From Class C Haldane to Class A Walter Panas, Somers, Lakeland and Yorktown, the Northern Westchester/Putnam Examiner area boys’ hoops teams are locked and loaded for a run at their respective league titles, including Mahopac senior F Ryan Reilly (30) and the Indians. Meanwhile, Putnam Valley’s Class B Tigers are leaning on URI-bound junior G Eva DeChent (21), as Class A Walter Panas does likewise with freshman sensation Cadence Nicholas (12) on the girls’ hoop’s scene. Holiday tourneys will be featured at a gym near you this week, so take in the action and support our local hoopers...
Walter Panas Has Eyes on Class A Prize
Local Ballers Take Aim at League, Sectional Titles

By Ray Gallagher
Examiner Sport Editor @Directrays

Football ran long in these parts in the fall of 2021, and the Examiner has some catching up to do when it comes to hoops. We make no apologies for that: Class AA state champ Carmel, plus Class A runners-up Somers and Class B Pleasantville, took our readers on the finest grid journey we’ve ever seen in this neck of the woods.

That said, excitement is off the charts for the 2021-22 Section 1 basketball season for a vast majority of the Examiner-area clubs that hope to contend for league and sectional titles this coming March. Yes, COVID-19 restrictions will dampen some of the enthusiasm. It’s simply impossible to ignore the fact that players will be forced to run up and down the court with face coverings on, and it’s difficult for some, if not most, to come to grips with the fact that the Westchester County Center will not host the sectional Final 4’s since the building is a shell of itself after serving as a COVID vaccine center/warehouse for most of the last year.

It is what it is, and Section 1 coaches, players and fans are prepared to make the best of it. Here’s a glimpse of what we can expect from the teams within the Northern Westchester/Putnam County regions.

CLASS A

With 30 teams scattered about five leagues in Class A this year, much of the Examiner-area hubbub centers around Walter Panas and Yorktown. Coach Mike Auerbach’s Panthers return one of the premier guards in the section in silky All-League junior G Alex Tavarez, who has the swag and hops to match his rep, and the inclusion of 6’8” 340-pound senior transfer Maleek McNeil has added some big-time buzz to the mix. The inside-outside combo of Tavarez’s speed and skill and McNeil’s brute strength undoubtedly gives the Panthers a shot to contend for league and sectional prowess.

Yorktown’s All-Section C/F Eddie Brucaj is poised to deliver what could be a record-setting season for double-doubles. The 6’7” senior has a chance to deliver a Final 4 campaign if everything shakes out for Coach Mark Pavaia’s Huskers.

Lakeland has the hardware in tow after hitting hard by graduation, but the Red Devils are an unknown, as they try to forge their way back to relevance. Hen Hud will work within the confines of one of the toughest leagues around with Poughkeepsie, Panas and Lourdes serving as a trio of rough challenges for the Sailors.

LEAGUE D

WALTER PANAS

2021 Record & Playoff result: 9-5, Lost at Briarcliff in 2nd round
Coach: Mike Auerbach (5th year at Panas, 111-89)
Key Departures: Caleb Evans, Rob Simmonds
Key Returning Players: Alex Tavarez 6’0” Jr. G (All-League, 19.5 PPG, 5 APG, 5 RPG); Cam Nicholas 6’1” Sr. G (4.4 PPG, 2.5 RPG); Oliver Smith 6’3” Sr. F (6.1 PPG, 7.2 RPG); Dillon Chenard 6’9” Jr. F (3.8 PPG, 5.5 RPG); Derek Mojica 6’1” Jr. G/F; Kerwin Daly 6’2” Sr. G/F; Jadon Frederick 5’10” Sr. G; Ethan Linton 5’10” Sr. G
Key Newcomers: Maleek McNeil 6’8” Sr. F; Jerry Smallwood 6’9” Jr. G
League Favorite: Poughkeepsie
Section Favorite: I haven’t seen everyone over the summer and fall but I imagine the usual favorites will be in the mix. Poughkeepsie, Tappan Zee and Byram Hills. We suspect Mahopac, Eastchester, Somers, Lakeland, Pearl River all look tough as well.
Team Goals: Compete for a league title and be in position to make a run come sectionals.
Coach’s Comments: We’ve had a really good summer and fall. Hopefully, it carries over into the high school season. We return a handful of guys with varsity experience which could be a plus for us early on. Junior, Alex Tavarez, who averaged nearly 20 points as a sophomore should be one of the better guards in the area. Obviously, the addition of Maleek McNeil has made a big impact. He’s a 6’8” forward with guard skills and a high basketball IQ. Alongside McNeil, fellow forwards Oliver Smith and Dillon Chenard have worked hard to improve their games and will provide more offensively than a year ago. We have some shooting and ball handling depth with Cam Nicholas, Jadon Frederick, Derek Mojica, Kerwin Daly and Jerry Smallwood, which hopefully will take some pressure off our top scorers.

