

Examiner Sports

Split Decision!

Lakeland Girls, Panas Boys Prevail in 31st Annual Giglio Games



Walter Panas junior G Alex Tavarez -- a viable D-I prospect -- spins and wins in the lane for two of his game-high 21 points in the host Panthers' 73-45 win over rival Lakeland in Saturday's 31st annual Giglio Games... see Boys' Hoops Notebook

RAY GALLAGHER PHOTOS

The heat was on in Round 2 of the Lakeland vs. Panas girls' hoops series last Saturday when the visiting Hornets avenged last month's loss to Walter Panas by pounding out a 60-55 League II-C win in the 31st annual Giglio Games where the Hornets, including (L-R) Hannah Devane, Ava Lugo, Tyler Hormazabal, Grace Hahn and Nichole Ljuljic, had the last licks... see Girls' Hoops Notebook

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NWE/Putnam Boys' Hoops Notebook

Surging Panas Upends Lakeland, Poughkeepsie, Hen Hud Panthers Take Giglio Games Gold Ball; Mahopac Pounds Somers, Seeks League Title

By Ray Gallagher
Examiner Sports Editor @Directrays

And here comes Class A **WALTER PANAS**, just like we thought it would. A mid-season funk now a thing of the past, Coach Mike Auerbach's Panthers (12-4, 5-2 in II-D) have reeled off six-straight wins, including Saturday's 73-45 League II-D win over visiting rival **LAKELAND** at the 31st rendition of the Giglio Games. Behind three double-digit scorers, including Maleek McNeil (14), Oliver Smith (21) and silky smooth junior G Alex Tavaréz (game-high 23), the Panthers left the Hornets in the dust behind a 22-10 third-quarter run that saw the effusive Tavaréz unleash a whirling slam dunk off a steal... game, set, match, which kept Panas from being whitewashed at the fabled Giglio Games (Lakeland won 3 of 4 contested games).

The Panthers were caught up in a COVID cloud around the holidays, leading to some internal issues and some sub-par play, but the corner was officially turned last week with wins over Lakeland, Poughkeepsie and Hen Hud, putting Panas in position to snag at least a share of the league title with Lourdes (8-0), should they beat the Warriors and get some necessary help from Hen Hud.

"A lot has changed but the main thing that has improved greatly was our ball movement," said Tavaréz, a legit D-I prospect and top local talent. "As a team, we've grown a lot chemistry-wise and I

definitely think we are a section-winning team and we're looking to accomplish that goal. Big things are coming."

In Panas' 59-53 win over host Poughkeepsie, Tavaréz had 30 points and McNeil added 11 points in a statement triumph that helped the Panthers work their way to the current No.5 seed in Class A.

"Tavaréz has been terrific," Auerbach stated. "He was 12 for 21 from the field and 6 for 6 from the free throw line against Poughkeepsie. He hit big basket after big basket in a really tough environment and did an excellent job defending their point guard Jahlyl Morgan, who hurt us in the first game a few weeks ago. Maleek was big, too. He gave us a reliable second option to play through offensively."

"The difference though was it was the best game our role players played collectively against one of the upper-tier teams in the section," Auerbach added. "Dillon Chenard was excellent, blocked four shots to go along with eight rebounds and two big three pointers on the offensive end. Oliver Smith chipped in with eight rebounds and five points and Cam Nicholas stepped up with seven points, five assists, five rebounds and made a couple huge baskets to stop the bleeding when Poughkeepsie went on their runs. We've felt all along our A-game was good enough to beat anyone on our schedule. Finding that level consistently will be the challenge down the stretch. We play just about every other day now with some tough league games and a trip to Somers over the final week and a half of the regular season."

Panas started the week with a 73-51 drubbing of **HEN HUD** behind 20 points from Tavaréz 19 from McNeil had 19 and Smith added 13 for Panas. Hen Hud's Rocco Capicotti scored 11 points while Michael Gagliardi added nine.

It's entirely possible that Panas is fully back in business, on the hunt for its first title since 2014 when the great Tim McCauley was doing his thing.



Panas F Oliver Smith flushes home two-handed rim-rocker in Panthers' rout of Lakeland in Saturday's Giglio Games.

"We're clicking the way we thought we could back in November," Auerbach said. "Tavaréz had an incredible week."

That week and his season has conjured up images of the past.

"Outside of Timmy McCauley at the County Center, I'm not sure there have been many better individual weeks in recent Panas history," Auerbach said of Tavaréz, who has 820 career points despite the COVID issues that have wrought havoc. "His defense on Chris Whyte-Luciano from the second quarter on was outstanding, in addition to what he gave us on the offensive end. Chris was hurting us early and we didn't really have an answer for him off their ball screen stuff until Alex dug in and was able to start getting through it on his own."

McNeil, a true X-factor for Panas, has found his niche of late.

"Finding different ways we can play through Maleek, whether it's against man or zone, has made a huge difference too," the coach said. "He's such an easy target



Panas G Alex Tavaréz goes glass for two points against defense from Lakeland's Logan Shiland in Panthers' Giglio Games win over Hornets Saturday.

and I'm not sure I've seen many better passing big men at this level. Oliver Smith was great against Lakeland. He's an endless energy guy who can take advantage of smaller teams that will struggle to keep him off the boards."

