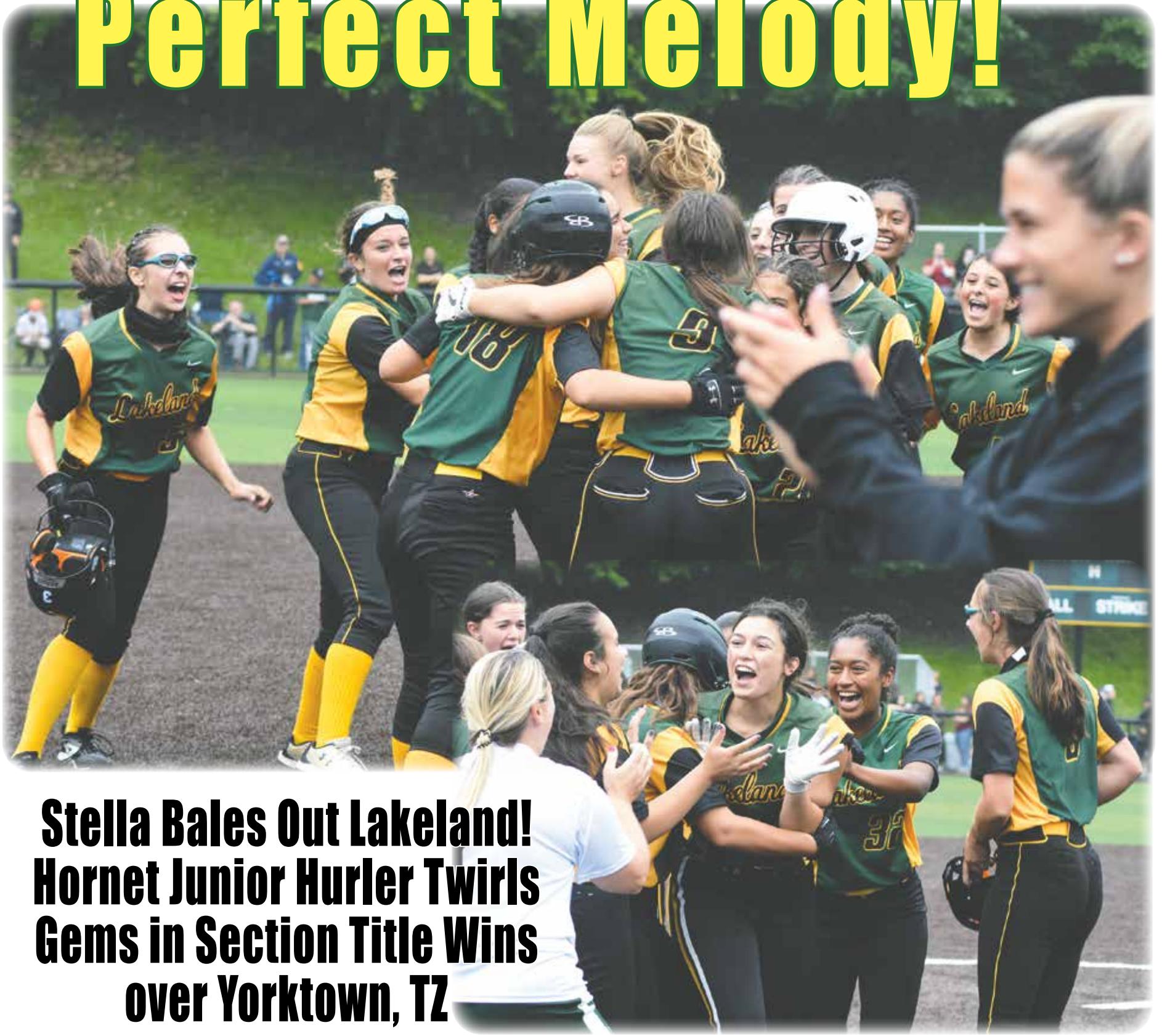


# Examiner Sports

## Perfect Melody!



**Stella Bales Out Lakeland!  
Hornet Junior Hurler Twirls  
Gems in Section Title Wins  
over Yorktown, TZ**

RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS

Lakeland players, including ace P Stella Bale (L), react to Melody Rubino's (center, inset) game-winning, walk-off bunt single in the bottom of the 12th, which gave the top-seeded Hornets a 1-0 Section 1-A title win over No.2 Yorktown Saturday when Bale and Husker chucker Maya Servedio combined to strike out 41 batters in an epic pitcher's duel the likes of which we've never seen in these parts. Lakeland went on to win the overall Class A title Sunday in a somewhat anticlimactic 7-0 thrashing of Tappan Zee at Arlington High School... see Softball Notebook

# Mahopac Cops 1st Section 1 Title, Lakeland Tops Yorktown, TZ for 2nd



Mahopac players celebrate C Michelle DellaMura's game-saving tag at plate in 1-0 Section 1 AA title win over North Rockland Saturday.

**By Tony Pinciaro & Ray Gallagher**

We have seen great individual pitchers hailing from the Westchester/Putnam regions of Section 1 before, but Mahopac senior Shannon Becker and juniors, Stella Bale of Lakeland, and Maya Servedio of Yorktown, form one of the finest trios we've ever seen in this neck of the woods. The three chuckers combined to strike out 78 batters over the course of four championship games last weekend; Bale combining for 40 in the Section 1 Class A-1/A-2 finals in wins over Yorktown and Tappan Zee, Becker dropping 18 likes flies in the Indians' 1-0 Class AA title victory over North Rockland and Servedio sitting down

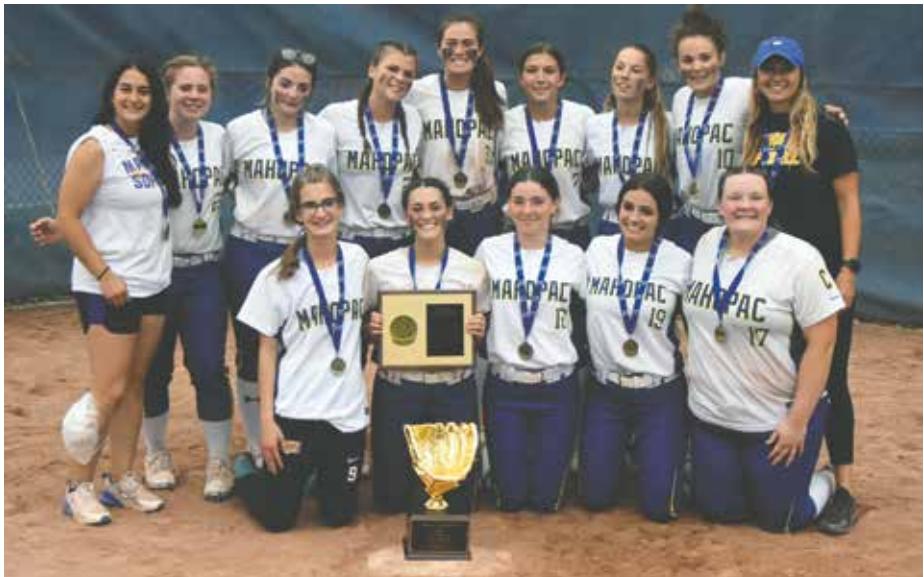
20 in a losing champion effort at Lakeland.

"I can't recall a time when we've had three pitchers in a 15-mile radius dominate like these three have," 31-year veteran Lakeland Coach Steve Fallo said. "All three will go on to have dominant college careers, they're that special."

That kind of "Special" produced a pair of sectional championships for Examiner-area teams.

## CLASS AA

It was only fitting that shortstop Ava Lichtenberger delivered the biggest hit in MAHOPAC softball history after making the most important defensive play in



Mahopac players and coaches pose with first Section 1 title trophies in school history after Saturday's 1-0 Section 1 Class AA title win over North Rockland.

program annals.

Lichtenberger singled in Gianna LoFaro with the winning run in the bottom of the 10th inning, sending top-seeded Mahopac to a 1-0 win over visiting second-seeded North Rockland in the Section 1 Class AA softball final.

It was the first sectional title for the Mahopac softball program and second 1-0 walk-off win over North Rockland this season. Mahopac achieved this title because Lichtenberger made a huge defensive play in the top of the 10th inning. The freshman shortstop fielded a relay and fired home a strike to catcher Michelle DellaMura, who applied the tag to get the North Rockland baserunner.

"The 10th inning was crazy," Notre Dame-bound Mahopac pitcher Shannon Becker said. "They put pressure on us as they started with a runner on second and our shortstop, Ava Lichtenberger, made an

amazing throw to the plate and Michelle made an amazing tag. They picked us up and it was so exciting. We brought that energy into the bottom half of the inning and Ava again came through with an RBI single. I'm so happy for her. It was such an exciting inning and those are the exciting moments why you play the game."

Winning the title on a walk-off on your home field made it more special for Mahopac, especially for Mahopac Coach Cristina Giansante's seniors.

"It was surreal when we scored the winning run," Becker said. "Proud is an understatement to describe how I felt. We worked so hard and to see it all pay off is so rewarding. Going out my senior season as a champion is so amazing and I wouldn't have wanted to end my career any other way. I am so fortunate to be a part of this team and I was filled with joy."