Out of the Gate: The Panthers have not let Auerbach down, getting off to a 4-2 start, including a disappointing 45-44 Panther tourney title loss to undefeated North Rockland (4-0). The 61-56 loss to Eastchester was an eye-opener that should let the Panthers know that Class A will be a dog fight.

LAKELAND

2021 Record & Playoff result: 9-6 (won the Putnam-Northern Westchester Small School tournament title game)

Lakeland junior F Logan Shiland will provide a major paint presence for the Hornets.

Coach: Steve Fall (7th year, 57-65)
Key Departures: Rob Nardelli (All-Section, Aidan Welcome, Reed Thompson Mark Cummins (All-League)
Key Returning Players: David Mula, Sr. 5’10” G; Jason Portella, Sr. 6’0” G; Tyler Ronk, Sr. 5’10” F; David Pinkowski, 6’ G/F; Logan Shiland, Jr. 6’3” F; Andrew Mendel 6’2” C
League Favorites: Poughkeepsie, Lourdes and Panas
Section Favorite: Poughkeepsie
By the Numbers: Shiland (7.4 PPG), Mendel (6.2 RPG)
Team Goals: To be prepared, focused and excited to play each and every game. We play in a very competitive league and we have to be ready every night.
Coach’s Comments: We are excited for the start of the season. This team wants to be in the gym and has put the work in, to be ready for the season.

Out of the Gate: At 3-2 through the first five games, Lakeland has posted an impressive win over Mahopac to win the Lakeland tourney title, but setbacks to John Jay (3-1) and Yorktown (3-1) would indicate the Hornets’ have plenty of work ahead of them.
LEAGUE C

YORKTOWN

2021 Record & Playoff Result: 8-5 Lost to Somers in 1st round

Coach: Mark Pavella 26-30 (4th season overall)

Key Departures: Anthony Granitto, Jared Fairen

Key Returning Players: Eddie Brucaj Center Sr. 6’7” (All-Section as a junior); Antoine Coles Guard Jr. 5’10”; Justin Price Guard So. 6’; William Schietinger Guard Sr. 5’11”; Marco Jovicic Forward Sr. 6’1”; Mark Shkreli Small Forward Sr. 6’1”; Jack Murphy Guard Sr. 5’11”; Jack Prybylski Guard Sr. 6’2”; Captain Charlie DeGennaro Jr. 5’9”

Key Newcomers: Thomas Costello, G, So, 5’10”; Billy Feeks G, So 5’11”; Joshua Barton C, Jr. 6’2”; Rocco Conciatori F, Jr. 6’3”; John Romero G/F Jr. 6’2”

League Favorite: The league is well balanced, and any team can win on any given night.

Section Favorite: Class A has a lot of talented teams. Poughkeepsie and Tappan Zee are always strong programs in Class A.

By the Numbers: Brucaj (13 PPG, 8 RPG).

Team Goals: Right now we are focused on having the right attitude at each practice and getting better each day.

Coach’s Comments: We are looking forward to having a normal hoops season this year.

Out of the Gate: Aside from the season-opening loss to a surprisingly strong RCK (3-0) club, the Huskers have steamrolled their way to a 3-1 start, including wins over Lakeland (54-48) and double-digit whippings of Peekskill and Fox Lane, which was an eye-opening triumph.

SOMERS

2021 Record & Playoff Result: 6-8, lost in regional semis to Mahopac

Coach: Chris Dicicito (10th year Somers, 11 previously at Rye)

Key Returning Players: 5’9” All-Section Sr. G Bennett Leitner; 6’5” Jr. G Matt Fitzsimons; 6’5” Sr. C Christian Schillingford; 5’9” Sr. G TJ Olifers; 6’3” Jr. F Dylan Ingraham

Key Newcomers: Four talented sophomores who are vying for playing time, along with a handful of seasoned seniors.

League Favorite: Wide open but we fully expect to contend.

Team Goals: Win our first league title since 1989 and make a deep run in sectionals.

Coach’s Comments: We'll continue to build off of last year on the offensive side. We will continue to run the floor and attack the rim. We have shooters as well, so our perimeter game should be solid. On the defensive end, we will continue to press and play a physical in-your-face match-up zone. We are long so the zone should be the primary defense for us. The key for our success will depend on the health of the players and how long they take to gel once we get started. We will have to play catch up with all the football and soccer guys having deep playoff runs, but I’m used to doing so.

Out of the Gate: Somers will deep its foot in the pool for the first time Wednesday when it hosts Lakeland and then get ready for Putnam Valley in Friday’s opening round of the Somers Tournament. Carmel and Ossining are also in the tourney mix.

MAHOPAC

2021 Record & Playoff Result: 12-2, Lost Regional Final to Fox Lane

Coach: Tom McMahon

Key Departures: John Cosentino, Vin Bastone, Luke Syku, Chris Clark, Miles Buckley

Key Returning Players: Michael Callahan, Patrick McMahon (All-League), Colum Ranaghan, Ryan Reilly, Max Gomes, Anthony DeMatteo, Jack, Moore, Craig Perri, Sean Massett

Key Newcomers: Potent-scoring Jake Cozens, Liam Dodd, Joey Grassia, Joey Koch, Leury Reyes Ramos, Phil Salmon

League Favorite: Very competitive league, anyone can win it.