Hen Hud (10-7, 4-4) went on to knock off Lakeland, 56-42, for the second time this season when Dean Hiltzley and Gino Wamack ran circles around the Hornets for 19 points apiece. Lakeland (7-9) was led by David Mula's 10 points but remained winless in league play.

The Sailors concluded the week with a 57-43 Gazette Cup win over Croton to win for the third time in four games while

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Panas G Cameron Nicholas gets two points ahead of Lakeland's Chris Whyte-Luciano in Panthers' Giglio Games win over visiting Hornets.



Panas boys, led by 'Body by Maleek McNeil' (55), pose off after whipping Lakeland for Giglio Games trophy Saturday.



Panas C Maleek McNeil challenges Lakeland's Logan Shiland and Andrew Mendel in Panthers' Giglio Games win over visiting Hornets Saturday.

Sports

NWE/Putnam Boys' Hoops Notebook



Hen Hud junior G Dean Hiltley goes for two of his 19 points in win over visiting Lakeland Thursday.

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maneuvering their way to the No.15 seed.

Winning ugly is rarely pretty, but it's better than the alternative, so an ugly victory can be a beautiful thing; just ask **MAHOPAC** Coach Tom McMahon, whose team survived a 45-44 League II-C win over visiting **YORKTOWN** on senior night last Thursday.

"It may have been ugly, but it is exactly what we expected and prepared for," McMahon said after Max Gomes finished with a team-high 12 points, including two clutch free throws in the waning seconds and another breakaway bucket. "It's just another close win for this team, which just seems to find a way in those types of games. That's a credit to the kids we have."

"(Yorktown coach) Mark (Pavella) is one of the best coaches in the section and his



Hen Hud sophomore G Eugene Wamack lifts for two points on Lakeland junior G Chris Whyte-Luciano in Sailors' win over Hornets Thursday.

team always gives us trouble," McMahon added. "I thought we did a great job defending (Eddie) Brucaj and (Billy) Feeks and (Justin) Price, but Price made some tough plays and shots in the fourth, which happens, but defending them takes a lot out of you. We didn't shoot it well enough, but made a couple when it counted. Any league win is a good win."

Mahopac senior F Ryan Reilly snagged nine caroms and F Colum Ranaghan added nine points and seven boards for the Indians (11-4), who had their hands full with Price. Of his game-high 18 points, the silky sophomore hit a pair of lethal 3's to give the Huskers a short-lived lead late in the fourth. Price added six rebounds and five assists and continued his ascension through the ranks of Section 1. Senior C Brucaj added eight points and 10 boards for Yorktown, which suffered its second loss in a row (53-50 to John Jay CR).

Mahopac has now reeled off 10 wins in its last 11 games, including Tuesday's 57-40 League II-C win at **SOMERS**, which had won eight in a row but lost all hopes of procuring its first league title since 1989. The win put Mahopac (7-0 in League II-C) in the driver's seat for the league title.

"We'll get that league title if it's the last thing we do," Somers Coach Chris DiCintio said. "Probably not this year, but before I ride off into retirement. Quite frankly, Mahopac just has our number this year. I don't know if it's in our heads or what, or if it's just a bad matchup with their length and strength. We didn't expect our two top players to get two fouls on each of them in the first quarter, which took our two best

All-Section players out of the game. That being said, I thought Coach McMahon did a great job coming out in a defense we hadn't seen from them all year in the diamond-and-one. That stumped us. They had not played that a single time all year in all the film we watched, but I still like our chances in the playoffs."

The Tuskers (10-7) had little chance in the second half against the Indians, who saw the heroics of junior G Joey Koch and the timely shots of senior Max Gomes come up clutch, scoring all of his eight points after the break. Koch was off the hook, though, delivering three 3's while providing a measure of breathing room in a game with no room to breathe until Koch ignited a 20-6 run to give the Indians a 53-34 lead with 1:38 remaining.

Mahopac's Mike Callahan finished with 12 points and five rebounds, including a clutch hoop

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Lakeland's Andrew Mendel takes brunt force charge from Panas big Maleek McNeil in Hornets' loss to Panthers Saturday.



Hen Hud senior C Rocco Capicotti gets up for two in Sailors' win over visiting Lakeland Thursday.



Lakeland sophomore F Logan Crilly powers up against Hen Hud senior C Rocco Capicotti in Hornets' loss to Sailors Thursday.



Mahopac F Ryan Reilly (30) snuffs out shot from Somers F Christian McGrane in visiting Indians' 57-40 rout of Tuskers last Tuesday.

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down the stretch while teammate Ranaghan had 11 points, six rebounds and three assists. Jake Couzens chimed in with 10 points and six rebounds. Reilly added six points and nabbed nine rebounds.

Somers was in it to win it when senior G Bennett Leitner drained four 3s in the fourth quarter and finished with 16 points while sharpshooting soph Andrew Violante finished went for nine. Somers junior F Matt Fitzsimons was contained to five points and seven rebounds.

With three games left and a two-game lead on the rest of the league, Mahopac (7-0 in II-C) will look to wrap up the league title this week against Greeley, John Jay CR and Brewster.

Somers recovered with a 61-53 win over visiting Putnam Valley, which had no answers for the Fitzsimons' double-



Mahopac G Michael Callahan (2) and Somers G Brady Leitner get after rebound in visiting Indians' 57-40 rout of Tuskers last Tuesday.

double. Leitner added 15 points and four steals. Nicky Iocovello crushed the Tigers from behind the arc (three 3-pointers) for Somers. Arthur Holzman (17 points) and Cole Durocher (16) kept the Class B Tigers in striking distance.

