

State Semifinal Sorrow



A Dejected Anthony Sardo Bows His Head as Westlake's Dream of a State Championship is Ended by Section 2 Champion Schuylerville at Kingston's Dietz Stadium Saturday Evening

Westlake's Memorable Playoff Run Ends in the State Semifinal

By Andy Jacobs

With heads bowed, shoulders slumped and tears welling in their eyes, Westlake football players waited late Saturday afternoon for the final few seconds to tick off the clock at Dietz Memorial Stadium in Kingston.

It had been apparent since the last remaining daylight had given way to darkness in the third quarter that their pursuit of a state championship was about to come to a crushing halt. Section Two champion Schuylerville erupted for three second-half touchdowns to turn the Class B state semifinal into a rout, winning by a lopsided 35-0 margin and advancing to next week's championship game at Syracuse's Carrier Dome.

"I thought coming out in the third quarter," said Wildcats coach John Castellano afterwards, "if we could get the ball going a little bit, get some offense going and get in the end zone, we could make it a football game."

But the Wildcats, despite riding the wave of a seven-game winning streak highlighted by recent upset victories against a pair of previously unbeaten teams, had no real answer for Schuylerville, which scored on its first possession of the day and never looked back. When the undefeated Black Horses used their option offense to march 71 yards in 15 plays over the game's first six minutes, the Wildcats' heralded defensive unit quickly discovered it was facing its biggest challenge of the season.

It had been nearly a month, spanning three and a half games, since the Westlake defense had surrendered a touchdown. That gaudy streak quickly ended as Schuylerville quarterback Will Griffen ran nine yards for a big first down on a fourth-and-two play just past midfield to sustain the Horses' opening drive.

Eight plays later, all the way down at the



Will Snyder of Westlake takes his time getting back on his feet after a pass thrown to him was intercepted in the fourth quarter.



Westlake quarterback Tom Castro throws a pass in the first half of Saturday's Class B state semifinal.

1-yard line, Griffen seemed to be stopped short by a posse of Wildcats short of the end zone. But while Castellano and the Wildcats waited for a whistle that never sounded, Griffen flipped the ball behind him to Zach Pierce, who easily scampered into the left side of the end zone for a Black Horse touchdown.

"I thought we had 'em stopped, I'll be honest with you," said Castellano about the play that put Schuylerville on the scoreboard. "I thought the kid was stopped on fourth down. The explanation I got is not one that really makes a lot of sense to me. But I thought there if we stopped 'em, it might've been a little different. But they got it, so it's tough."

The Wildcats were forced to punt on their first two possessions of the game, but midway through the second quarter, sparked by a pair of Rob DiNota-to-Michael Hernandez passes, including one on third-and-



Westlake's Joseph Ferri stands dejectedly in the final moments of Saturday's state semifinal.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



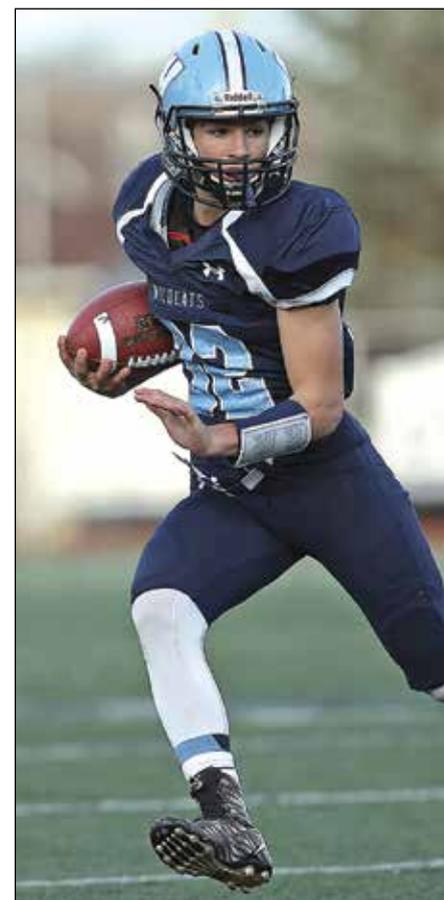
Schuylerville quarterback Will Griffen (2) is stopped near the goal line just before pitching the ball behind him to Zach Pierce (5), who then ran in for the game's first touchdown.