Section Favorite: Poughkeepsie, Tappan Zee, Byram Hills, Rye, Lakeland, Somers, Pearl River

Mahopac’s Michael Callahan and Put Valley defenders Sean Holzman, Cole Durocher and Nate Shillingford will be relied upon for big seasons.

Team Goals: To compete for a league title and section title.

Coach’s Comments: We are fortunate to return nine players this season, including three starters and six of our top ten. We have strong senior leadership and will rely on their experience. We also have a talented junior class to add into the mix. The schedule is tough. There is a lot of talent in Class A and it is very deep. We will also see many teams we have never seen before.

Out of the Gate: It hasn’t been the start the Indians (1-3) were hoping for after three-straight losses to Lakeland, Byram Hills and Poughkeepsie.

BREWSTER

2021 Record & Playoff result: 2-6 (did not enter postseason)


Key Returning Players: Connor Griffin 6’4 Jr. F Steve Swisher 6’1 Jr. G; Shane

continued on next page
McLaughlin 6’3 Sr. F; Cooper Rookwood 5’9 Sr. G; Brice Washington 6’0 Sr. G

Key Newcomers: Nick Sayegh 5’11 Sr. F; Evan Knorr 5’11 Sr. G; Christian Alvear 5’10 Jr. G; Pat Ford 5’8 Jr. G; Julius Walters 5’10 Jr. F; Tyler Sherman 6’1 Jr. F; Matthew Thompson 6’4 So. F; William Dignan 5’9 Jr. Fr. G

Team Goals: To use everyday as an opportunity to improve and become closer as a team.

Coach’s Comments: The Bears have worked hard this preseason to improve their skills and develop team chemistry. Committed team defense and rebounding will be a key to a successful season. The Bears have only five seniors on the roster and newcomers will be given an opportunity to contribute early on. Consistency and ball security will be important factors in Brewster’s overall success as well.

Out of the Gate: After starting out 3-0, the Bears were humbled in Saturday’s 78-43 loss to host Lakeland.

CLASS AA

Ossining’s Jaeden Carr is a dynamite senior point guard, who hopes to make the Pride relevant as they attempt to battle with down-county powers like Mount Vernon, Fox Lane and White Plains. Meanwhile, Carmel, which is behind the 8-ball due to its prolonged football campaign hopes to get up to speed, not to mention contend with vastly improved Dutchess league rivals RCK and Arlington.

CARMEL

2021 Record & Playoff Result: Coach: Brandon Johnson (1st year)

Key Departures: None

Key Returning Players: Kevin Dall, Sr. G; Andrew Fiore, Sr. G; Nick Dileo, Sr. F; Trevor Caya, Sr. G; Randy Aboagye, Sr. F; Ben Antoniuk, Sr. G/F; Vin Mazzamutto, Sr. G/F; Michael Guiney, Sr. G; Dan Monahan, Sr. G; Dylan Shields, Sr. G; Jake Storen, Jr. F

Key Newcomers: Trevor Spinelli, Sr.; Morgan McLaughlin, 6’3 Sr. F; Cooper Rookwood, 6’0 So. F; William Dignan, 5’9 Jr. G; Pat Ford, 5’8 Jr. G; Julius Walters, 5’10 Jr. F; Tyler Sherman, 6’1 Jr. F; Matthew Thompson, 6’4 So. F

Section Favorite: We only root for one favorite team, Carmel.

Team Goals: To learn from our past, improve a little each day and work harder than the previous day.

Coach’s Comments: We are led by our two senior captains Jaeden Carr and Vinny Bernardo. They both do a tremendous job leading our team on and off the court. We have several key returners who are competing each day and making one another better. We are excited to get to work and embrace the challenges and opportunities ahead of us.

Out of the Gate: The Pride (2-1) have come out hot, even their 52-49 loss to North Rockland shows promise. Ossining will play Carmel in the opening round of the Somers tourney this week.

OSSINING

2021 Record & Playoff Result: 4-6, lost to John Jay CR 1st Round

Coach: Mike Casey (7th year)

Key Returning Players: Jaeden Carr, PG, Sr. 5 ’10 (All Section); Vincent Bernardo, F, Sr. 5’10; Justin Santos, F, Jr.;

6’3 Isaiah Ahlers, G, Soph. 6’3; Dominique Bautista, F, Jr. 6’3; AJ Caparelli, G, Jr. 5’11; Terrell Francis, G, Sr. 6’1

Key Newcomers: Darien Blalock, F, Jr. 6’2; Isaiah Haye, G, Jr. 5’7; Gavin Thomas, G, So. 6’0

Team Goals: To improve a little each day and work harder than the previous day.