CLASS AA

OSSINING found out that White Plains, despite its subpar record (6-11), is no joke when Tiger Logan McCormack (20 points) and Daniel Herzner (10) went for double digits in a 50-45 White Plains win. Ossining hotshot Jaeden Carr had 18 points for the Pride (10-6), who currently hold the No.6 seed.

CARMEL (10-6) lost its first crack at



Mahopac's Colum Ranaghan, Sean Massett, Anthony DeMatteo and Patrick McMahon greet Mahopac Maniacs after 45-44 win over Yorktown Thursday.

N.West./Putnam Fab Five Hoops Poll

No.1 PANAS – Coach Auerbach's Class A Panthers (12-4) have that sectional-title buzz about them again, and that conjures up images of Tim McCauley, Rich Montesarchio, Mike Marschner and all those other legacies before Alex 'The Great' Tavarez.

No.2 MAHOPAC – Coach McMahon's Class A Indians (11-4) are about to lock up the League II-C title and possibly play an opening round playoff game in front of the raucous #Mahopac Maniacs as the potential No.7 seed.

No.3 HALDANE – Coach V's Class C state-ranked (No.5) Blue Devils (15-2) certainly laid an egg in loss to host Bronxville, which only goes to show you better bring your A-game against the likes of the Hamilton/Tuckahoe survivor, not to mention Put Valley this week.

No.4 OSSINING – Coach Casey's Class AA Pride (10-6), the current No.6 seed, discovered that White Plains is no ordinary 6-11 team in 5-point loss to Tigers and thus they have little chance to catch Fox Lane or White Plains, who will duke it out for the league title.

No.5 SOMERS – Coach DiCintio's Class A Tuskers (10-7) appeared to be a notch short of being a legit contender for any sort of Class A title when Mahopac stomped 'em pretty good last week, but I sure hope to be on hand when they finally snap that league title drought #1989.

HM CARMEL – Coach Johansen's surging Class AA Rams (10-5) are beating the teams they are supposed to beat but I need to see them knock off either Fox Lane, Arlington or RCK as we close out the season before I jump on board with league title aspirations, much lass Class AA.

HM YORKTOWN – Coach Pavella's Class A Huskers (7-10), the current No.17 seed, have a real shot at finishing 10-10, which could bump them all they way to No.14/15, which could get them a home outbracket game.

HM HEH HUD – Coach Hirsch's Class A Sailors (10-7) fell short in three major tests against Poughkeepsie, Lourdes and Panas, so if they can somehow survive an outbracket game and advance to Great 8 we'd be looking at a very successful campaign #Overachieve.

HM PUTNAM VALLEY – Coach Morales' Tigers (6-9) gave Somers fits for four quarters, so we can only hope that these tough losses to Class A clubs like Somers, Mahopac and Lakeland has them prepped for a wide open Class B tourney.

RCK, 65-52, and now know what we've been hearing about all year; RCK (11-3) is legit as the current No.3 seed. Andrew Fiore had 15 points and four rebounds for the Rams, the current No.5 seed, in the loss. The Ramd did recover in time to post an 83-48 blowout of Port Chester when F Nick DiLeo posted another strong double-double (17 points, 13 rebounds) while Fiore

chipped in 15 points.

CLASS B/C

HALDANE hammered North Salem, 74-52 when Matteo Cervone (20 points), Tristen Reid (12) and Soren Holmbo (11) all went to town for the Blue Devils (15-2), the No.1 seed in Class C, who will look to lock down the League III-E title this week.



Somers G Nick Iocovello (L) and Mahopac G Michael Callahan battle for rebound in visiting Indians' 57-40 rout of Tuskers last Tuesday.

Sports

NWE/Putnam Girls' Hoops Notebook

Lakeland Knocks off Panas, Claims Giglio Games Gold Ball

By Tony Pinciario

A mid-week loss to fellow Class A school Pearl River dropped **LAKELAND** to 4-3 in its last seven games, after opening the season a perfect 10-0. Lakeland would not have time to be upset over the loss because the Hornets' next opponent was intra-district rival, **WALTER PANAS**. The Panthers defeated the Hornets in their first meeting of the season.

Lakeland returned to practice, following the loss to Pearl River, focused and intent on improving on areas of its game that needed to be upgraded. The result: Lakeland avenged its loss earlier in the season with a 60-55 victory over the host Panthers in the 31st annual Giglio Games last Saturday.

Lakeland, the current No.3 seed in Class A, is now 15-3 this season as it prepares for the always-competitive Section 1 Class A Girls' Basketball Championship. The Section 1 regular season concludes Monday, Feb. 14, followed by the seeding meeting, Tuesday, Feb. 15. The Section 1 Girls' Basketball Championships will begin Feb. 17 with Tappan Zee (16-1) clinging to the top seed.

"We took a look back at the Pearl River game, watched film and saw the areas we could improve on," senior and captain Tyler Hormazabal said.

Hormazabal pointed out that Lakeland went to school on its first game with Panas, the current No.2 seed.

"We knew the many things we needed to improve on after that game," Hormazabal said. "Panas is a very strong team so we focused on our offense and defense, as well as our strengths and weaknesses. We also spoke to each other about working together as a team and our bond together, and that helped us moving forward. We were happy to come out with a win."

