Belvu was 31-13.

Grappling Notebook

YORKTOWN came in 12th place, high-lighted by senior Andrew Finateri, the 120-pound runner-up. Finateri completed his career with a season record of 38-5 and overall mark of 136-26 for coach Eric Fama. Senior Dean Patierno (145) and Christian Sinagra (170) each placed fourth after reaching the championship semifinals.

OSSINING had three placefinishers in 285-pound runner-up Joe Nolan, Jonathan Benitez (106) who placed fifth and Tristan Robinson-July (132) who was sixth.

BREWSTER's Matt Henry (170) and Austin Matra (285) were sixth-place finishers. Giovanni Russo (113) of **LAKELAND/PANAS** and **SOMERS'** Thomas Gall (220) each placed fourth.

Girls' Hoops Notebook

Don't Sleep on Sailors in Class A; Ossining Likes its Path in Class AA

Hen Hud, Panas on Collision Course; Put Valley's Time is Now; Tough Road for 'Pac

By Ray Gallagher Examiner Sports Editor@Directrays

The Section 1 basketball Gods might have been looking out for nine-time defending Class AA champion OSSINING last Thursday when the postseason seeds were released. Coach Dan Ricci's Pride (12-8), who were good enough to earn the League I-D title (the 20th in 27 seasons), are not the same team we've become accustomed to the last decade, but they drew the No.6 seed, which puts them on the opposite side of the bracket from top-seeded Ursuline -- No.4 in NYS -- and fourth-seeded Magnus (No.14 in NYS), arguably the top two favorites in the tournament.

"I do like the fact that we avoided what we think are the two best teams until the finals," Coach Ricci admitted of the somewhat favorable draw, taking nothing away from No.3 Lourdes (No.23 in NYS), Ossining's likely quarterfinal opponent on Feb.28 should the Pride survive a first-round bout with No.11 Fox Lane.

And while Ossining looks to have benefitted from the draw, No.5 MAHOPAC did not. Coach Chuck Scozzafava's Indians (14-6) are in line for an opening-round tip-off at home against No.11 RCK, a League I-A foe they manhandled twice in the regular season, before hitting the road in a likely quarterfinal Feb. 28 showdown with Magnus (16-4) where a Final 4 berth will be on the line and an eventual semifinal date with Ursuline. For all the good that has come out of youthful Mahopac's superb season, the Indians sure drew the short straw in terms of the playoff brackets. Look at it this way, the In-



Yorktown senior G Jesse Barer gets up for bucket in Huskers' 50-38 Class A outbracket win over Nanuet Saturday.



BOB CASTNER/ RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS

Mahopac's Caitlyn O'Boyle and Hen Hud's Caitlin Weimar will need big post-season efforts to get their teams to County Center.

dians would be hard-pressed to win a title this year no matter who they drew, but 2020 is all about 2021, and the experience they draw from this should propel them next season; what should be one of Mahopac's finest since the days of Adrienne Blount and Sarah Fixler (just after the turn of the century).

Class AA CARMEL, the No.17 seed, defeated No.16 Port Chester, 64-47, to qualify for the field of 16 and a date with No.1 Ursuline. Caroline McIntyre (17 points) was one of four double-digit scorers for Carmel, including Madelyn McMath (14), Caitlyn Webber (12) and Danielle Bello (11).

"This was a great team win, and I'm so proud of the effort and teamwork displayed today," Carmel Coach John Sullivan said.

CLASS A

Looming on the horizon is a potential No.2 HEN HUD vs. No.7 WALTER PANAS quarterfinal match-up, which would feature some of the region's top talents between two programs separated by just seven miles of backroads via Watch Hill Rd. How will Panas boss Matt Evangalista shut down

Hen Hud's Marist-bound senior F Caitlin Weimar, the walking double-double with triple-double potential? How will Sailor boss Ken Sherman, who guides the state-ranked (No.20) Sailors, counter the feisty Panthers' depth and Final 4 experience, including a bevy of players who reached the sectional semis a year ago? Panas (14-6) will have to dispatch No.10 Clarkstown South first, and two-time defending League II-E champion Hen Hud (19-1) will need to handle No.15 YORKTOWN, a 50-34 winner over No.18 Nanuet in Saturday's Class A outbracket. Coach Brian Mundy's Huskers (10-11) stand as one major obstacle; the team the Sailors must defeat in the opening round to move one. Yorktown, though, is looking to bust up a bracket.