The Wildcats' Ryan Duffy picks up big yardage on the first play of the second half Saturday afternoon.

three for a first down, they moved deep into Schuylerville territory. But on third down at the 30-yard line, another pass to Hernandez was knocked away by Benjamin Phillips.

One play later, needing five yards for a first down, the Wildcats gave the ball to Ryan Duffy, who became the first of several Westlake players to make the mistake of trying to vault over would-be tacklers. He got jolted in midair and lost the football. Schuylerville recovered the fumble and began a 12-play, 81-yard drive that was capped by Skyler Bateman's three-yard touchdown run with 58 seconds remaining in the half.



Westlake sophomore quarterback Rob DiNota runs with the football vs. Section 2 champ Schuylerville.

Despite the two-touchdown deficit at halftime, Castellano figured his Wildcats still had a chance to be the ones advancing to the state final.

"14-0 at the half, it's a football game," he said. "Yeah, we're right there at halftime. I think coming out in the third quarter, we got the first big play and then we didn't continue. We didn't build on that."

On the first play from scrimmage in the second half, Duffy found running room along the right sideline, picking up 15 yards to the Wildcats' 48-yard line. After two Anthony Sardo runs, Westlake faced third down and six. Quarterback Tom

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Castro, who had injured his shoulder a week earlier in the regional win over Marlboro, rolled out to his right. But he was thrown down for an eight-yard loss and the Wildcats were forced to punt.

The Wildcats had to kick the ball away again, this time from right in front of their own end zone, with just over three minutes left in the third quarter. On first down, Bateman broke some tackles and



Rob DiNota of Westlake throws a pass during Saturday's state semifinal game vs. Schuylerville.

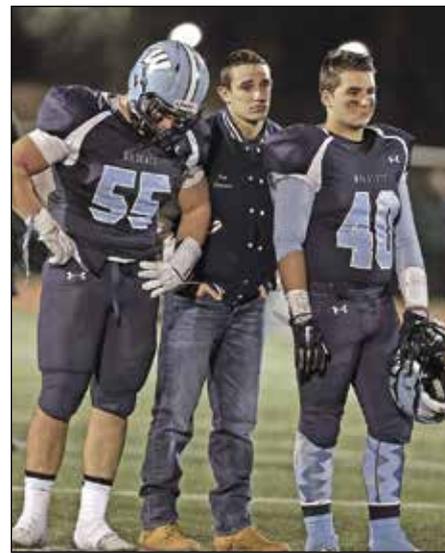
ran for nine yards. One play later, Griffen rambled 37 yards to the end zone, then booted the extra point, as Schuylerville extended its lead to 21-0.

Westlake's last gasp came moments later when Drew Kapica fielded the kickoff and, like Duffy before him, paid a heavy price for going airborne on his runback. He too was jarred to the ground and fumbled away the football. The Horses took over at the Wildcats' 23. Two plays later, on second-and-23, Derek Willson romped 36 yards for another touchdown.

The third quarter ended with successive plays in which first Duffy got hurt and then Michael Love needed to be carried off the field after injuring an ankle. As the fourth period began, the Wildcats trailed 28-0 and it was apparent to all their fans who had made the long trip north that a remarkable season was nearing its end.

"It's tough," said Castellano about having to endure a fourth quarter with the outcome no longer in doubt. "But they fought. A lot of those kids that got hurt, except for Love, I think came back in the game. So I was happy they didn't quit on me. And we talked about that, and I was proud of 'em. I thought they did a nice job."