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Mahopac players swarm freshman Ava Lichtenberger after her clutch RBI single gave Indians 1-0 Class AA title win over North Rockland.

RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS



Mahopac freshman Ava Lichtenberger delivers game-winning RBI single in Indians' 1-0 Section 1 Class AA title win over North Rockland Saturday.

# Sports



Mahopac C Michelle DellaMura makes clutch tag play on relay throw from SS Eva Lichtenberger in 1-0 win over North Rockland.

*continued from previous page*

Becker was her usual dominant self in beating North Rockland for the second time this season. Becker spun a three-hitter and struck out 18 in registering her 18th shutout of the season without allowing an earned run all year.

Even though Becker blanked North Rockland in a regular-season matchup, she and DellaMura did their homework in preparation for the final.

"We knew North Rockland was a really strong team coming in," Becker said. "They've proved to be a top contender this year, and after beating them 1-0 on a walk off

when we played them in regular season we knew it was gonna be a great game and we'd have to give it everything we have to get the win. They're a great team and we were prepared for a tough fight. Michelle and I reviewed what the batters did against us last time and planned pitches for each batter."

For the second time this season, Becker and North Rockland sophomore windmiller Delaney McGovern were locked in a pitcher's duel. Becker was in her zone in the first inning.

"I wanted to set a tone from the start and when I struck out the side the first inning I

*continued on next page*



Her eyes were wide open until Mahopac 1B Lauren Zecca knew she locked down out in 1-0 win over North Rockland.



Few things in life are as sure as bond between a pitcher -- Shannon Becker (L) -- and her catcher -- Michelle DellaMura, as evidenced after 1-0 win over North Rockland.



Lakeland 1B Hannah Matusiak stretches for put-out on Yorktown's Elaina Ornstein in 1-0 Hornet win.

# Softball Notebook



Lakeland SS Shannon Scotto slides in safely at 3B before tag from Yorktown's Adrianna Albano in Hornets' 1-0 win over Huskers

*continued from previous page*

knew I felt good," Becker said. "I went out there hyped for the game and I think that helped me start out strong and get through the game."

Becker credited McGovern with also pitching an excellent game.

"Delaney did a great job attacking the inside half of the plate," Becker said. "She got a lot of us jammed or to pop out and I think once we got a couple at-bats we went up to the plate with better plans and had better approaches at the plate towards the end of the game. She has proved to be a great pitcher and I knew it was going to be close. I give her a lot of credit for throwing two great games against us and she's going to do great the rest of her high school career."

Becker pointed out she was focused throughout because every pitch mattered.

"In tight games, it's much easier to stay focused because each pitch and each play matters," said Becker, who singled and doubled. "It pushes me to stay focused. After a pitcher pitches a great game like that, no one wants to be the loser, so I'm pushed

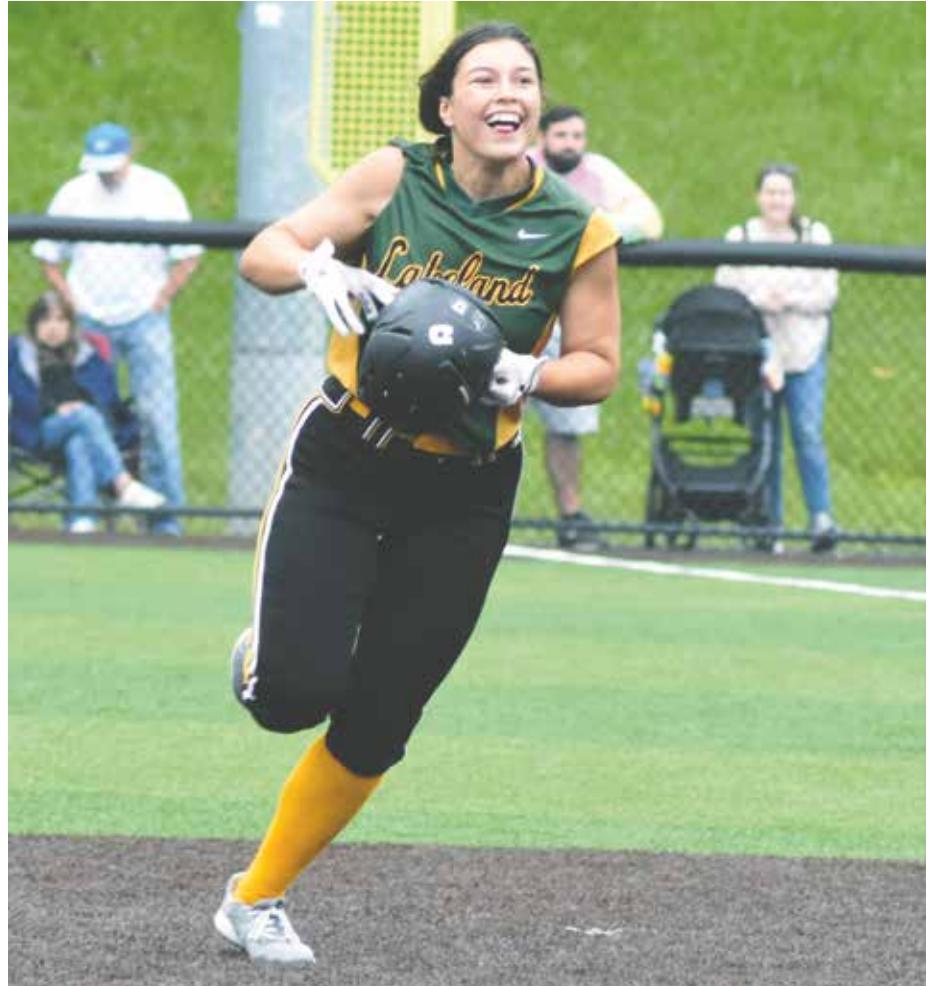
even more to give it everything I have."

Mahopac had been waiting for the opportunity at a sectional title after coming up a round short in 2019 (semi-final loss to John Jay East Fishkill) and not having a 2020 spring season because of covid.

"This time last year, we were devastated with the news that our entire season would be cancelled," Becker said. "Things turned around and a year from that moment, we wound up section champs. We're so fortunate to have had a traditional section tournament and have a chance to fight for the title in the entire section."

"Winning this title is so surreal. This team was amazing and we deserved it so much. We worked so hard and I think after losing a heartbreaker in 2019 and 2020 being cancelled, we were hungry to finally do it. And we did. I am so thrilled and couldn't have asked for a better way to wrap up my Mahopac career."

Mahopac finished the season at 19-1.



Lakeland C Melody Rubino gets emotional after delivering game-winning, walk-off bunt in 1-0 sectional title win over Yorktown.

#### CLASS A

Stella Bale was not going to allow **LAKELAND** to be denied last weekend. The junior RHP tossed a three-hitter and struck out a career-high 21, sending top-seeded host Lakeland to a 1-0 walk-off win in 12 innings Saturday over second-seeded **YORKTOWN** in the Section 1 Class A-1 softball final.

Senior C Melody Rubino bunted home Amanda Cohen with the decisive run to give the Hornets the title.

Bale followed that win up with another shutout, 7-0, over A-2 champion Tappan Zee in the A1-A2 championship game Sunday at Arlington. Bale rang up 19 strikeouts giving her 319 for the season and 40 K's over her final two games.

"Stella's performance against Yorktown was absolutely outstanding," said senior 1B Hannah Matusiak. "Stella manages to do something amazing every game and is by far the best pitcher I ever played with."

Lakeland defeated Yorktown, 3-0, in the regular season. Yorktown pitcher Maya Servedio was matching Bale zero for zero. Servedio struck out 20 and scattered seven hits. The two pitchers allowed one free pass apiece in what could only be described as the duel of the decade.

"I didn't know how the game would play out, but I knew both teams would give it their all," Matusiak said.

Once the game went to the 10th inning and the international tie-breaker rule was instituted -- last batted out of the previous inning starts the 10th inning on second base -- Matusiak said it became even more intense.

"That game was the most nerve-wracking game I've ever played in, but we all kept each other calm," Matusiak said. "Once we went to the international tiebreaker, it made us play harder as a team."

The nerves and tension turned to celebration when Cohen touched the plate to end the game, scoring upon Rubino's well-placed bunt.

"When the winning run scored I was beyond happy and have never felt such an amazing feeling," Matusiak said. "It felt *continued on next page*



As expected, close-knit Yorktown players took 1-0 Class A-1 title loss to host Lakeland hard Saturday.



Like so many others in this epic battle, Yorktown's Alyssa Buck had a tough time figuring out the opposing pitcher in 1-0 loss to Lakeland.

# Sports



Lakeland players and coaches bask in glow of their 7-0 Section 1 Class A title win over Tappan Zee Sunday.

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like the whole world stopped and it was just me and my team celebrating on the field together, especially after the 2019 final and then not having a junior season. This was special for me and the other seniors. I'm so proud of our team and am beyond grateful for this season."

In the win over Tappan Zee, Ava Knopf had two hits, including a home run, drove in two runs and scored twice. Lakeland senior SS Shannon Scotto and Leah Cohen also had two hits and two RBI and Ryleigh Melendez added two hits and a run scored.