The Huskers broke open the Nanuet win with a strong second-quarter surge (a 13-5 run), and saw junior F Ashley Zeollas drop 12 of her 17 points to break open a close game after the half. Sophomore Melissa Severino added 13 points for Yorktown while freshman Emily Ward went for eight



Mahopac junior Mia Klammer's youthful, 5thseeded Indians have a tough road to Class AA Final 4.

points. Which brings Yorktown to Hen Hud whom they lost to by just eight points back in mid-January. But should the Sailors and Panthers take care of business, we're looking at a very juicy quarterfinal match-up with County Center ramifications.

"Very bittersweet no matter how it goes," Hen Hud Coach Ken Sherman said. "Coach Evangalista and I are good friends, so I'm not crazy about playing them to get to the County Center, and every other year we are rooting for Panas. That said, we will not look past Yorktown."

No.14 **BREWSTER** squeaked past No.19 Eastchester, 55-47 in OT, and will visit No.3 Tappan Zee in the opening round. Bear Adrianna Calicchia (9 points) was undaunted at the charity stripe in OT, hitting 4 for 4 from the line to seal the deal. Alexis Mark posted a monster double-double (20 points, 10 rebounds) for the Bears while F Grace Galgano was one blocked shy of an incredible triple-double (18 points, 14 rebounds, 9 blocks).

CLASS B

The time is now for second-seeded **PUT-NAM VALLEY**, ranked No.12 in NYS. Re-

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Eagles back in Dec. Coach Dini suspects her squad is ready for prime-time play, having gained the necessary experience in years past. She is also fully aware of Croton hotshot Anna Eng and Captain Nicki Bugliosi, who won't go down without a fight, should they get past Dobbs.

blown a big-time lead in a 49-44 loss to the

"I feel good about what we've done to get this far and I feel we're prepared well for this," Dini said. "I thought our schedule was challenging with good balance to prepare us for playoffs this year. I definitely feel ready but Class B is wide open, and I want to take it game by game. There are even a lot of lower seeds that can beat anybody and no game will be easy. I have a great feeling about this team and hope we can stay healthy and continue to play well on both ends through play-

All that said, 2019 sectional runner-up Briarcliff, ranked No.1 in NYS, should ultimate-

> ly lie in wait as a likely final obstacle, provided the Tigers can get past third-seeded and state-ranked (No.18) Hastings, whom they beat 54-41 previously, in the in semis. Briarcliff, though full of history and well coached

Somers' Dani DiCintio (4) and Jordan May, as well as Panas' Kristin Scrobola, are well prepared for the Class A post season.

under Don Hamlin, enters the tournament in a state of anxiety, having lost its last two games of the season to Pearl River and rival Pleasantville. The Tigers are a confident bunch, though, built for NOW.



No 15 Valhalla (8-12) at No. 2 Putnam Valley (16-3), 4:30 p.m.

No. 10 Dobbs Ferry (9-11) at No. 7 Croton (12-8), 4:30 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 21

No. 9 Yonkers (16-4) at No. 8 Somers

(13-7), 4:30 p.m.

No. 14 Brewster (12-9) at No. 3 Tappan Zee (15-5), 5 p.m.

Girls' Hoops Notebook

No. 15 Yorktown (10-11) at No. 2 Hen Hud (19-1), 5 p.m.

No. 10 Clarkstown South (11-9) at No. 7 Panas (14-6), 5 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 22

No. 17 Carmel (6-15) at No. 1 Ursuline (20-0), 11 a.m.

No. 12 Ketcham (9-11) at No. 5 Mahopac (14-6), 2 p.m.

No. 11 Fox Lane (10-10) at No. 6 Ossining (12-8), 12 p.m.



Yorktown freshman G Emily Ward goes for two of her six points in Huskers' 50-38 Class A outbracket win over Nanuet Saturday.

cent playoff failures need to be put in the rear-view mirror and chalked up to both inexperience and having faced a Section 1 legend in Woodlands' Syracuse-bound G Teisha Hyman. PV Coach Kristi Dini's onceyouthful Tigers (16-3), who did not have a



Yorktown junior F Haley Caricati looks for open teammates in Huskers' 50-38 Class A outbracket win over Nanuet Saturday.



Putnam Valley's starting five is built for now and aiming for 1st Section 1 title in school history.