Hormazabal finished with 17



Hornets swarm Ava Lugo after her big-time triple gave Lakeland late lead in win over rival Walter Panas Saturday.

points to lead a balanced scoring effort. Ava Lugo added 15 points and Nichole Ljuljic contributed 14 points. All three hit big shots down the stretch.

Lakeland Coach Miranda Mangan cited Hannah Devane, Grace Hahn and Hormazabal with converting key free throws down the stretch.

Lugo and Ljuljic have raised their games, offensively, giving Lakeland proven scorers behind Hormazabal. Teams can no longer focus their defensive attention solely on Hormazabal.

"Since the beginning of the season, everyone has been working hard and this hard work is really paying off and helping us get victories," Hormazabal said. "And I know I can count on every single one

of my teammates to finish the play. I have confidence in my teammates' ability."

Hormazabal finished with a game-high 22 points in Lakeland's 47-33 victory over **HEN HUD**, to open its week. Lugo added eight points and eight rebounds.



Lakeland girls revel in their 60-55 win over rival Walter Panas in Saturday's Giglio Games.

MAHOPAC continued rolling with three more victories – over Somers (61-40), Yorktown (53-29) and Brewster (57-32).

Mahopac is now 12-4 this season, including 7-0 in league play, with the current No.4 seed in Class A.

A key factor in Class Mahopac's surge is its defense, as it held Yorktown and Brewster to season-

lows in points.

"I think the intensity of our defense starts with our communication," said senior and captain Melanie DeMeo. "Whether we are on, or off the ball, we are always calling screens and having active hands to produce steals or deflect the ball any chance we get."

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Lakeland captains Tyler Hormazabal and Hannah Devane hoist coveted Giglio Games trophy Saturday after knocking off rival Panas.

RAY GALLAGHER / TONY HUMBERTO PHOTOS



Lakeland's Nichole Ljuljic fires jumper on Panas' Kelsey Cregan in Hornets' win over Panthers Saturday.



Lakeland's Sarah Devane pulls up on Panas' Kelsey Cregan in Hornets' win over Panthers Saturday.

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Mahopac held **YORKTOWN's** leading scorer Melissa Severino to just six points. In the Brewster game, after Grace Galgano scored 20 points in the first half, Mahopac limited the Bears' star to three points in the second half thanks to Jess Sterbens and Fiona O'Boyle.

"Going into the Yorktown game we knew that Melissa Severino runs a lot of their offense so we tried to prevent her from getting the ball as much as possible," DeMeo said. "Grace (Galgano) was on our radar. She is a very good player, but Jess and Fiona took on the challenge of containing her in the second half. Getting that type of contribution from them was huge, and a big part of that win."

Julie DeBrockey had 13 points for Mahopac against Brewster. Kristina Rush and DeMeo each had 11 points.

DeMeo scored 11 of her game-high 18 points in the first quarter against Yorktown. Lauren Beberman finished with 13 points and Rush added 10 points.

DeBrockey scored a season-high 19 points as Mahopac opened its week against Somers. Rush added 14 points and Beberman chipped in with 10 points.

Ava Guidice led **SOMERS** with 17 points.

OSSINING dropped a pair of games – to Yorktown (61-55) and White Plains (64-58) in which the opponents outscored the Pride in the fourth quarter to overtake it.

The Pride snapped its three-game losing streak with a 68-56 victory over Irvington at the Pauline Ricci Memorial Classic. Ossining followed it up with a win over Peekskill, improving to 12-4 this season as the current No.6 seed in Class AA.



Lakeland's Tyler Hormazabal tries to gain lane on Panas' Julia Gallinger in Hornets' win over Panthers Saturday.

Class AA Ossining closed out the 11th annual Pauline Ricci Memorial Classic with the win. It was the fifth game of the day in what has become an outstanding tournament in honor of Ossining Coach Dan Ricci's late mom.

Even though no fans were allowed to attend the games, Ricci said all of the



Panas G Cadence Nicholas drains big trey in Panthers' loss to visiting Lakeland Saturday.

coaches committed to playing. Each player received a shirt commemorating the event, which made Ricci smile.

"It's a great event and it's always good for me because it's in my mom's name," said Ricci, who also did this when he coached

varsity football and girls' varsity lacrosse. "When I was told that we were not having fans, I reached out to all of the coaches to let them know. And they said, 'We are still coming. This is for your mom'. It was great basketball as the teams played hard, and we raised money for scholarships. I really thought it was a good day. Some of the coaches and some of the kids donated. We were also able to live-stream the games so fans could watch."

Ossining outscored Irvington, 16-7, in the fourth quarter.

Ella Schneckler poured in a game-high 29 points and Katie Marx added 19 points and 10 rebounds. Michelle Mercado registered 15 assists and Karen Perriott grabbed 12 rebounds. Ricci cited sophomore Ella Castrillon, who scored five points in the decisive fourth quarter, and junior Angelica Rios who grabbed six rebounds.

"It was our best win of the year," said Ricci of the Irvington game. "Irvington is super well-coached and it had just beaten Hastings. The kids fought through adversity. They came up and made some big shots at the end of the game. Ella (Schneckler) had a great game. It was definitely a team effort. We are having a different player come off the bench to help us. It's a good sign when kids are coming in and contributing."