Lakeland closed the season with an 11-game winning streak to finish 18-2 while securing the second title in the last four tries years for 31-year veteran Coach Steve Fallo, who called bale the greatest windmiller in Lakeland history.

"Stella is unlike any pitcher we've ever had at Lakeland, she's simply the best," Fallo said.

**YORKTOWN** Coach Samantha Fernandez said her team, which finished 17-4, surprised a lot of people this season.

"The girls played hard the whole time and I'm so proud of them for the season we had," Fernandez said. "We proved how good we truly are. I couldn't have asked for a better season."

"The Lakeland game was probably the best game I've ever coached here at Yorktown, despite the loss. I was still super proud of hte girls for fighting till the end. Congratulations to Lakeland."

Charlotte Constantine had two of Yorktown's hits off of Bale and Servedio, just a junior, will return as one of the section's top hurlers. Lakeland vs. Yorktown; expect more of the same in the future.



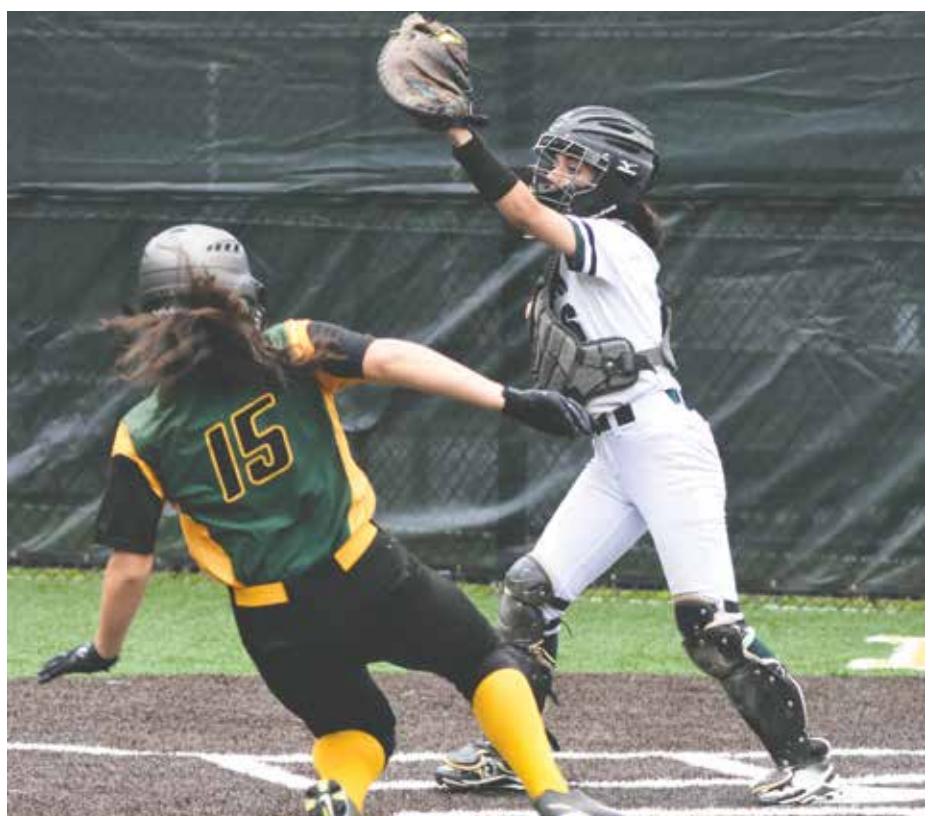
Yorktown's Olivia Fasce slides in safely after tripling in 1-0 Class A-1 title loss to Lakeland Saturday.



Despite bringing her best game face and whiffing 20 batters, Yorktown's Maya Servedio took a 1-0 loss in section final.



Yorktown C Elaina Ornstein gets some ups before umpires ruled an early release on tag play in Huskers' 1-0 loss to host Lakeland.



Yorktown C Elaina Ornstein gets force out on Lakeland's Leah Cohen in Huskers' 1-0 loss to Hornets.

# Carmel Mashes, Bashes Down Championship Door

*Rams Win 1st Section 1 Class AA Title in 31 Years; White Plains, Byram Hills Fall in Late Rounds*



Carmel Rams pose with first Section 1 Class AA title plaque since 1990 after 5-1 win over mighty RCK Saturday.

By Ray Gallagher  
Examiner Sports Editor @Directrays  
& Rob DiAntonio @RJD\_Photos

Imagine hitting above .400 all season, hovering near .460 at season's end, yet somehow flying under the radar: Welcome to the 2021 spring of Matt Demme. The All-Section Carmel senior, playing in the shadows of UConn-bound senior Jack Sullivan and Iona-bound senior Anthony Febo, helped carry Coach Joe Hackert's fourth-seeded Rams to their first Section 1 Class AA championship in 31 years last Saturday when visiting Carmel flirted with

first-inning disaster only to post a 5-1 win over perennial powerhouse Roy C. Ketcham, the No.2 seed.

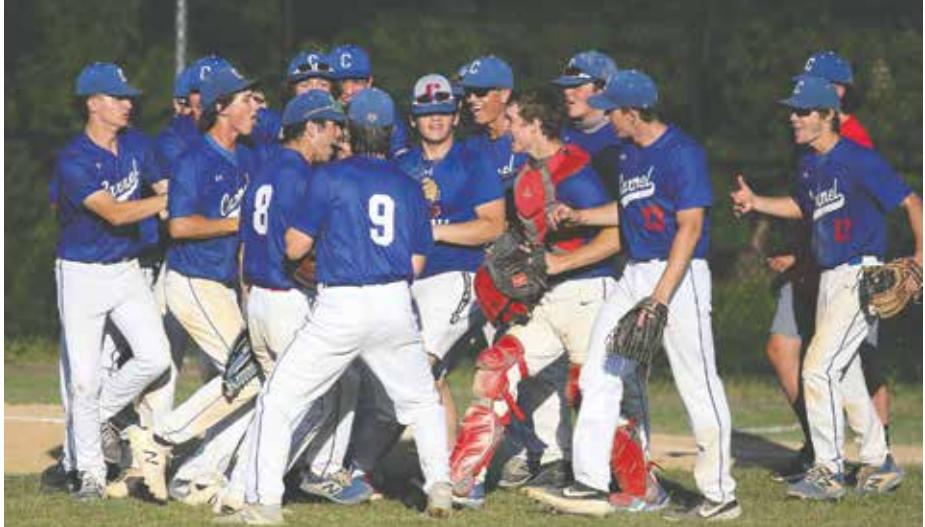
"Hands down, Matt was the most unheralded star in Section 1 this season, hands down," Hackert exclaimed after watching Demme deliver two hits and three RBI, including a two-run single after RCK Coach Pat Mealy intentionally walked Ronnie Shoff to get to Demme in a critical four-run fourth. "Matt carried us at times. If Febo or Sullivan weren't hitting on those rare days, Matt came up huge for us and he did so again throughout the playoffs."

Demme went through a mental phase as a junior when he couldn't hit the broad side of a barn during summer ball, but Hackert took the bat out of his hands and talked the kid off the ledge.

"We literally sat down and laughed about how poorly he was hitting," the coach said. "Sometimes it helps to laugh at yourself, and so he comes in this year and just tears the cover off the ball and gives us quality innings as a No.2 starter in every game he pitched this season. Honestly, when the season started, I would have put up three other kids for All-Section ahead of Matt, but he was unbelievable."

Unbelievable is going 31 years, since 1990, in fact, without a title and then going to RCK to win the first since former Coach Bob Shilling did so three decades ago. RCK is home to 11 league titles, six Section 1 championships, three regional crowns, three state Final Four appearances and one state title.

Sullivan survived



Carmel players celebrate 6-5 come-from-behind win over White Plains in Section 1 Class AA semis before beating RCK 5-1 for 1st title in 31 years Saturday.

a shaky first inning but escaped further damage when Miele opted for a first-inning suicide squeeze, which popped into the air for an inning-ending double play.

"That was huge," Hackert said. "That was our first big defensive play but shortstop Kevin Dall made another later in the game when he went up 10-feet high to snare a line drive to his glove side to get us out of another potential jam."

Sullivan went on to assume command of his slider, which was so effective it rendered the Indians scoreless over the final six frames. Sully slotted fastballs and bent sliders with equal effectiveness, whiffing 10 and scattering four hits.

"Him and I were in sync all day," said Febo, who scored twice to finish with 27 runs in 22 games. He tore the cover off the ball, finishing with a .493 BA, five dingers and 34 RBI. "We just knew what type of team we were up against. I knew exactly what to call. Jack is a stud. He has been a stud from freshman year and he showed up today. It was an insane win and I am just proud of my team and the fight we had all year."

Sullivan's fight was evident since he bulldogged his way onto the scene as a fresh-faced 14-year-old back in 2017. Fast forward four years and we're looking at Player of the Year material: .542 BA, 5 HR, 14 2B, 42 RBI, 27 R in 22 games at the dish; 5-1 1.44 ERA, .175 BA on the mound.