Boys' Hoops Notebook

Yorktown's Brucaj Leading by Example; No Easy Draws for Locals

By Ray Gallagher Examiner Sports Editor@Directrays

Yorktown senior captain Roni Brucaj should run clinics on taking charges. The 6'2" forward has taken over 50 charges for the 16th-seeded Huskers (11-10), including four in Yorktown's 70-62 Section 1 Class A outbracket win over visiting No.17 Lincoln last Saturday.

In addition, Brucaj dropped a game-high 23 points to go with nine boards while teammates Jared Faivre (12 points) and Rob Miller (8 points, 6 steals) came up huge.

"You talk about rim protectors as guys who block shots," Yorktown Coach Mark Pavella said, "but Roni does it by sacrificing his body for the good of the team. He's played selfless basketball all year. Roni and Rob Miller, our other captain, have provided great leadership for our young team."

Led by Brucaj, Yorktown has come a long way, baby. After finishing third in its own tournament in December and starting the season at 1-6, the Huskers were an after-thought, but a late-January/early-February surge has seen Coach Pavella's Huskers win seven of the last nine, including a 56-53 shocker over rival Lakeland, which had won nine in a row, on Feb. 10th.

In that game, Yorktown junior F Tony Granitto (17 points, 10 rebounds) and Brucaj (15 points, 7 rebounds), were instrumental in the upset.

"It was horrendous, we couldn't do anything right," Lakeland senior sniper Jack



BOB CASTNER/RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS

Yorktown junior F Anthony Granitto attacks rack in Huskers' 70-62 Class A outbracket win over Lincoln Saturday.

Kruse said.

Give Yorktown credit, though, because the Huskers, win or lose against top-seeded Tappan Zee this Friday, became relevant by following the tone set by Brucaj. Nicely, done, boys!

NWE/PUTNAM HIGH FIVE HOOPS POLL

No.1 LAKELAND Coach Fallo's Class A No.5 Hornets (16-4, 9-1 II-C), winners in 9 of last 10, suffered a tough loss to Yorktown down the stretch, which dropped them two spots in the bracket and set up a tough openinground game against Clarkstown South, which has been a solid Class AA team much of the last decade. No.6 Poughkeepsie, the reigning state champs, should be on deck if the Hornets survive the Vikings, but the road to the Final 4 is as tough for Lakeland as anyone out there. Whoa!

No.2 PANAS --Coach Auerbach's Class A No.9 Panthers (13-7, 7-3 II-C) also got a tough draw in that they will have to go south to No.8 Harrison before seeing No.1 Tappan Zee in the quarters. The Huskies, who just lost to Sleepy (6-14) and barely beat Mahopac, can be had, for sure, but the state-ranked (No.19) Dutchies are a tall order for a youthful Panas club on the road in that hostile environment.

No.3 TOWN Coach Pavella's Class A No.16 Huskers (9-9, 4-4 II-C) went to town on No.17 Lincoln in a 70-62 win behind Brucaj (23 points, nine rebounds), and now they will embrace opening-round challenge from topseeded Tappan Zee, the 2019 runner-up.

No.4 MAHOPAC
-- Coach McMahon's
Class AA No.13 Indians (10-10, 3-5 I-A)

will have to stand tall at No.4 Mount Vernon, the program Mahopac just can't seem to avoid in the playoffs for much of the last decade (at least 4th time since 2011). Still, pretty sure McMahon would sign in blood for 10-10 regular season when he took over last

summer, all things considered. Sophomore class is loaded with athleticism, so things are looking rosier in the future.

No.5 HALDANE -- Coach Virgadamo's Class C No.2 Blue Devils (15-5, 5-1 III-E) get a free pass to County Center to face No.3 rival Tuckahoe, which has won four of the last five, so getting to top-seeded, state-ranked (No.4) Hamilton, which has few weaknesses, is no sure thing for a Blue Devil unit that is surely built for now.

No.5A OSSINING -- Coach Casey's Class AA No.15 Pride (8-13, 2-5 I-D) were hitting everything they threw up in 84-73 outbracket win over No.18 Carmel Saturday. Khy'Leil Hawkins notched a careerhigh 39 points and dished five assists while Jaeden Carr (28 points, 14 assists) was swishing and dishing with the best of them. They combined to hit 12 3-pointers, including seven from Hawkins and hope for more of the same against state-ranked (No.18) two-



Yorktown senior F Sean Vogel gets up for two points in Huskers' 70-62 Class A outbracket win Saturday.

seed Horace Greeley in the opening round. Greeley swept the Pride this season, so...