Schneckler scored 15 points and Marx added 13 points against White Plains. Mercado finished with 11 points and 10 assists and Karen Perriott had a team-best 10 rebounds.

Yorktown outscored Ossining, 25-14, in the fourth quarter, to grab the win.

Marx and Schneckler each had 18 points. Mercado had nine points and 10 assists and Perriott collected 15 rebounds.

BREWSTER registered two impressive wins to open the week, including Grace Galgano achieving a milestone. The senior reached 1,000 varsity points in a 66-28 win over Horace Greeley.

"Grace converted a layup midway through the first quarter," Brewster Coach Mike Castaldo said. "Grace has had an incredible career and is having a ridiculous senior year. She missed half of her freshman year due to an injury and only played in 13 games last

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A Grand in Hand!



Brewster senior F Grace Galgano gains lane en route to her 1,000th career point in Tuesday's rout of visiting Greeley.



Brewster's Sophia Alzugaray (L), Madison Dakin and Margo Cunningham (12) congratulate Grace Galgano (center) after her 1,000th point.



Brewster G Adrianna Calicchia gains lane on Greeley's Ramsey Edson in Bears' 66-28 win over visiting Quakers Tuesday.

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Brewster's Sophia Alzugaray zips bullet pass cross court in host Bears' 66-28 win over Greeley last Tuesday.

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year because of a shortened COVID season and she was still able to get 1,000 points. She will be the only player in Brewster history, boys or girls, that will end her career with over 1,000 career points and rebounds."

Galgano finished with 17 points, 10 rebounds and five blocked shots against Greeley. Adrianna Calicchia and Madison Dakin each had 11 points and Jordan Niles scored nine points.

Galgano had 25 points, 11 rebounds and six blocked shots as the Bears held off a late-charging John Jay-Cross River, 43-38.

Calicchia converted three of four from the foul line in the final seconds to secure the win.

Brewster trailed Mahopac, 22-21, at halftime, but the Bears only managed 11 points in the second half.

"We were in a great position to come away with a huge win on the road against one of the best teams in the section and we went ice cold," Castaldo said. "We couldn't score, we couldn't rebound and we took too many possessions off. Against a team like Mahopac, you can't afford to take one possession off. Mahopac did a great job and played a great 32 minutes."

Galgano had 20 points, 13 rebounds and five blocked shots. Brewster, now 14-4, closes out the season with Somers and Yorktown while clinging to the No.6 seed in Class A.

YORKTOWN had two memorable victories last week as the Cornhuskers beat Ossining (61-55) and Kaitlyn Judge's 3-pointer at the buzzer resulted in a 57-55 win over John Jay-Cross River.

Melissa Severino gave Yorktown the lead for good against Ossining on a lay-up with 1:06 remaining in the game. Severino scored 10 of her team-best 18 points in the fourth quarter, including 3 of 4 from the free-throw line to seal the win.

Olivia Lucas scored 14 points Erisa Krasniqi added 11 points. Judge's last-second shot was the third time this season Yorktown has won in the final seconds. Judge finished with a career-best 18 points, including 15 in the second half.

Mahopac defeated Yorktown, 53-29. Despite the loss, Yorktown has won eight of its last 10 games, improving to 10-6 as the current No.10 seed in Class A.

PANAS split a pair of games as the Panthers (16-2) beat Poughkeepsie (78-29), but lost to district rival, Lakeland (60-55).

Freshman Cadence



Brewster's Bre Washington goes up for shot in Bears' 66-28 win over visiting Greeley last Tuesday.



Ossining's Ella Schneckler tore up Irvington with a career-high 29 points (7 threes) in Pride's win Saturday.

Nicholas had 20 points and six steals against Poughkeepsie. Katie Hoffman had 13 points and Kelsey Cregan and Lindsay Kagan each chipped in 11 points for the Panthers.

PUTNAM VALLEY beat Dobbs Ferry 79-48 behind 28 points from Eva DeChent. Amanda Orlando added 19 points and Nai Torres contributed 13 points. The Tigers (9-7) will be a tough out in Class B's postseason, currently seeded seventh.

PEEKSKILL beat Lincoln as Amori Murphy and TK Cowan Honghoch led a balanced scoring effort with

10 points apiece. Jayla Smith added nine points and Amori Cleveland scored seven points for the Red Devils (11-6), the current No.9 seed in Class A. Honghoch tossed in 21 points and Kiki Mercado had a season-high 15 points in a loss to Port Chester.

Ray Gallagher contributed to this story.



Ossining F Katie Marx went for double-double (19 P, 10 R) in Pride's win over Irvington Saturday.



Ossining's Michelle Mercado scored seven and dished 15 assists in Pride's win over Irvington Saturday.

Sports

Vikings Step Up in the Fourth Quarter to Outlast Westlake

By Andy Jacobs

Two teams anxious to reclaim local bragging rights and also turn their fortunes around in the final days of the regular season finally met for the first time last Wednesday evening.

By the time the final buzzer sounded, it was the host Valhalla Vikings who emerged with a 55-50 victory over archrival Westlake in a game that wasn't decided until the last 30 seconds. Michael Giuliano scored a game-high 24 points, Basiaka Butcher added 20 and Devan Cooper provided a second-half spark as the Vikings improved to 10-4.