Coach’s Comments: We are led by our two senior captains Jaeden Carr and Vinny Bernardo. They both do a tremendous job leading our team on and off the court. We have several key returners who are competing each day and making one another better. We are excited to get to work and embrace the challenges and opportunities ahead of us.

Out of the Gate: The Pride (2-1) have come out hot, even their 52-49 loss to North Rockland shows promise. Ossining will play Carmel in the opening round of the Somers tourney this week.

CLASS B

Putnam Valley has stumbled out of the gate with three-straight losses to open the season, but they are on the road to relevance. It was only a few years ago when the Tigers were in the mix of serious title contenders for some seven years, going 70 games over 500% in six years under former Coach Mike McDonnell, who won five league titles and made four Final 4 appearances and a pair of finals. It’s unlikely the Tigers feature that kind of success in 2021, but help is on the way on the levels below. The league is loaded with talent, including North Salem and Haldane, who look like the early favorites.
Despite New Coach, Putnam Valley Seeks 3rd-Straight Class B Title

Lakeland, Panas to Battle for League D; Mahopac, Brewster to Challenge in League C

By Tony Pinciaro

In 2020, PUTNAM VALLEY won the Section 1 Class B title and was primed for a run at a state title. However, the Covid pandemic cancelled the state championships and subsequently the 2020 spring sports’ season.

Last year, Putnam Valley made it consecutive championships as the Tigers defeated Walter Panas to win the Northern Westchester/Putnam Small Schools title. The Tigers finished with a 19-2 record under former Coach Kristi Dini, who was unceremoniously released prior to the start of the season.

Putnam Valley is hoping to make it a three-peat and are in a good position to accomplish this. The Tigers enter the 2021-22 season with a veteran nucleus, led by URI-bound junior sensation Eva DeChent, and a new leader in veteran and former Briarcliff girls’ Coach Don Hamlin.

Winning the school’s first sectional title in 2020 was exciting, but making it two consecutive titles was additionally rewarding considering the situation the winter athletes faced.

“It meant so much to me and the team because it was the second year in a row we won and, despite the restrictions, we still worked as hard as we could because at any moment it could have ended with covid,” said DeChent, a five-year varsity player who is closing in, this season, on 1,000 career points, and the all-time PV scoring record.

DeChent, an All-Section selection last year along with current Pace University freshman Arianna Stockinger, is joined by a deep, veteran group. Senior Amanda Orlando, an All-League pick last year, returns to the backcourt with DeChent. Classmate Natalie Mazza and sophomore Ava Harmon return in the frontcourt while sophomores Nye Torres and Brianna Foody provide experienced backcourt depth.

Hamlin welcomes a quintet of newcomers to varsity led by 5-foot-11 freshman and center Jona Kobashi. Senior Leann Keeler and junior Rachel Berdecia will man forward spots and sophomores Taylor Rogers and Faith Marrero add more depth to the backcourt.

Even though the returning group is familiar with the newcomers, they are acclimating themselves to Hamlin, who coached for 26 years at Briarcliff before retiring at the conclusion of last basketball season.

“We were lucky to get Coach Hamlin because he has a lot of experience and we are looking forward to learning from him,” DeChent said. “We are pleased that even with the change in coaches, in a short time everyone is using that as motivation to work harder and get better every day in practice.”

Hamlin was enjoying his retirement in South Carolina, but decided to return to New York for the winter with his wife, Denise, coaching Briarcliff varsity girls’ basketball.

“I knew I would want something to do,” Hamlin said. “I missed coaching basketball, already, and this opportunity became available. The timing was uncanny, but after much discussion at home, I applied and feel fortunate to have been offered the position. I am coaching a great group of girls. They have been super to work with. They are kind, friendly and they love basketball. The community has been very supportive. My two assistants, Kerry Scarduzio and Cyan Scarduzio, are just awesome young ladies. The girls have terrific role models in these two. I don’t think I could have coached in a better situation.”

DeChent, who suffered an ankle injury in the first week of the season, understands that opponents will bring their ‘A’ games in hopes of beating the two-time-champion Tigers.

“We will come ready to play every game, not take any team for granted and play our...
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best every game,” DeChent said.

Putnam Valley opened the season with a victory over Pleasantville before suffering injuries to two starters in a loss to Arlington.

However, Putnam Valley bounced back with a strong effort, minus two starters to overcome perennial Section 1 Class B champion Irvington, 50-47.

“It was a nice win against Irvington,” Hamlin said. “We played down two starters, but Amanda Orlando, Nye Torres, Briana Poody, Jona Kobashi and Ava Harmon stepped up.“

“We have a tough week ahead, but we hope to be at full strength after the break, if not sooner.”