HM CROTON -- Coach Boykin's Class B No.9 Tigers (11-9, 5-3 III-A) had been on a roll before season-ending loss to Hen Hud,

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Yorktown captain Roni Brucaj continued to do all the dirty work for Huskers in 70-62 Class A outbracket win over Lincoln Saturday.



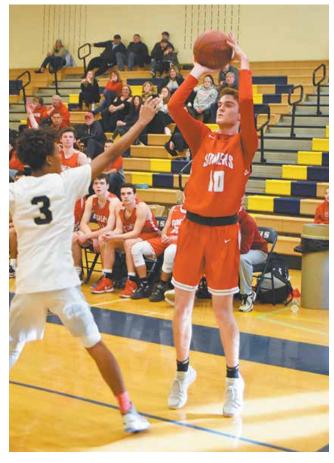
Yorktown junior G Jared Faivre scored two of his 12 points in Huskers' 70-62 Class A outbracket win over Lincoln Saturday.

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Boys' Hoops Notebook







outbracket loss to host Beacon Saturday.

Class A outbracket loss at Beacon Saturday.

Somers junior G Robert Repp drives lane in Tuskers' 57-37 Class A Somers junior Henry Gilroy gains basebaline in Tuskers' 57-37 Somers senior F Kenny McGrane fires jumper in Tuskers' 57-37 Class A outbracket loss to host Beacon.

and that pivotal loss put them on a quarterfinal path against No.1 Hastings. Been a good run but the Yellow Jackets, ranked No.7 in NYS, have been next level all season.

HM PEEKSKILL -- Coach Turner's Class A No.15 Red Devils (10-10, 4-4 II-E) saw Brennan Heaven lead the way with 23 points in a 69-64 win over No.18 Eastchester Saturday when four Red Devils hit for in double dig-

its, including Antonio Taylor (18 points), Javon Reed (12) and Jayson Tinsley had 10. Reed broke it open with three-straight 3's to build a 16-point second-quarter lead for the Red Devs, who draw No.2 Byram Hills in what is sure to be a hellacious opening round game.

HM SOMERS -- Coach DiCintio's Class A No.20 Tuskers (7-14, 4-6 II-C) hardly resembled the program we've seen the last 6-8 years in a 57-37 Class A outbracket loss to No.13 Beacon. Momma told me if ya' got nothing nice to say, don't say anything at all, so we'll just say this offseason is pivotal if Somers is going to contend in 2021.

HM CARMEL -- Coach Ross' Class AA Rams (8-13, 1-7 I-D) earned a No.18 seed and saw torch-passing Jarid Garcia and torch-receiving Drew Fiore drop 20 points apiece but it wasn't enough in an 84-73 season-ending loss to No.15 Ossining.

HM HEN HUD -- Coach Hirsch's Class A Sailors (5-15, 0-8 II-E) lost so much talent the last couple years, so it was only normal they take a few steps back. The Hiltsley boys are certainly something worth building upon, so get after it, gang!

HM PUTNAM VALLEY -- Coach Morales' Class B No.18 Tigers (3-17, 1-5 III-E) had to get back their uni's after discovering

they'd met the outbracket criteria, but they were quickly returned again upon a 56-50 loss to No.15 Pawling. Don't fret, the pipeline has some talent from 4th grade on up, so PV won't be down for long.

HM BREWSTER - Coach Nelligan's Bears (4-16, 0-10 II-C) did not qualify for postseason play and can now turn to what we suspect is a fruitful baseball campaign.

LOCAL PLAYOFF SCHEDULE Class B first round Thursday, Feb. 20

No. 9 Croton-Harmon (11-9) at No. 8 Bronxville (13-7), 7 p.m.

Class A first round Friday, Feb. 21

No. 15 Peekskill (11-10) at No. 2

Byram Hills (17-3), 5 p.m. No. 12 Clarkstown South (11-9) at No. 5 Lakeland (16-4), 5 p.m.

No. 16 Yorktown (11-10) at No. 1 Tappan Zee (18-2), 7

No. 9 Panas (13-7) at No. 8 Harrison (15-5), 7 p.m.

Class AA first round Saturday, Feb. 22

No. 13 Mahopac (10-10) at No. 4 Mount Vernon (11-9), 12 p.m.