"It was a good high school game," said Vikings head coach Rich Clinchy after his team had ended a skid in which it had lost three of its previous four games. "It may not be beautiful basketball, but it was tough basketball. When you play Westlake, it's always a physical game. You know they're gonna play good defense. You know they pass the ball well. They play like a team out there, a very good team."

For the Wildcats, the loss was their fifth in a row and dropped them a game under .500. They were led by Justin Silva's 16 points and Martin Sunjic's 13 and spent almost the entire evening trailing the Vikings by a few points. Westlake's only lead of the game, 41-40, came 40 seconds into the fourth quarter on a 3-point shot by Mark Malandrucolo and only lasted for 15 seconds.

"You know, it was a couple possessions that could've gone either way," said Westlake coach Chad Charney. "There were a couple of layups and little chippies we missed. We missed a big 3 in the corner and then they made a big one. Refs, we can complain all we want, but we've gotta put the ball in the basket in a game like that."

Just two minutes into the contest, it seemed that the Wildcats might be in for a long night. Valhalla opened up a quick 6-0 lead with a pair of layups by Butcher and then another from Giuliano. But the Wildcats responded immediately with



Valhalla junior guard Devan Cooper sails through the lane for a bucket in last Wednesday's home win over Westlake.

their own 6-0 spurt as JJ Jackette drove the lane for a bucket and then Silva followed with consecutive baskets.

In the final minute of the first quarter, Valhalla got a fast-break layup by Giuliano and a left-handed layup by Basiaka and took a 15-11 lead into the second period. A pair of 3-pointers from Giuliano, one from the left elbow and the other from the right, helped the Vikings build their largest lead of the game, 23-13, with 4:42 to go in the half.

But once again, Westlake battled right back, scoring the next nine points as Silva connected on a 3-point shot and a pullup

17-foot jumper, Jack Neglia made a couple of free throws and then Sunjic scored inside. A 15-foot baseline jumper by Jackette with four seconds remaining sent the teams off the court at halftime with the Wildcats trailing just 27-26.

Giuliano scored five early points when the second half began, enabling Valhalla to stretch its slim lead to six points. The Wildcats, though, were able to withstand the Vikings' stepped-up defensive pressure and moved to within two points after a put-back by Neglia, who scored six of his 10 points in the third quarter, and then a bucket by Silva. Another put-back, this time by Sunjic, with 28 seconds remaining in the third quarter brought Westlake within 40-38 entering the fourth.

"They handled the pressure very well," said Clinchy about the Wildcats. "Once they broke the backcourt, they took it down the lane real well. We had to change defenses halfway through the third and then in the fourth. We changed the pressure defense. I don't know if it was better, but we changed it."

After battling from behind all night, the Wildcats finally grabbed the lead in the first minute of the fourth quarter when Malandrucolo got open in the right corner and drained a 3-pointer. But the Westlake lead was brief as Basiaka tied the game with a free throw and then followed with a right-baseline 15-foot jumper.

The teams were tied for the fourth and final time at 43-apiece when Giuliano gave Valhalla the lead for good by making both ends of a 1-and-1 with 5:32 left in the game. His two free throws started a 7-0 Viking run that was capped with a Giuliano layup on a pass from Cooper with 3:25 on the clock. Silva managed to drain a 3-point shot with 1:20 to go, moving the Wildcats within 52-48, but that was as close as they got.

Two free throws with 31.8 seconds left



The Vikings' Basiaka Butcher rises for a jump shot in the second half of last week's game against the Westlake Wildcats.

by Cooper, who scored all nine of his points after halftime and delighted the home fans with a couple of acrobatic layups in traffic, gave Valhalla a six-point advantage and all but sealed the outcome.

"Devan Cooper, when he came back in the second half, made the difference in terms of his quickness," said Clinchy. "And of course that one shot (hanging in midair with 1:35 left), which is, you know, whatever, it goes in. So I think he made the difference there."

"You know, it's a tough thing," said the Wildcats' Charney about his team's recent

continued on next page



Westlake's Justin Silva dribbles toward the top of the key in the first half of Wednesday's game at Valhalla.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



Westlake's Jack Neglia and Valhalla's Chris Purchia await a potential rebound in the second half of last Wednesday evening's game.



Martin Sunjic of Westlake drives to the basket during the Wildcats' road game vs. Valhalla.

Sports



Valhalla’s Michael Giuliano, who scored a game-high 24 points, sends a corner jump shot over the outstretched hand of Westlake’s Jack Neglia in last Wednesday night’s 55-50 Viking win.

continued from previous page

losing streak. “Last year, we had a really good team, and we graduated nine guys. And basically last year we had a nine-man rotation. We returned one guy who was in that regular rotation. So it’s been a learning curve.”

The Wildcats did close their week by defeating Pleasantville on Saturday, but Charney knows there’ll be plenty more challenges for his players as they conclude the regular season with four games this coming week.

“It’s not gonna get any easier,” he said. “It’s all good teams and we’re just hoping



Westlake junior Jack Neglia takes the ball toward the basket in the first half vs. the host Valhalla Vikings.

to continue to play like we did tonight and get ready for the playoffs.”

While Clinchy insists he’s taking things one game at a time, he too has an eye on the upcoming sectionals.

“The key thing at the end of the year is who has good practices,” he said. “The quality of your finish is determined by your practices. If you don’t continually improve, you’re gonna underachieve at the end. That’ll be the test in the next two weeks.”