"We threw Sullivan and Febo to the wolves as freshman, then did the same with six of seven sophomores the next year, so we took some lumps early on," Hackert said. "But it got to the point where I only step in here and there to call parts of the game. Febo and Sullivan call their own game now. After four years together, I felt they earned that right. They have built such a rapport. Jack struggled in the first innings as he has at times this season before he figures out what's working. Once he established his slider from the second inning on, they were done. To go through RCK like he did gave us chills watching. RCK is the barometer, the team you measure yourself against every year. When you go in there and win you show

mental toughness, and we believe our kids have that after what we put them through as freshmen and sophomores. It paid off today."

And did so all year during an historical season that saw the team rock 21 homers, drive home 206 RBI, mash 239 hits and bat .383 as a team. In the fourth, RCK's St. John's-bound ace Xavier Kolhosser could not keep the Rams at bay. Nick Montagna's long double to left tied the game. Sullivan followed with an RBI single for a 2-1 lead before Demme provided some insurance for Sullivan with a clutch two-run single that made it 4-1. Game over!

"They loved every minute of playing baseball together," Hackert said. "We're in a nail-biter with RCK and these kids are coming off the field or sitting in the dugout all smiles, totally unfazed and always had each other's backs. I've got to believe this was one of the best hitting teams in Section 1 in a long time. I've never seen anything like it."

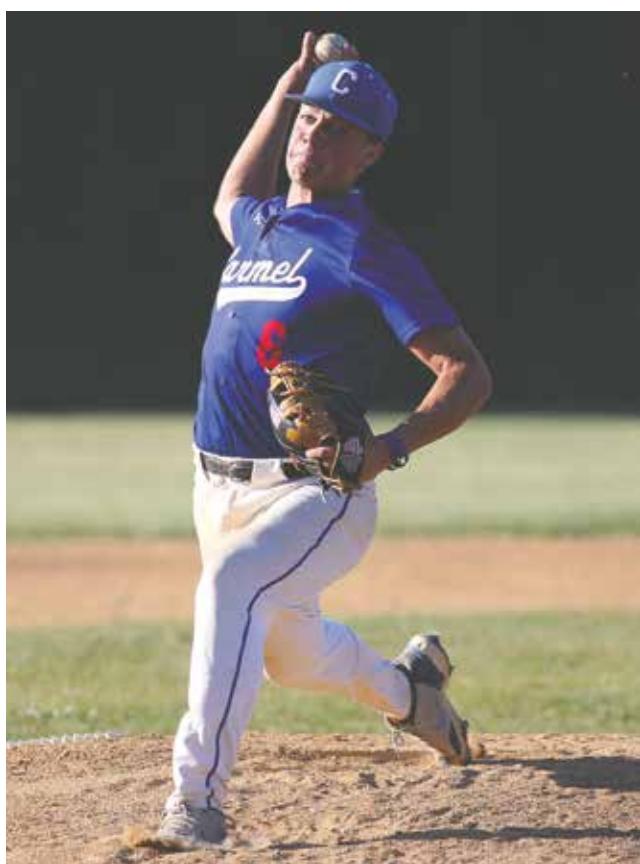
And neither had Carmel High, for at least 31 years.

In Thursday's 6-5 semifinal win over White Plains, the Rams were not at their best, committing three errors, but they pounded out 11 hits and overcame a 5-3 deficit with three runs in the fifth. Demme went 6-2/3rds for the win, fanning six Tigers. Sullivan and Jon McIntyre had three hits apiece for the Rams.

The Rams also topped No.5 Suffern, the then-reigning champions, 11-1, last Wednesday when the Rams scored three runs in the bottom of the fourth of a game delayed by Tuesday's foul weather. Mason Compton hit an RBI double and Brendan Murphy hit a two-run double. Tim Albano pitched a scoreless fifth inning to close the game that Sullivan had started and worked four innings without allowing an earned run. Sullivan added a two-run single and Febo (two hits, three RBI) mashed.

**WHITE PLAINS** had a memorable postseason run that came up just short against eventual champion Carmel in a 6-5 Class AA semifinal loss last Thursday.

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Among most unheralded stars in Section 1, Carmel P Matt Demme delivers in 6-5 semifinal win over White Plains.

# Sports



Carmel C Anthony Febo blows home with game-winning run in Rams' 6-5 Section 1 Class AA semifinal win over White Plains.

*continued from page 5*

"The boys made a heck of a run," said White Plains coach Marcel Galligani, whose squad finished 14-7. "Super proud of their efforts, toughness and compete level. Knocking off the No. 1 seed Mamaroneck and being the only team to beat them speaks volumes about this group. The fact that we won our first two playoff games not allowing a run and only scoring two, shows you that these boys handled the bright lights like men."

The eighth-seeded Tigers took a 5-3 lead in the top of the fifth inning against the Rams. Teddy Hauser's two-run double drove in John Myers and Chris McGuire.

Mark Kent singled home Hauser to extend the lead. But the Rams answered with three runs against Kent in the bottom of the inning and regained the lead, aided by some fielding miscues by the Tigers.

White Plains had chances to tie it up in the sixth and seventh innings but couldn't capitalize. Myers (3 for 4, 2 runs) was stranded at second after a double in the sixth. Hauser reached second in the seventh after an errant Carmel throw but the Rams were able to induce a groundout to end the game.

"We unfortunately let it slip away," Galligani said. "We were able to come up



White Plains' Teddy Hauser slides safely into second in semifinal loss to eventual champ Carmel.



Carmel LF Sandor Kozma fires ball in during Rams' 6-5 Section 1 Class AA semifinal win over White Plains.

with a huge hit in the fifth and unfortunately a few mistakes in the bottom half of the inning doomed us. Despite giving away the lead, we fought and managed to get the tying run into scoring position in both the sixth and seventh innings. That showed toughness and character. Despite not being able to push the tying run across, I could not be more proud of my boys. You have to give Carmel credit. They're a very good team and very well coached. They played solid defense and swing the bats really well."

Declan Bruton went 2 for 4 with an RBI for the Tigers. Derek Diaz had an RBI and Nicky Vendola added a hit and a run scored.

The Tigers earned a pair of 1-0 wins to

get to the semis, including a nine-inning upset of top-seeded Mamaroneck in the quarterfinals. The teams had split during the regular season. Diaz, a freshman phenom, tossed a complete game three-hit shutout while striking out seven with zero walks.

"Derek was fantastic against Mamaroneck," Galligani said. "His ability to command his pitches in any count was impressive. He got ahead in the count and hit his spots. As a 14-year-old freshman on a big stage like that, I can't tell you how impressed I was, as was everybody else in attendance. Keep in mind they had seen him a few weeks prior when he pitched another

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White Plains' Mark Kent pitches against host Carmel in Class AA semifinal loss to host Rams.



White Plains' Chris McGuire follows through on a hack in Tigers' 6-5 semifinal loss at Carmel.

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gem at home for us when we handed them their first loss of the season."

Joe Salerno had the lone RBI for White Plains in the second inning on a fielder's choice, driving in Bruton (2 for 3). On top of his impressive pitching performance, Diaz was 2 for 2 with a double.

#### **CLASS A-1**

**YORKTOWN**'s dream season -- among the finest regular seasons in school history -- came to an abrupt halt last Thursday when the top-seeded Huskers were sent packing in a 5-3 extra-inning Section 1-A semifinal loss to visiting Clarkstown North.

When you string together 10 hits, are aided by three walks and three Ram errors, the Huskers normally win those types of games going away, but they are still waiting for that elusive clutch hit that might have broken the game open in their favor. Instead,

the Huskers left 13 runners on base and made three uncharacteristic errors behind their stellar pitching.

If we learned anything about top-seeded Yorktown in Year 1 of the CJ Riefenhauser era it's that his Huskers have no quit in them. The Huskers battled ceaselessly throughout the season, including their loss to eventual champion Clarkstown North, the No.5 seed.

Clarkstown North scored four runs in the top of the eighth, aided by a couple of booted balls, and then stranded the bases loaded in the bottom half of the inning, limiting Yorktown to two runs in another comeback bid.

Yorktown took its quarterfinal match against visiting John Jay-Cross River, 12-5 when lefty Scott Weitman threw four scoreless innings in relief and struck out two to earn the win. The senior hurler had one of the finest seasons in Yorktown history and will be sorely missed next season. Husker 1B Swaroop Pujari was 2 for 3 with a double



Yorktown senior 3B Kyle Zaslaw gets behind his boys in Huskers' 5-3 extra-inning semifinals loss to Clarkstown North Thursday.

and five RBI to lead one of the more feared offenses in the section. The Huskers were in early trouble, down 4-0, but never panicked. Tyler Pugliese (2 for 4, 2B three RBI) and Kyle Zaslaw (3 for 4, two runs) initiated a couple of key rallies.

No.10 **SOMERS** had some magic going and the benefit of an easy quarterfinal draw against No.2 Yonkers that had some Class A managers questioning the structure of the tournament seeds. COVID played a part in the determination of the seeds this season, but brackets were broken early and often in all team sports because certain teams that hadn't truly challenged themselves -- for whatever reasons -- were rewarded with high seeds they may or may not have deserved. Certainly, Yonkers, which had a great season but lacked quality W's, was one

of them. Somers blew out Yonkers before falling to Eastchester, the eventual A-1 runner-up, 14-1.