BREWSTER BEARS

Coach: Mike Castaldo (10th year)

2020-21 record: 9-4 (98-80, overall)

Tournament results: Lost to Mahopac in the Northern Westchester/Putnam Large School Tournament Championship Game

Graduated seniors: Two starters

Top returning players: Grace Galgano, Sr., 5-10, C (Captain, 2-time All Section); Sophia Alzugayay, Sr., 5-3, PG; Adrianna Calicchia Sr., 5-5, G; Madison Dakin, Jr., 5-9, G/F

Key newcomers: Margo Cunningham, Jr., 5-7, F; Bre Washington, Jr., 5-5, G; Bri Franklin, Jr., 5-5, G; Shay Rookwood, Soph., 5-4, G; Jordan Niles, Soph., 5-5, G

Coach’s thoughts and season outlook:

We are always looking to compete for a league title and make a deep run during sectionals. Last year, the girls found ways to win close games and we return a great core group that can expect to do the same thing again.

This and that: Castaldo said Galgano has a great shot to reach 1,000 career points and 1,000 career rebounds this season.

BREWSTER has been dominant, opening the season with a 13-point win over a perennially-tough Rye team. The Bears followed it up with decisive verdicts over Lincoln and Clarkstown North. Galgano had a huge game against Clarkstown North with a game-high 25 points. She also added 13 rebounds, eight blocked shots and five steals. Calicchia added 10 points and four assists and Dakota chipped in eight points and eight rebounds. Galgano led Brewster with 21 points and Niles finished with 12 points as the Bears overwhelmed Lincoln.

“We did a great job controlling the glass,” said Castaldo of the Clarkstown North game. “It was our best rebounding effort, as a team, this year. Grace played a solid game. Her stat line is always filled as she takes pride in getting rebounds and playing great defense.”

Brewster will host its annual tournament, Thursday-Friday. R.C. Ketchup will play Pelham in the first game, 5 p.m., and Brewster faces Poughkeepsie, 6:30 p.m. The consolation game is 5 p.m., Friday, followed by the championship game, 6:30 p.m.

“The girls are playing well, right now; and I’m proud of them, but we’re not where we want to be,” Castaldo said. “We need to get to the next level with our defense and intensity.”

HEN HUD SAILORS

Coach: Ken Sherman (13th year)

2020-21 record and overall record: 3-9

Tournament results: Lost in the first round to eventual champion Putnam Valley in the first round of the Northern Westchester/Putnam Small School Tournament

Graduated seniors: Three, including two starters.

Top returning players: Colleen Ryan, Sr., PG; Shannon Ellis, Sr., C; Alex Figueroa, Sr., G; Maddy Porter, Jr., F; Kaitlyn Raguso, Fr., G (team-leading 13 ppg last year).

Key newcomers: Alexa Robinson, Soph., G; Kayla Tresgallo, Soph., C; Hailey Pearson, Soph., F; Carmen Marino, Fr., F; Kayla McCarthy, F, PG; Martin Quigley, Fr., F

Team strengths: Defense; Colleen Ryan running the offense. Question marks, as any: Where will the scoring come from after Raguso.

Coach’s thoughts and season outlook:

Our first goal is to have more wins than last season. We want to start with small goals and work our way from there.

This and that: After playing her freshman year at Marist, former Sailor Caitlin Weimar transferred and is playing for Boston University. Kira Varada, a 2021 graduate, is playing lacrosse at Iona.

LAKELAND HORNETS

Coach: Miranda Mangan (eighth year at Lakeland, 10th overall).

2020-21 record and overall record: 7-7

Tournament results: Won opening-round game against Croton, lost to top-seeded Panas in semifinals of the Northern Westchester/Putnam Small School Tournament

Graduated seniors: Four, including two starters.

Top returning players: Tyler Hormazabal, Sr., 5-7, G (Captain, All-League, led the team in scoring and steals); Hannah Devane, Sr., 5-10, F/G (Captain, second on the team in scoring and rebounding);

Caitlain Carroll, Sr., 5-7, G.; Hailian Rowan, Sr., 5-4, G; Nichole Lujilic, Soph., 5-5, PG; Sarah Devane, Fr., 5-7, G/F

Key newcomers: Nikole Langan, Jr., 5-10; Grace Hahn, Soph., 5-10; F; Ava Lugo, Soph., 5-8, G; Kellie Sullivan, Soph., 5-6; Amanda Franco, Fr., 5-4, G

Team strengths: This year we have a really well rounded roster. There is a core group of experienced players that saw a lot of action last season, mixed with talented youth, and some depth to our bench.

Coach’s thoughts and season outlook:

We are really looking forward to this season. Every practice so far has been filled with a lot of excitement, and fresh energy. The girls have been through a lot the last two years with all of the challenges that COVID has thrown their way. They are ready to take nothing for granted and make the most of this season.

Mangan could not have asked for a better start to the season as her team is 5-0. The Hornets, after winning the Relay for Life Tournament in week one of the season, beat Riverside and Yorktown to stay undefeated. Hormazabal has been an offensive force through five games. She had a game-high 22 points and also added four steals in the 60-46 triumph over Yorktown. Hormazabal is averaging 25 points per game.