Basiaka Butcher of Valhalla gets inside for an easy basket in the second half of the Viking victory over visiting Westlake.



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Mikaele Martinez of Valhalla shoots the ball in the Vikings’ 55-50 win over Westlake.



JJ Jackette of Westlake slips past Valhalla’s Basiaka Butcher for a shot in the lane during last week’s clash of archrivals.

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Byram Hills senior guard Beth Corelli reached the 1000-point milestone last Tuesday with a free throw late in the third quarter of the Bobcats’ home victory over Sleepy Hollow. She finished the day with 24 points, six rebounds and five assists in the 59-52 win.

Sports

Barbalato Leads the Bears to a Win Over Pleasantville

For a good portion of the first half last Wednesday afternoon, there was no hint at all that Caroline Barbalato was about to have her highest scoring game in a Briarcliff Bears uniform.

The junior guard misfired on each of her first five shots from the floor, all of them 3-point tries, and her teammates struggled right along with her. In fact, the Bears went more than seven and a half minutes between points during a disastrous first quarter that ended with them trailing visiting Pleasantville 11-4.

But late in the half, with Briarcliff still behind by six points, Barbalato finally found the range, connecting on a long 3-pointer from the top of the key. When she drained another one just over two minutes later, the Bears suddenly had a one-point lead and would never trail again the rest of the way. With Barbalato finishing with seven 3-pointers and a game-high 27 points, they defeated the archrival Panthers 53-37 and improved their record to 12-4.

The Bears, leading 21-18 at halftime, broke the game open with an 11-0 spurt to start the second half. Briarcliff's big blitz started and finished with 3-pointers from Barbalato three minutes apart. When the Panthers finally managed to get on the board with 3:51 remaining in the third quarter on a hook shot in the lane by freshman Meghan Raefski, who scored a team-high 13 points, it was Barbalato again who answered for the Bears with another trey that increased the lead to 35-20.

A 3-point shot by a wide-open Abby McAllister and then a free throw from McAllister a minute later after Bears star Cat Carrafiello was whistled for her fourth foul brought the Panthers to within 37-26 with 49.2 seconds left in the third quarter. But then the Bears' Rebecca Kratz, who



Briarcliff's Caroline Barbalato drives around Pleasantville's Tina Matica in last Wednesday's Bear victory.

along with Adrianna Scanga wound up with nine points, weaved her way right of the lane for a basket with six seconds to go and Briarcliff took a 13-point cushion into the final period.

If the Panthers had any hopes of a



Pleasantville guard Tina Matica dribbles out of the backcourt as she's pressured by Briarcliff's Caroline Barbalato in the fourth quarter of last week's game.



Ruby Donohue of Pleasantville and Cat Carrafiello of Briarcliff keep their eyes on the ball as they await a rebound.



Cat Carrafiello of Briarcliff tries to get to the basket in the first half of last week's home win over Pleasantville.

comeback, they were dashed when the Bears started the fourth quarter with seven quick points. Senior forward Kyla Miller began the run when she grabbed a rebound and went coast to coast for a lefty layup high off the glass. Then Barbalato followed with her sixth triple of the game, this time near the right elbow and once again from well behind the 3-point arc.

A pair of free throws by Barbalato with 6:07 left in the game provided the Bears with their largest advantage of the day, 46-26. Pleasantville did respond with consecutive baskets by Kayla Collins and then one from McAllister, cutting its deficit back down to 14 with 3:51 still on the clock.

But a half minute later, it was Barbalato, of course, who supplied the dagger, firing in her final 3-pointer of the contest. Pleasantville, now 5-11 this season, got a bucket from Raefski and then Gianna Doto scored inside as Carrafiello fouled out, but it hardly mattered. The Bears ended the game with a 10-foot baseline toss by Kratz and two final free throws from Barbalato.

Long before Barbalato's hot finish, there was an ice-cold start for Briarcliff. Carrafiello had converted inside on a spin into the paint 25 seconds after the opening jump, but then the Bears didn't score again until the sophomore, Scanga, made a 17-foot jumper from the left corner with two seconds left in the first quarter.

The Panthers, meanwhile, took advantage of the Briarcliff offensive woes by scoring 11 straight points to build a nine-point lead. Their run began with a left-elbow 19-footer by Ruby Donohue just over a minute into the game. Then came a fast-break layup from Raefski and a basket down low by Collins. After both teams went scoreless for over four minutes, Raefski capped the Panthers' run with a pullup jumper from the foul line and then a fast-



Briarcliff's Eliza Aldrich (left) and Adrianna Scanga battle for a rebound with Pleasantville's Kayla Collins during last Wednesday's game won by the host Bears.

break lefty layup on a dish from Doto.

Pleasantville was still in control with 3:05 left in the second quarter after a 15-foot pullup jumper by Tina Matica extended its lead to 15-9. But moments later, Barbalato finally made her first shot of the game, the 3-pointer from well beyond the top of the key, igniting a 12-3 Bear burst the rest of the half that changed the course of the game and led to Briarcliff's fifth win in its last six games.

-Andy Jacobs



Pleasantville freshman Meghan Raefski goes up for a shot in the second half of last week's game at Briarcliff as the Bears' Caroline Barbalato tries to stop her.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



Abby McAllister of Pleasantville fires up a long 3-pointer just before the buzzer ending the third quarter in last Wednesday's game vs. Briarcliff.