#### **CLASS A-2**

**WALTER PANAS** (12-3) had been struggling to score runs as the regular season concluded and it caught up to Coach Anthony Fata's top-seeded Panthers in last Wednesday's season-ending 5-0 loss to No.5 **BYRAM HILLS** in the sectional semis. The Panthers opened the playoffs with a 2-1 win over visiting Nanuet when ace P Jackson DiLorenzo fired a complete game and allowed no earned runs while striking out 15. Panas C Danny Witters went solo

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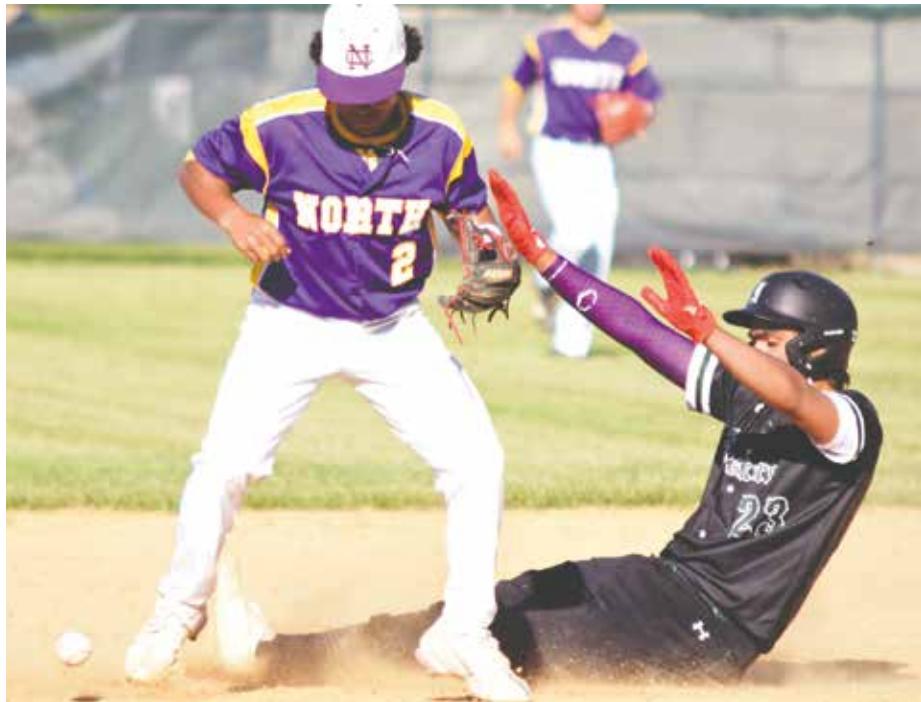
Yorktown junior Jon Munoz dives back in safely to 1B in Huskers' 5-3 extra-inning semifinals loss to Clarkstown North Thursday.



Yorktown coaching staff reacts to big inning-ending out in Huskers' 5-3 extra-inning semifinals loss to Clarkstown North Thursday.

# Sports

# Baseball Notebook



Yorktown senior 1B Swaroop Pujari is safe at 2B in Huskers' 5-3 extra-inning semifinals loss to Clarkstown North Thursday.

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and Gavin Carlucci added an RBI single for the Panthers, who return a ton of talent for another run in 2022.

**BYRAM HILLS** went on a memorable run to the Section 1 Class A2 finals, where the fifth-seeded Bobcats were out dueled by second-seeded and host Tappan Zee, 2-1, on Saturday.

Bobby Chicoine, a junior who is committed to Boston College, allowed two earned runs on three hits and fanned eight Dutchmen. Tappan Zee chucker Kyle Roper needed just 77 pitches to get through seven innings.

Tappan Zee took an early 2-0 lead on a Brendan Baiamonte two-run single in the first inning. But Byram got on the board with a run in the fifth inning with Christian Bellantoni's two-out RBI infield single. The

Bobcats, however, were unable to muster any more offense as the Dutchmen's stellar defense held them at bay.

TZ moved on to the Class A championship game where they were routed by Clarkstown North, 14-2, on Sunday.

Byram's Jordan Baskind tossed a three-hit shutout and struck out eight in a 5-0 win over host Walter Panas in the semifinals last Wednesday. Michael Ascanio blasted two homers and had three RBI. Jared Cohen socked a solo shot while Danny Bernstein went 2 for 3 with an RBI.

The Bobcats bested Hen Hud 5-2 in the quarterfinals behind a complete game effort from Chicoine. He struck out six, scattered seven hits and let up the two earned runs. Chicoine (2 for 3, double, RBI, run) and Bellantoni (3 for 3, RBI, run) paced the



Byram Hills junior Bobby Chicoine, a Boston College commit, pitches in Bobcats' 2-1 loss to Tappan Zee in Class A2 final on Saturday.

Byram offense. Josh Gillison (3 for 3 RBI) led the Sailors.

## CLASS B

Second-seeded **BRIARCLIFF** reached the Class B semifinals but lost to eventual champ and third-seeded Rye Neck, 6-3, on Thursday. Rye Neck broke open a tie game with a three-run sixth inning. In the bottom

of the sixth, the Bears' Max Haberman (3 for 3, RBI) was robbed of a bases loaded hit that may have tied the game.

Tom Poggi had a two-run homer for Briarcliff in the bottom of the first, tying the game up after Rye Neck jumped out to the early lead.

The Bears cruised past 2019 Class B champ **WESTLAKE**, 12-2, in five innings in the quarterfinals. Jay Amador sparked the Briarcliff offense with two hits and four RBI, including a single in the fifth which brought home two runs to end the game. Poggi picked up the win on the hill and also had a two-run home run. Marc DeNunzio supplied the No. 7 Wildcats' offense with a two-run single.

Just like Briarcliff, **VALHALLA** had a strong postseason run, reaching the Class B semifinals. The fifth-seeded Vikings went on the road to Rockland County and defeated fourth-seeded Albertus Magnus, 4-2, in the quarters. Marc Weeks tossed a complete game gem, fanning nine Falcons and letting up two earned runs. He retired the final 15 batters of the game.

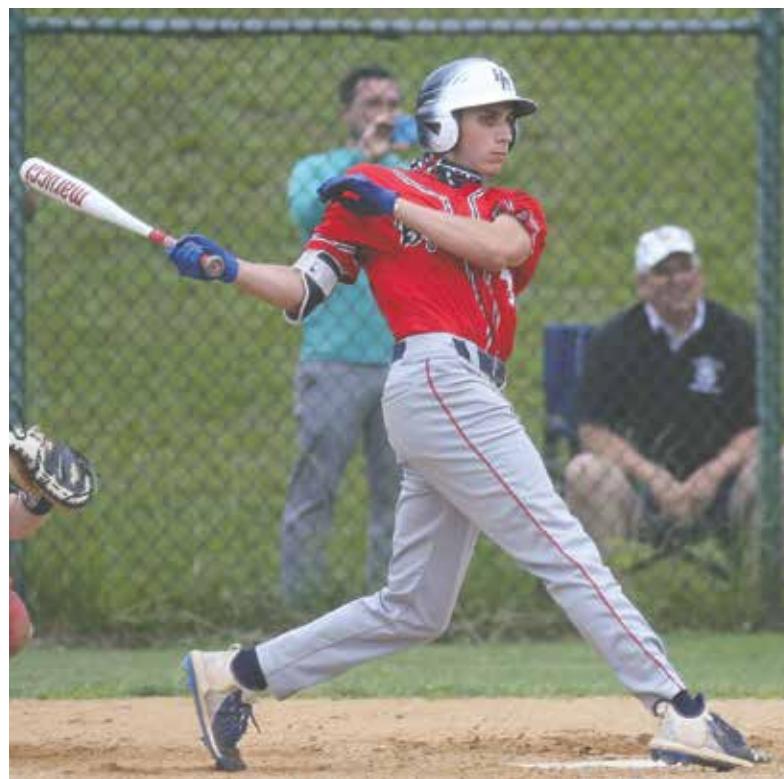
Christian Rossi (2 hits, 2 RBI) and Jason Rodriguez (2 hits, 2 runs) sparked the Vikings' offense in the upset win.

Valhalla lost to top-seeded Bronxville, 3-2, in eight innings in the semifinals. The Broncos' Charlie Vail was issued a bases loaded walk to end the game.

**PLEASANTVILLE** had an 11-inning, three-day marathon affair with Bronxville in the quarterfinals but just like Valhalla, lost 3-2. The game was suspended after nine innings last Monday, rained out on Tuesday and finally completed on Wednesday.



Byram's Brady Karp hustles to first base at Tappan Zee in Class A2 championship loss.



Byram's Michael Ascanio follows through on a swing at TZ in Class A2 final loss.

# Briarcliff Cruises to 2nd-Straight Title, Yorktown Denied Again

By Ray Gallagher  
Examiner Sports Editor @Directrays  
& Rob DiAntonio @RJD\_Photos

Rye's Jack O'Byrne scored a fate-changing goal in the Garnets' 11-7 Section 1 Class B title win over visiting Yorktown last Saturday night, which was a sign of the times. O'Byrne's nifty behind-the-back, give-and-go tally to beat Husker keeper Adam Norris for a 7-3 second-quarter lead was a microcosm of the Section 1 boys' lax circuit, but the fact that Class C champion Briarcliff may have been the best team in Section 1 this season is the macrocosm: The rest of Section 1 has officially caught up to 40-time sectional champion Yorktown.