Hannah Devane added a double-double with 10 points and 10 rebounds. She also posted three blocked shots. Lujilic finished with 10 points and six steals, Lugo had eight points and six steals and Sarah Devane added seven points and 11 rebounds.

Hormazabal had 26 points, five steals and four assists in the 76-21 victory over Riverside.

Hannah Devane contributed 16 points, Lugo had 14 points, Lujilic chipped in seven points and five assists and Amanda Franco also had seven points.

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“It’s a great start to the season,” Mangan said. “The girls are really starting to gel. Our competition is going to get a bit tougher over the next few weeks so we are looking forward to competing.”

MAHOPAC INDIANS

Coach: Chuck Scozzafava (ninth at Mahopac, 25th overall)

2020-21 record: 12-1

Tournament result: Mahopac won the Northern Westchester/ Putnam Large School Championship.

Graduated seniors: Four, all starters.

Top returning players: Lauren Beberman, Jr., 5-9, G/F (All-Section); Melanie DeMee, Sr., 5-6, G (All-League); Julie DeBrocky, Sr., 5-6, G/F (All-League); Julia Pociellci, Sr., 5-6, G/F; Marissa McNary, Sr., 5-6, F; Piper Krammer, Jr., 5-7, G/F; Jessica Serben, Jr., 5-9, F; Gianna Rispoli, J., 5-6, G; Kristina Rush, Jr., 5-5, G.

Key newcomers: Katie Watts, Jr., 5-7, G; Fiona O’Boyle, Soph., 6-0, C/F.

Coach’s thoughts and season outlook: As a team strength would be the number of sophomores. And an eighth-grader so how fast we learn and improve throughout the season is key.

This and that:

Team strengths: Speed, athleticism and defense.

Team question marks, if any: Experience, after graduating four starters; the returning players will have to take on new roles and challenges.

Coach’s thoughts and season outlook: The hopes to be very competitive and to try to learn and improve throughout the season, to be a challenge to eliminate in the playoffs.

This and that: Panas will play in the Somers Tournament, 12/16 & 12/18 with Ossining, Mahopac and Somers. ... Panas and Putnam Valley meet, 1/9, in the Slam Dunk Tournament.

Panas added two more wins, over Sleepy Hollow (58-39) and Peekskill (53-31), improving to 4-0 this season. Cadence Nicholas continued her stand-out freshman year with a season-high 29 points against Peekskill. She added five rebounds and seven steals. Nicholas, in her second varsity season, is averaging 19.5 points per game to date.

Tavares registered her first career triple-double with 10 points, 11 rebounds and 10 steals. She also collected five assists. Nicholas had a team-best 15 points against Peekskill. She also added five rebounds and seven steals. Nicholas, in her second varsity season, is averaging 19.5 points per game to date.

SOMERS TUSKERS

Coach: Marc Hattem (sixth year)

2020-21 record: 9-9

Tournament results: Lost in the semifinals of the Westchester/ Putnam Small Schools Tournament.

Top returning players: Amy Lasher, Sr. (All-League); Ava Giudice, Jr. (All-League); Lauren McCartain, Jr.; Maddie Lyle, Jr.; Lindsay McCullough, Soph.; Alexa Warycha, Jr. (will miss the first month with an injury)

Team strengths: We have an amazing group of multi-sport athletes that know how to compete, practice the right way, and understand the work it takes to be successful. With Alexa out, our desire to rebound the ball will be the difference in deciding the outcome of games.

Coach’s thoughts and season outlook: We just want to get better and we will. We’ve been preaching improvement, every day, at practice with the goal to be playing our best basketball come February.

This and that: Somers will host Mahopac, Ossining and Panas in its Tournament, 12/16 & 12/18.

YORKTOWN CORNHUSKERS

Coach: Brian Mundy (fourth year)

2020-21 record: 6-7

Tournament results: Lost to Ossining in the first round of the Northern Westchester/ Putnam Large School Tournament. The game was even at 44-44 with four minutes remaining in the game.

Graduated seniors: Three, including one starter.

Top returning starters: Melissa Severino, Sr., 5-7, G (17 ppg, 8 rpg, All-League); Emily Ward, Jr., 5-3, G; Olivia Lucas, Jr., 5-6, G (8.4 ppg, 3 steals per game), Artesa Gashi, Sr., 5-9, F; Erisa Krasniqi, Sr., 5-9, F; Lindsey Townes, Sr., 5-8, G; Isabelle Merlini, Sr., 5-8, F; Sarah Yakout, Sr., 5-8, F

Key newcomers: Kaitlyn Judge, Soph., 5-6, G; Martina Pybylski, Jr., 5-5, G; Rachel Gevanthor, Jr., 5-3, G; Nicole Boccia, Jr., 5-6, F; Nicole Thomas, Jr., 5-6, F; Riley Tiberi, Jr., 5-7, F

Team strengths: Defense, grittiness.