Sports



Fox Lane’s Sheldon Rothfleisch controls the puck in Sunday night’s game vs. Mt. Pleasant.

focus on
Hockey
Fox Lane vs.
Mt. Pleasant



The IceCats’ Nicholas Delia moves up the right wing with the puck during the first period of Sunday night’s rout of Fox Lane. He finished with a goal and five assists.



Nathan Xie of the IceCats sends a slap shot toward the goal in the rout of host Fox Lane.



Andy Kao of Fox Lane starts up the ice with the puck during the Foxes’ home game against the IceCats.



Mt. Pleasant’s Aidan Schutt skates past Fox Lane’s Aaron Easton in Sunday night’s lopsided win by the IceCats.



Thomas Schutt of the Mt. Pleasant IceCats takes the puck up the ice vs. Fox Lane on Sunday. He finished with seven goals in the IceCats’ 16-1 victory.



Fox Lane goalie Daniel Rojas was under constant pressure against the IceCats and made 28 saves in his 40 minutes between the pipes.



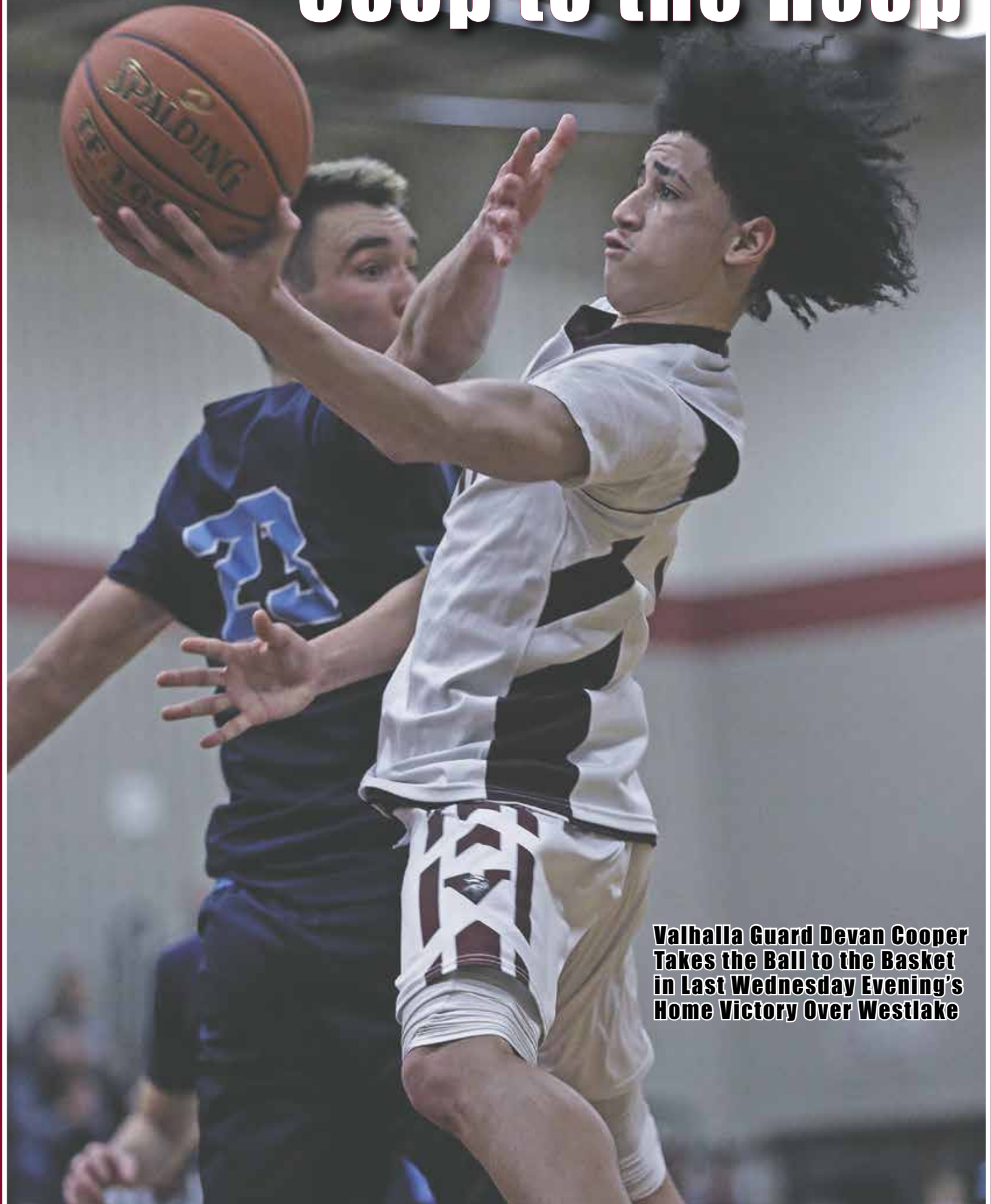
Mikey D’Elia leads a Fox Lane rush up the ice during Sunday night’s home vs. the Mt. Pleasant IceCats at Brewster Ice Arena.



Fox Lane’s Mikey Toole tries to skate past Mt. Pleasant’s Aaron Bottiglieri in the second period of Sunday night’s game.

ExaminerSports

Coop to the Hoop



**Valhalla Guard Devan Cooper
Takes the Ball to the Basket
in Last Wednesday Evening's
Home Victory Over Westlake**