Having gone three years without winning the section, Coach Sean Carney's seven-time NYS champion Huskers are still the cream of the crop, but the cream hasn't risen since 2017 while other programs, including Coach Al Meola's two-time reigning champion Bears, have not only narrowed the margin, but, for the time being, have closed the one-time gaping gap. Throw in the fact that Scarsdale emerged from nowhere to knock off heavily favored Mamaroneck and win its first title ever in Saturday's Class A title tilt, and you get the sense that 'the times they are a changin', which isn't necessarily a bad thing when you consider growing the game is tantamount to its success nationwide.

Yorktown will always be the standard by which other Section 1 teams are measured; that may never change, but the game has grown expeditiously, and it'll be on the Huskers to keep pace and surpass the field again. There was a time when lacrosse was a fringe sport (1980's-90's) and only Yorktown players and a handful of others -- at places like Lakeland/Panas

and Mahopac -- could make the type of play Garnet pole O'Byrne made last Saturday, but the turn of the century unleashed a wave of potential, which players across the country have ridden to unbridled success #GrowTheGame.

## CLASS C

**BRIARCLIFF** fell behind 1-0 against **BYRAM HILLS** in the Section 1 Class C championship game but the Bobcats' lead didn't last very long. The second-seeded Bears took a few minutes to settle in and then kicked it into high gear and routed the No. 5 Bobcats, 17-4, to claim their second straight section title. The previous one came in 2019 in Class D.

Hayden Fruhling finished on a feed from Benny Rakower to score the Bobcats' initial goal as they controlled possession early. But that lit a fire under Briarcliff, who took control of the game late in the first quarter. Lucas Proctor broke the ice with just under four minutes left and Elliot Jones netted the next two. Nico Santucci then scored to give the Bears a 4-1 edge after one quarter.

"We were mad because we were watching all this film and their first goal was exactly what we said they were gonna do," Briarcliff Coach Al Meola said. "And they did it. I think it woke us up early, which was great. It got us right back into the game. From then on, we were going north the whole time."

The Bears' next goal didn't come until midway through the second quarter. Jack Ricciardi used a pick and drove to his left, unleashing a lefty crank into the top right shelf to make it 5-1. Just over a minute later, Kyle Proctor found Jones, who dove and finished to extend the lead. Gavin Javorsky



Briarcliff senior pole Aidan Murnane and Bears made short work of Byram Hills in 17-4 Class C title win over Byram Hills.

sliced through the Bears' defense and scored to get a goal back for the Bobcats but Ricciardi finished off a flawless break started by an Aidan Murnane steal with 1:06 left to send the Bears into halftime with a 7-2 lead.

Despite the five-goal halftime lead, Meola knew not to count out the Bobcats.

"We said they're a scrappy bunch and they're gonna try to scratch and claw their way back out," Meola said. "There are great coaches over there and they're gritty boys. So we knew we were still in a dogfight and we weren't wavering at all."

The Bears poured it on in the third quarter, outscoring Byram 6-2 to squash any hopes of a comeback and extend the lead to 13-4. The ball didn't stay in one stick for long as it ping-ponged to the open teammate.

"We were moving the ball and the sharing was unbelievable," Meola said. "No selfishness on this team. They all just literally bought into a system and played it to perfection, or close to perfection."

Jones, a junior, led Briarcliff with a game-high five goals. Ricciardi and Lucas Proctor each tallied two goals and four assists. Kyle Proctor added a goal and handed out four assists. Brandon Rispoli (2G), Anthony Capasso (1G, 1A), Santucci (1G, 1A), Murnane (1G) and Brett Lachtman (1G) all chipped in. Evan Van Camp stopped 10 shots.

The Bobcats were paced by Javorsky's two

goals. Sean Siegel also had a goal. Jack Quinn corralled five shots in net while Ben Weinhoff won 16 of 23 faceoffs.

Despite missing the 2020 season due to the pandemic, Briarcliff's chemistry was immediate for a Bears team that picked up signature wins over Yorktown and Mamaroneck during the regular season.

Meola said the team's "attention to detail" aided them in their success.

"It's never a struggle to get these guys to compete and get to practice," he said. "These guys want to be here. They're here early, they're joking around or having fun. They're just really close. I think that's huge. Sometimes it's not all about X's and O's. It's about guys wanting to play for each other. So it was pretty awesome."

Briarcliff (15-1) would have very much

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Briarcliff's Matt Waterhouse has step on Byram's Sean Siegel in Bears 17-4 Section 1 Class C title win over Bobcats Saturday.

ANDY JACOBS / BOB CASTNER PHOTOS



Briarcliff's Brandon Rispoli readies for whack from Byram Hills' Hayden Fruhling in Bears' 17-4 sectional title win over Bobcats.

# Sports

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been a strong contender for a Class C state championship in a normal season. But the states were cancelled this year so the Bears will have to wait for 2022 to get their chance at the biggest prize.

"It's disappointing because this team has a lot of talent," Meola said of the Bears, who reached the state final in 2019. "What a squad. Just the closeness, the tightness, the unity. It's been unbelievable. This senior group is unreal and it's gonna be tough to see them go. You know, we had guys breaking down in our huddle yesterday after practice. This is a really tight group. I'm getting choked up telling you about it. I've been with these guys since they were all in fourth and fifth grade."

Briarcliff cruised past No. 6 Pearl River, 15-3, in the semifinals. Ricciardi sparked the Bears with three goals and five assists. Matt Waterhouse (3G, 1A), Jones (2G, 2A), Lucas Proctor (3A) and Kyle Proctor (3A) helped stuff the stat sheet for the Bears.

The Bears dismantled Tappan Zee 17-3 in the quarterfinals. Lucas Proctor (4G, 1A), Kyle Proctor (2G, 5A), Ricciardi (2G, 4A) and Rispoli (2G, 2A) did the damage.

Byram (12-5) rallied from a 5-0 deficit to defeat No. 8 Pelham, 12-8, in the semis. Fruhling (1A) and Javorsky each netted a hat trick. Siegel and Rakower notched two goals and an assist apiece.

Fruhling had five goals and an assist in a 14-4 blowout win over Our Lady of Lourdes in the quarterfinals. Javorsky also had six points with three goals and three assists. Michael Oronzio (3G, 1A) and Rakower (1G, 3A) also had impressive games while Weinhoff dominated the X yet again, winning 17 of 23 faceoffs.

"This season was unbelievable," Fruhling said. "We had an amazing group of kids who sacrificed a ton for the program. I think the key to our success was the gritty style we played with, which allowed for us to put a ton of pressure on our opponents. We played fast and aggressive, which granted us a lot of opportunities in transition and when we were able to capitalize it made the difference."



Briarcliff's Elliot Jones lines up one of five goals he would net in 17-4 Section 1 Class C title rout of visiting Byram Hills Saturday.

Fruhling also won a Class B Bowl championship as the quarterback with the football team on top of being a section finalist in lacrosse.

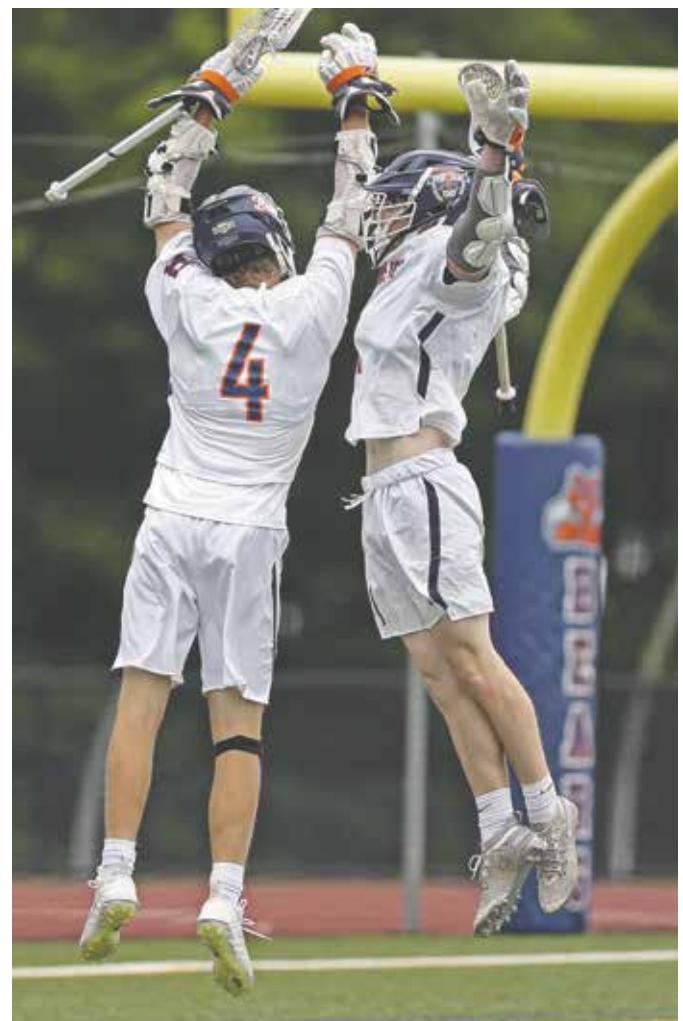
"What I'll miss most about playing lacrosse at Byram is the relationships and passion around the game," he said. "There is nothing like repping your hometown high school and playing with the kids you've grown up with. I am going to miss the time we spent on and off the field and I wish I could step on the field with this group one more time."