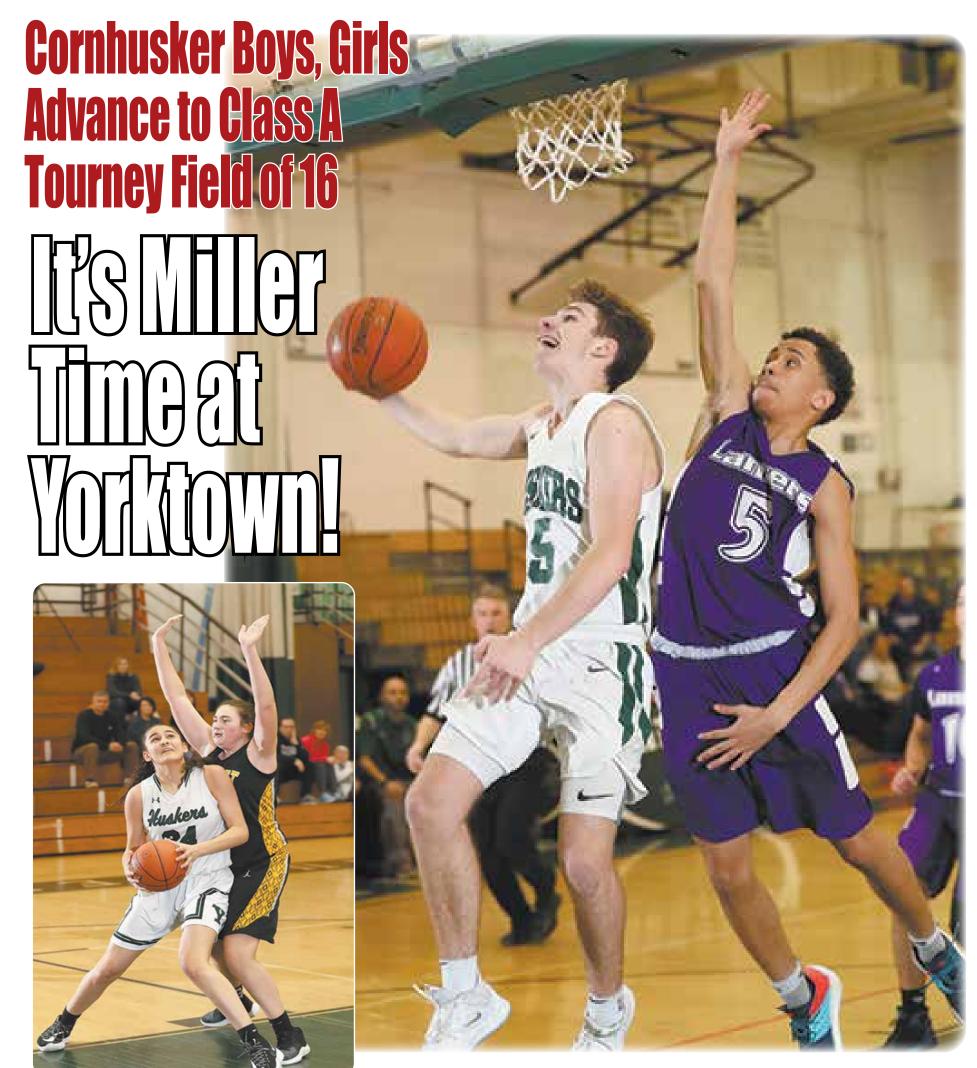
No. 15 Ossining (8-13) at No. 2 Horace Greeley (17-3), 2 p.m.



Somers junior G Matt Lipski fires contested J in Tuskers' 57-37 Class A outbracket loss to host Beacon Saturday.



Somers senior G Andrew Lasher meets Beacon defender in visiting Tuskers' 57-37 Class A outbracket loss Saturday.



BOB CASTNER PHOTOS (PLEASE VISIT WWW.CASTNERPHOTO.NET FOR MORE)

With back-to-back out-bracket wins at home last Saturday, the Yorktown boys, including high-flying senior captain Rob Miller (8 points, 6 steals), and the 15th-seeded Yorktown girls, including junior F Ashley Zeolla (inset), advanced to the field of 16 Class A teams in their respective basketball tournaments, which tip-off this Friday on the road. The Yorktown boys, who next face top-seeded Tappan Zee, saw senior captain Roni Brucaj score 23 points, snag nine rebound and draw four more charges (now over 50 for the season) in a 70-62 win over Lincoln while Zeolla broke open a close game with 12 of her 17 points in second quarter in the Huskers' 50-38 over Nanuet, propelling Yorktown to an opening-round bout with No.2 Hen Hud... see Boys', Girls' Hoops Notebooks