Coach’s thoughts and season outlook: We have a lot of girls with varsity experience. We will be competitive because this group works really hard and they’re hungry. If we can defend and rebound, we will put ourselves in position to win games. We also have an assistant coach for the first time this year, in Sunnie Killeen. She brings a wealth of knowledge and was a Division III All-American. She has already been a tremendous asset.

This and that: Yorktown will host the George Budries Classic beginning Sat., 1/8 vs. Somers, 3:30 p.m. All boys’ and girls’ basketball levels will play against Somers, throughout the day, alternating boys and girls, starting with Freshman boys (we have no Freshman girls team).

Yorktown went 1-1 to open the 2021-22 season, beating Gorton (62-15) before falling to Lakeland (60-46). Severino outscored Gorton with 24 points, Townes contributed 10 points and Judge added seven points. Severino had 16 points and Krasniqi scored 11 points against Lakeland.

NWE/Putnam Girls’ Hoops Preview
Byram Hills Defeats the Bears in the Booster Club Tourney Title Game

By Andy Jacobs

Not that long ago, Danny Bernstein probably wasn’t among the players Byram Hills basketball coach Ted Repa figured would play a leading role in the 2021-22 fortunes of the Bobcats.

But on Saturday evening, Bernstein erupted for a game-high 28 points, 11 of them in the fourth quarter, as the Bobcats earned a 68-56 victory over Briarcliff in the championship game of the Bears’ annual Booster Club Basketball Tournament. His two big 3-pointers in the midst of a 14-3 Byram blitz over a three-minute span of the final quarter brought a sudden halt to Briarcliff’s comeback bid and sealed his selection as tourney MVP.

“He’s really, really our most improved player from last year to this year,” said Repa after watching his sharpshooting guard finish the night with six 3-pointers. “Kind of came out of nowhere. We always knew he was good, but now he’s playing like a man.”

The Bobcats never trailed in the contest, grabbing the lead 50 seconds in on a Benny Rakower 3-point shot and extending it to 19-6 after one quarter following back-to-back buckets from Bobby Chicoine, who wound up with 15 rebounds and a place on the all-tourney team. When sophomore Tyson Repa tossed in a runner from just outside the lane 10 seconds into the second period, Byram Hills built its largest lead of the night, 15 points.

“You know, we’ve been doing pretty well coming out strong,” said Repa, “and it gives us a little cushion because we need it. We tend to struggle a little bit in the second half.”

Briarcliff, held to just two baskets over the first eight minutes, exploded for 19 points in the second quarter. senior guard Jayden Larregue, who finished with a team-high 16 points and six 3-pointers, highlighted a pair of short jumpers in the lane to restore a double-digit cushion.

Two free throws by Luke McCann brought the Bears to within 49-41 after three quarters and they began the fourth with six straight points, highlighted by a 3-pointer from the left corner in Saturday’s win over host Briarcliff.

It was a little better in the second half, but still not consistent enough. We’ve got a long way to go, a long way to go. Luckily, it’s still early in the year. But we’re not where we want to be.”

Responded with eight straight points. Bernstein provided a 15-foot jumper left of the foul line and, 30 seconds later, added a 3-pointer from the left corner.

A fast-break layup by Sean Siegel concluded the spurt and increased the Bobcat lead to 63-50 with just two and a half minutes remaining. Bernstein’s final points of the game, on an old-fashioned 3-point play when Rakower found him open underneath for a layup, came with 1:32 left on the clock. Soon both teams were clearing the bench, with the postgame awards soon to follow.

“To win games, you have to have guys step up and make plays, and that’s what happened,” said Repa. “Our kids really battled, physically. They won the game with heart and toughness.”

It began with Bernstein swishing a 3-pointer from the right elbow with 5:35 remaining. Nearly a minute later, Repa followed with a 3-point shot from well behind the arc right of the key. The Bears’ McCann answered immediately with another 3-pointer, but then Byram

Ben Dreilinger of Byram Hills is sandwiched between Briarcliff’s Jayden Larregue (left) and Luke McCann as he tries to corral a rebound in Saturday’s tournament final.

Byram Hills sophomore Tyson Repa shoots the ball from the left baseline as Briarcliff’s Saad Hussain defends in the Booster Club Tournament.

Ben Siegel of Briarcliff tries to drive past Michael Rocco of Byram Hills in the second half of Saturday’s Booster Club Tournament title game.

Byram Hills guard Danny Bernstein fires a jumper from the left corner in Saturday’s win over host Briarcliff.
Briarcliff Girls Lose to Hastings in the Booster Club Tourney

By Andy Jacobs

An inability to grab rebounds, coupled with the stellar play of Hastings star forward Paige Martin, proved to be too much for the Briarcliff girls’ basketball team to overcome on Saturday afternoon.

Martin finished with a game-high 32 points and the Yellow Jackets overwhelmed Briarcliff on the offensive glass en route to a convincing 64-40 victory in the championship game of the Bears’ 2021 Booster Club Basketball Tournament.