No. 6 Pearl River ended No. 3 PUTNAM VALLEY's bid for the semis in a 13-10 road win over Coach Tim Weir's Tigers, who saw their 10-game win streak come

to a screeching halt. Brendan Donohue (4G, 3A) had his way with PV, who let a 9-9 tie get away from them in the final stanza. Tigers Ryan Denike and Jack Murphy each had two goals and two assists while Ethan Mournier added a hat trick.

## CLASS B

YORKTOWN (13-4) met its match for a third consecutive tournament, the first such account since we began tracking Section 1 lacrosse, but the streak of consecutive sectional final appearances



Briarcliff's Jack Ricciardi and Kyle Proctor celebrate goal in Bears' 17-4 Class C title win over Byram.

was kept alive. But Yorktown has never been about appearances. The Huskers are built to win every year, and it has gotten tougher with all the good 'Stick' being played in Section 1, and Rye is right there among the upper crust every season. The 2021 season saw the Garnets take a pair from the Huskers, including Saturday's title triumph, which was the biggest win in Rye history.

Senior Will Embury put the Huskers up

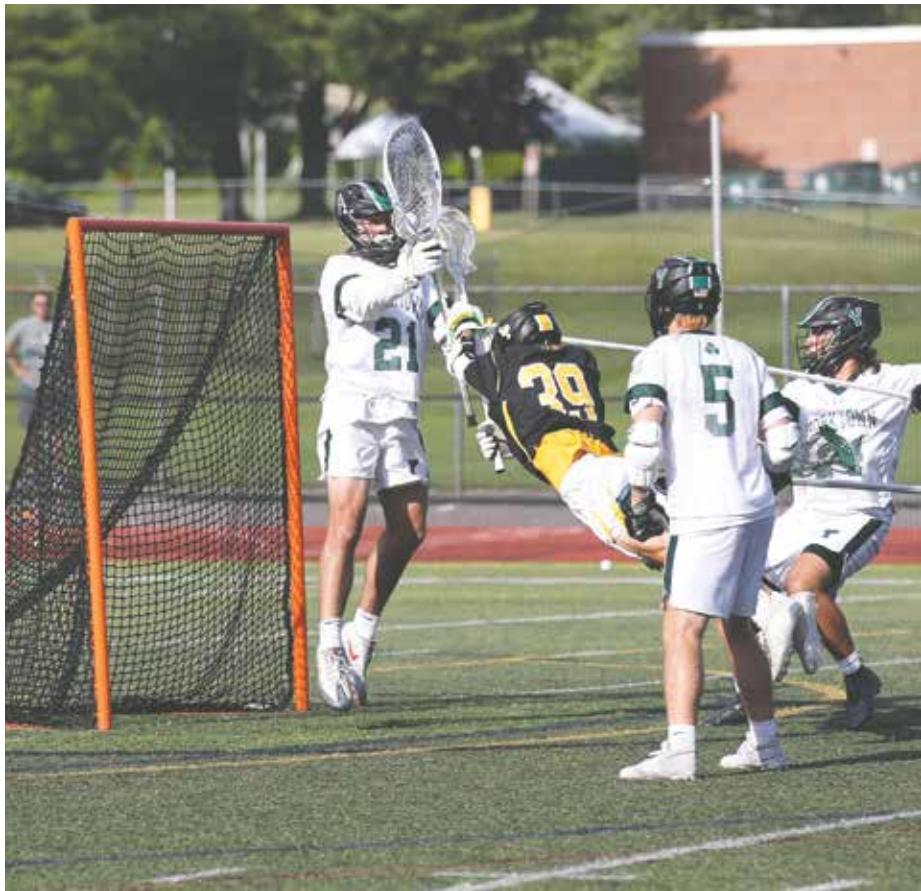
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Briarcliff's Anthony Capasso is hounded by Byram Hills' Ben Weinhoff in Bears' 17-4 Section 1 Class C title win over Bobcats.



Byram Hills' Hayden Fruhling takes run at cage in 17-4 Class C title loss to Briarcliff.



Yorktown G Adam Norris stops point-blank shot by L-P's Augie Kocaj in Huskers' Class B semifinal win over Rebels.

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3-1, but the Garnets reeled off five in a row for a 6-3 lead when Liam Hurley emerged from a crowd of players with 2:55 left in the first quarter to score. Rye switched out of a man-to-man defense and its zone D took the Huskers off their game.

Yorktown's Brendan Regan (2G, 1A), Embury (2G), Spencer Norris (G, 2A), Harry Griff (3A), Dylan Beck (G) and Jack Duncan (G) each produced but not enough. Yorktown G Norris (19 saves) faced stiff pressure throughout as the Garnets dominated the X (winning 15 of 22 faceoffs).

No.2 Yorktown advanced to the finals after its 11-8 win over No.3 **LAKELAND/PANAS** last Wednesday. The Rebels were in command early, up 3-1, before the Huskers ran off six unanswered goals.

Beck made it 1-1, but Tyler Nocito and Nick Grapp (hat trick) spotted L/P a 3-1. Embury and Griff went back-to-back to make 3-3 before Conor Huffnagel (3G, 2A) gave the Rebs their last lead at 4-3. Griff, Embury, Giacomo Micciari, Beck and Beck again, then Regan all scored in succession for a 9-4 lead the Huskers would never relinquish, despite L/P middie Vincent Scialdone going 13-9 on faceoffs.

"You can never be too far ahead against Lakeland/Panas," Carney said. "They always fight and claw to get back in, tons of pride on their end. I thought we executed well. We have had time to practice and teach a bit lately and that has helped the boys to understand their roles and responsibilities. Our job is to win the section and we know that."

While the Huskers came up short in



Yorktown junior A Harry Griff rips a goal that would start a Husker run that would spell doom for Lakeland-Panas last Wednesday in semis.

2021, the goal will always remain: Win the section and represent at states.

Lakeland/Panas reached the semis after its 13-11 win over a feisty sixth-seeded **SOMERS** club. Hufnagel had four goals and three assists for the Rebels. Reed Thompson added four goals and Liam Burke finished with three goals and one assist for the Rebels, who were coming off a 10-day COVID-related pause.

Somers was led by middie T.J. Deagan and T.J. Olifiers, who each had a hat trick. Somers got within a point, at 12-11, in the waning moments off a goal from Kieran Gill. Lorenzo Sessa (1G) did a lot of dishing (4A) for the Tuskers, who got better as the season progressed.

No.4 **MAHOPAC** was no match for Rye in the semis, falling 14-1, but the Indians have a ton of young talent returning for the 2022 season, and should they rebuild the defense quickly Mahopac (11-5) could take a big step next year.

**FOX LANE** (10-5), the No. 5 seed in Class B, narrowly lost to fourth-seeded Mahopac 12-10 in the quarterfinals. Everett Banks had a hat trick for the Foxes while Matt Magidson, Will Shepherd and Jack Cicchelli tallied two goals each. Jake Wollman had a goal and an assist.

The Foxes trailed 9-5 at halftime but trimmed the deficit to 11-9 midway through the fourth quarter when Wollman found Cicchelli in front for the diving goal.

But Mahopac had answers in the form of Jake Degnan (4G, 1A), Danny Koch (3G, 1A), Mike Harney (2G, 1A), Mike Retberg (1G, 1A), John Kearney (1G), Gavin

Viglucci (1G) and Matthew Puckhaber (2A). Chris Evans (1A) won 15-of-24 at the X and G Brett Crecco had nine saves.

"Jake Degnan's hat trick was three early goals that helped us jump out to a 6-2 lead," Mahopac Coach Job Bota said. "Coming out of the break they went on a two-goal run before Mike Harney scored from deep. Fox Lane stood tough and kept chipping away. The lead would come within two a couple times, but with nine minutes left in the game Danny Kotch scored off a nice double hitch move to make it 11-8. After another big goal by Fox Lane, John Kearney scored on the fast break down the alley to give us the 12th goal we needed for insurance."

Dylan Mutkoski scored three goals for No. 10 **HORACE GREELEY** in a 21-3 Class B quarterfinal loss at Yorktown. Embury had six goals and an assist for the Huskers while Back (4G, 3A) had his way, too.

#### CLASS D

**PLEASANTVILLE** reached the Class D semifinals but suffered a humbling 22-2 defeat at the hands of top-seeded and eventual champion Bronxville. The No. 3 Panthers won by forfeit over Pawling in the quarters.

#### CLASS A

Fifth-seeded **WHITE PLAINS** lost to fourth-seeded Suffern 8-6 in the Class A quarterfinals last Monday. Ryan Ortiz netted all six goals for the Tigers.