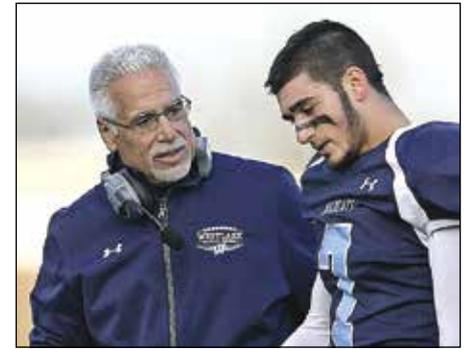
A Castro pass on the second play of the fourth quarter wound up being picked off, one of four Westlake turnovers in the second half. Two plays later, Bateman



Westlake seniors, left to right, Greg Alfieri, Jay Kalle and Nico Agosto stand dejectedly during the postgame ceremony at Dietz Stadium.

ran right up the middle for an 80-yard touchdown to conclude the game's scoring.

The lone highlight for Westlake came when DiNota, who split time under center with Castro, got past the line of scrimmage, reversed field and rambled 50 yards midway through the final period. One play later, though, his pass down the left sideline was intercepted, and it wasn't long before the Schuylerville players were pouring Gatorade on their coach and



Westlake head coach John Castellano helps Ryan Duffy off the field after a hard hit in the first half of Saturday's game up in Kingston.

celebrating a trip to Syracuse.

"Hey, listen," said Castellano, looking back on a season that will long be remembered by fans of the Wildcats, "we were 2-2 after four games. And I don't think anybody thought we'd be in the New York state semifinals. I'm proud of these football kids. They played hard, they gave everything they had, they played right to the end."

The Wildcats won't be playing inside the Carrier Dome, but they accomplished something this fall that no other Westlake team has in over three decades.

"I just think we've turned a corner here," predicted Castellano. "First championship in 32 years, a regional championship that they've never had and a state semifinal appearance, I thought was pretty good."

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Kathleen Passabet moves the ball toward the goal during a Panther home game.



Jean-Christophe Yahia runs in the Section One Championships at Bowdoin Park.

PLEASANTVILLE Fall 2015 A Look Back

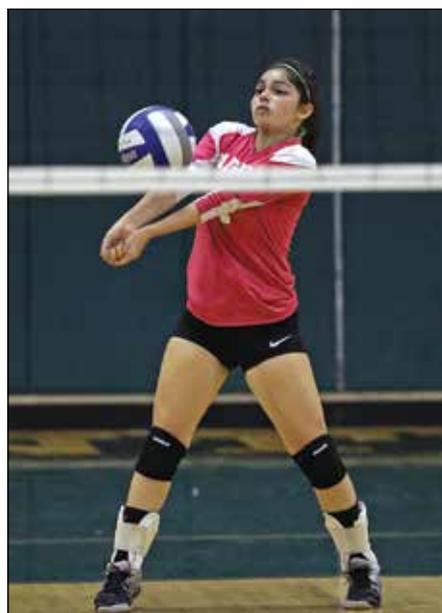
ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



The Panthers' Lauren Turenchalk sends the ball up the field in a game against Briarcliff that ended in a tie.



First-singles player Olivia Ashton prepares to smack a forehand during a match at Briarcliff.



Jaclyn Aloia bumps the ball during a Panther home volleyball match.



The Panthers' Ana Malfi gets set to pass the ball against host Westlake.



Soccer standout Remi Manna controls the ball near midfield.



Javaun Smith tries to get to the outside during the home playoff game vs. Putnam Valley.



Ryan Onuma tries to win a race for the ball in a game at Briarcliff.



The Panthers' Mark Damboragian boots a shot toward the net against host Briarcliff.



Above: Laura Chapman moves forward to hit a backhand return in a match at second singles.

Right: The Panthers' Michael Hammond runs with the football in a game at Pace.

Left: Drew Dorflinger helped the Panthers capture another cross country team title this year.



Freshman quarterback Jack Howe carries the ball in a win over visiting Ardsley.



Caleb Asamoah gets ready to send a shot toward the goal in a home game vs. Westlake.