“You know, we can’t rebound, we can’t rebound,” said Bears head coach Denise Hamlin afterwards. “That was the whole game. They went on their big run when we couldn’t box out or rebound, and then we couldn’t gain our composure to come back.”

Before the Yellow Jackets took command of the game in the second quarter, the two teams battled back and forth over the first eight minutes. The lead changed hands six times and a short baseline jumper by Adrianna Scanga with 28 seconds remaining gave the Bears a 16-15 edge after one quarter.

A 3-pointer out of the left corner by the Yellow Jackets’ Caitlin Drozd to start the second period changed the lead for the seventh and final time. The game was tied for the only time all day after a drive for a basket by Cat Carrafiello with four minutes left in the third quarter, followed by a high-arching 3-point shot from Caroline Barbalato that just beat the shot clock with 3:23 left in the period.

Unfortunately for Briarcliff, the Yellow Jackets then closed the quarter on a 10-2 run, sparked by seven points from Martin, who was named the tournament’s most valuable player. When the fourth quarter began, the Bears found themselves trailing 49-34, with Barbalato seated on the bench with four fouls.

Martin made sure the Bears wouldn’t come close in the final quarter by scoring three early baskets, all of them inside, helping stretch the Hastings lead to 56-38. “She’s a phenomenal player,” said Hamlin. “She works super hard, 12 months a year. We did the best we could against her. Paige is an awesome player, but they’ve got a nice surrounding cast, too.”

Briarcliff, which had opened the tournament by routing Dover on Thursday, was led by Carrafiello’s 15 points. Barbalato and Aldrich each chipped in with nine. But Carrafiello, who was named to the all-tournament team, made sure the Bears wouldn’t come close in the final quarter by scoring three early baskets, all of them inside, helping stretch the Hastings lead to 56-38.

“Losing Dylan hurts,” said Hamlin, who admits her team is currently a work in progress. “So we have a big hole to fill. And without her, it puts more pressure on them (Carrafiello and Barbalato). Hopefully, we’ll get somebody else to step up and do something, but it’s hard to expect when you’re playing against a Hastings.”
FOOTBALL 2021
A Look Back

Pleasantville’s Daniel Picart finds running room in the Panthers’ home win over Bronxville.

Valhalla senior quarterback Michael Dawson keeps the football himself in the Vikings’ mid-October game at Haldane.

Michael Rocco of Byram Hills breaks free for a big gain against the Westlake Wildcats.

Senior running back Kieran Cotter carries the football during Pleasantville’s regional playoff victory over Port Jervis.

Pleasantville quarterback Michael LaCapria scrambles out of the pocket while searching for an open receiver in the state playoffs.

Byram Hills quarterback Jared Cohen fires a pass in the Bobcats’ win at Westlake.

Byram Hills junior Gavin Javorsky returns a kick in a victory over Briarcliff/Hamilton.

Basiaka Butcher (7) and Devan Cooper of Valhalla do some end zone celebrating after a touchdown in a home win.

Valhalla's Je'Caryous Poteat scores a touchdown after grabbing a pass in the Class C championship game vs. Dobbs Ferry.

Brandon Rispoli of Briarcliff is chased by Nanuet’s Brendan Bennett in the second week of the season.
White Plains running back Elijah Pierre bursts through the line of scrimmage in a home win over Fox Lane.

Mike DeBono runs with the football in Fox Lane’s win at Ketcham early in September.

Fox Lane quarterback Eric Miller gets set to unleash a long pass in the Foxes’ Homecoming win.

Westlake quarterback Anthony Arrichiello rolls out to his left looking for an open receiver.

Briarcliff/Hamilton junior quarterback Ben Raphael looks deep down the field before throwing a pass vs. Pleasantville at Parkway Field.

Glen Ahern of Westlake turns upfield looking for big yardage in a home game vs. Byram Hills.

Nicolas Spista of White Plains eludes a tackle near midfield while replicating the Heisman pose.

White Plains quarterback Jay Biondi throws a pass during a road game vs. the Arlington Admirals.

Boden Bounds of Greeley scampers across the field in a home victory over Irvington.

The Briarcliff/Hamilton defense makes a tackle during an early-season home game.

Horace Greeley quarterback Ryan Wohl runs for a big gain in the Quakers’ win over Section 9’s Goshen under the lights.

The Greeley defense makes a tackle in the win at Poughkeepsie for the Independent League championship.

Briarcliff/Hamilton makes a tackle during an early-season home game.

Brian Bailey and his Fox Lane teammates celebrate their win over the Yonkers Force in early October.

Horace Greeley quarterback Ryan Wohl runs for a big gain in the Quakers’ win over Section 9’s Goshen under the lights.

The Briarcliff/Hamilton defense makes a tackle during an early-season home game.
Danny Bernstein Leads the Bobcats to a 68-56 Victory Over Host Briarcliff in the 2021 Booster Club Tournament.