Yorktown senior Dylan Beck cranks goal in semifinal win over Lakeland-Panas Wednesday.



Yorktown's Will Embury finds opening in Huskers' 11-7 Section 1 Class B title loss to host Rye Saturday.

# Varada Nets 4, Leads Hen Hud to 1st Section 1 Lax Title



Hen Hud players pose with first title plaque in school history after Sailors' 12-9 win over Tappan Zee in Section 1 Class C championship game.

**By Tony Pinciari**

Following a successful 2019 season, **HENDRICK HUDSON** Coach Rob Molfetta thought 2020 would be the year the Sailors would win their first Section 1 girls' lacrosse title.

That all changed when COVID cancelled the 2020 New York State high school sports' spring season. As a result, All-Section senior M Kira Varada and her teammates had to wait an additional year to get back on the field. When they did, the final result made it worth the wait.

Led by Varada's four goals, No.4 Hen Hud overcame No.3 Tappan Zee, 12-9, to win the Section 1 Class C title last Saturday. It is the first sectional lacrosse title in the program's history.

It's also Varada's second sectional title.

She was an integral member of the 2020 Section 1 Class A basketball team that beat Harrison in the final. The winter state championships were then cancelled when schools shut down in March 2020 because of the pandemic.

"Unfortunately, our spring season last year was taken away from us by covid so this year we wanted to win, not only for us, but for the seniors who didn't get the chance to play their last season with us," said Varada, who will attend Iona in the fall and also play lacrosse after one of the finest, if not finest, three-sport careers in Sailor history. "Honestly, we were just excited to have a season in the beginning. The goal was to win sectionals, but we first wanted to see how we did against the competition in the regular season. We played some of the best teams and competed with them, which made us realize our potential for sectionals."



Hen Hud players celebrate first section title in girls lacrosse after a 12-9 win over Tappan Zee.

Hen Hud, which finished with a 13-4 record, marched through sectionals, including an emphatic 18-0 semifinal win over top-seeded Sleepy Hollow. Varada had a team-leading six goals. Claire Popolizio scored five goals and Fiona McGovern added four to finish her career with 244 points.

After pitching a shutout of Sleepy Hollow, Tappan Zee managed one goal in the first half as Hen Hud led 5-1.

"The team played great defense, led by Colleen Ryan and Gigi Deak," Molfetta said. "We had that lead at half because of our defensive pressure on Tappan Zee. The win was a total team effort from all the players and they followed the game plan perfectly. Tappan Zee team is a very good team and they made a great comeback but we were able to withstand their effort."

Paige Montgomery, Popolizio and McGovern each had two goals and an assist

and Katie Bell netted two goals in the final. Varada also had seven draw-controls and Ryan had four.

Like many of the student-athletes, especially the seniors, they were very happy to be playing this spring and also have a sectional tournament. Once the horn sounded ending the final, Varada and her teammates celebrated.

"I've been playing with most of these girls since I started so I was grateful to finish with them by my side," said Varada, the school's all-time leading scorer in lacrosse (227 goals, 277 points) and single-season goal scorer in soccer. "It was a bittersweet moment. After four years of constant battle for this title we finally got it. However, it was also the last time I would play with this team and be coached by this staff. I will always remember this day and cherish it because of the people

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Hen Hud's Claire Popolizio fights for a loose ball in what was a physical championship game against Tappan Zee.



Hen Hud players cut loose after hoisting first girls lax title plaque in school history.



Somers' Ella Kittredge makes her move while Yorktown's Grace Pearce defends in Tuskers' semifinal win.

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who always supported us and pushed us to that title."

Molfetta, a skillful former backup goalie to All-American Brian "Pickles" Carcaterra at Yorktown, is happy for his team, especially his seniors.

"This sectional title is very rewarding because it is the third time we were there in the last five years and the first win," Molfetta said. "Some of the girls have been on varsity four and five years so this is a culmination of all their hard work. They built this program through their dedication and hard work and they were rewarded with the first girls' lacrosse sectional title in school history. I am so proud of them and this accomplishment."

Molfetta credited his longest-tenured seniors -- Varada and McGovern -- for their impact.

"Kira is an unbelievable player who can dominate a game in all three areas of the field -- the draw circle, offensively and defensively," Molfetta said. "Kira is the engine that makes us go and she was laser focused this year to win the sectional title."



Hen Hud's Colleen Ryan sends a pass up the field in championship win over TZ.



Hen Hud's Paige Montgomery goes on the attack in 12-9 championship game win over TZ.



Hen Hud senior captain Kira Varada leads a break up the field in Sailors' 12-9 win over Tappan Zee in Section 1 Class C championship game.



Somers' Kayli McMorrow and Yorktown's Alison Passarella battle for a loose ball in the semifinals.



Hendrick Hudson G Madison Porter gets set to make a save as the Sailors' defense converges.



Hendrick Hudson's Fiona McGovern races past Tappan Zee defenders on her way to the cage.

# Sports



Somers' Lauren McCartin leads a break as Yorktown's Sophia Spallone tries to keep up.

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over the last few years."

Varada graduates from Hen Hud as one of the most impactful players in the girls' lacrosse program history. She is taking her talents to Iona where she will be joined by soon-to-be Ossining graduate Kacie Scarduzio.

"I am beyond excited and I know Kacie is too," Varada said. "Starting a new chapter in not only my life but also my lacrosse career is exhilarating. I am also thrilled to be coached by Coach (Lauren) Kahn! She has been extremely supportive and amazing throughout my season and I am looking forward to furthering my career as a Gael."

## CLASS B

No.1 **SOMERS** beat John Jay-Cross River by one goal during the regular season, but the second-seeded Wolves had the final say in the Section 1 Class B championship game Saturday.

John Jay defeated Somers, 14-9 to win the title and the Wolves did something not many teams can boast. The Wolves held Somers' leading scorer and Columbia-bound Noelle DeMarinis without a point.

"After beating them in the regular season we knew they were out for revenge," said Holy Cross-bound Ella Kittredge, who had five goals. "They were very strong on defense and were able to take away many of

our offensive opportunities."

Somers' Coach Debbie Daly pointed to the second half as the difference in the game.

"Somers had great control in the first half, but in the second half John Jay dominated the draw and took advantage of every opportunity they had," Daly said. "It was a hard-fought game by both teams. John Jay shared the ball and every player contributed. Congrats to them on a well-played game."

Even though Kittredge and her classmates are graduating, she knows Somers will be contending, once again, for a sectional title in 2022.

"Despite the final result, I could not be more proud of what our team was able to accomplish," Kittredge said. "Just getting the opportunity to play this year was an amazing experience. Somers' varsity lacrosse has such a bright future and I can't wait to watch them succeed."

Ironically, Somers advanced to the



Somers' Noelle DeMarinis fires in Tuskers' 10-8 semifinal win over Yorktown.

final with a 10-8 victory over **YORKTOWN** in the semifinals. No.4 Yorktown beat Somers during the regular season.

Kittredge finished with four goals, Teagan Ryan added two goals and three assists and Lauren McCarron had two goals and an assist.

Alexa Borges led Yorktown with a hat trick. Husker sophomore Alex Scialdone added two goals and an assist and Sophia Spallone contributed two goals.

**BYRAM HILLS** had an outstanding season, reaching the Section 1 Class C semifinals only to be denied a title-game berth by Tappan Zee. The Bobcats finished with a 13-4 record, highlighted by senior Lily Ceisler's record-breaking season.

In the Bobcats' 18-12

quarterfinal win over Nanuet, Ceisler became the single-season scoring leader. Ceisler scored five goals and added three assists, giving her 116 points this season. This eclipsed the mark of 108 points by Sarah Gutstein set in 1986.

**OSSINING** senior Kacie Scarduzio returned to the field after a major knee injury robbed her of her sophomore year, then covid denied her the 2020 spring sports' season.

Scarduzio proved she was still the elite scorer she was in her first two varsity seasons, finishing her career with 162 goals and 27 assists.

"Kacie had a great year leading our team on and off the field," Ossining Coach Patrick Wheeler said. "She worked tirelessly to support her teammates and help put them in positions to be successful. It is going to be a difficult task to attempt to fill all of the holes left by her and our other graduating seniors."

*Ray Gallagher contributed to this story*



Yorktown goalie Sophia Altimari looks to clear in Huskers' 10-8 semifinal loss at Somers.



Yorktown's Gianna Altamari runs the offense while Somers' Anna Forbes defends in Tuskers' semifinal win.

# Becker than Ever!



**Mahopac Snags 1st Section 1 Title;  
Class AA Indians' Ace Outduels North Rockland, 1-0**

RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS

Notre Dame-bound Mahopac senior ace Shannon Becker fanned 18 batters and allowed just two hits in the top-seeded Indians' 1-0 Section 1 Class AA title victory over visiting North Rockland last Saturday when Mahopac hoisted the first sectional championship trophy in school history behind senior captains (L-R) Lauren Zecca, Michelle DellaMura and Becker, who, along with Gabby Marino (inset, R) patiently waited for freshman Ava Lichtenberger (inset, L) to deliver the clutch 10th-inning walk-off single before getting mobbed by teammates... see Softball Notebook