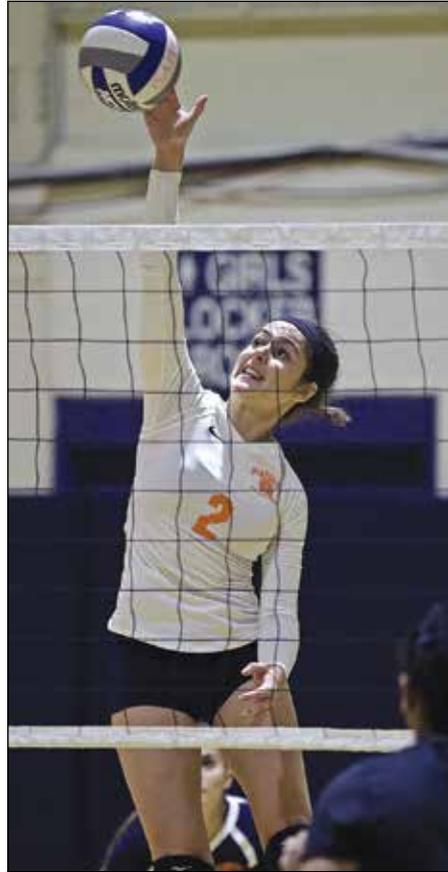


Aleena Hussain moves the ball up the field during a midseason field hockey game.



Quarterback John Plimpton scrambles with the football in the Bears' home game vs. Pleasantville.

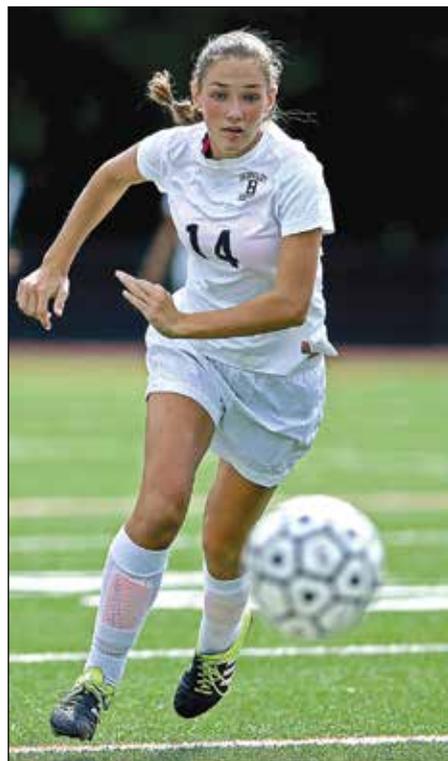
Below: Singles player Katya DiDonato lines up a forehand from behind the baseline early in the season.



Rachel Julie rises high above the net to put away a shot.



Isabella Pisani bumps the ball during a Bears' home volleyball match.



Kelly O'Donnell pursues the ball during a Briarcliff home soccer game.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



Cross country standout Ryan Gallagher competes at the sectional championships.



Caroline Pennacchio is on her way to a first-place finish in the Class C sectional championships.

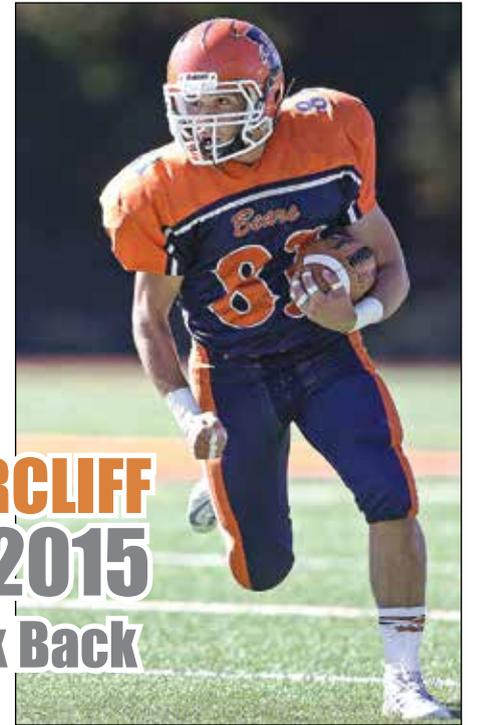


Above: Samantha Simpson prepares to hit a backhand return during a match at first singles.

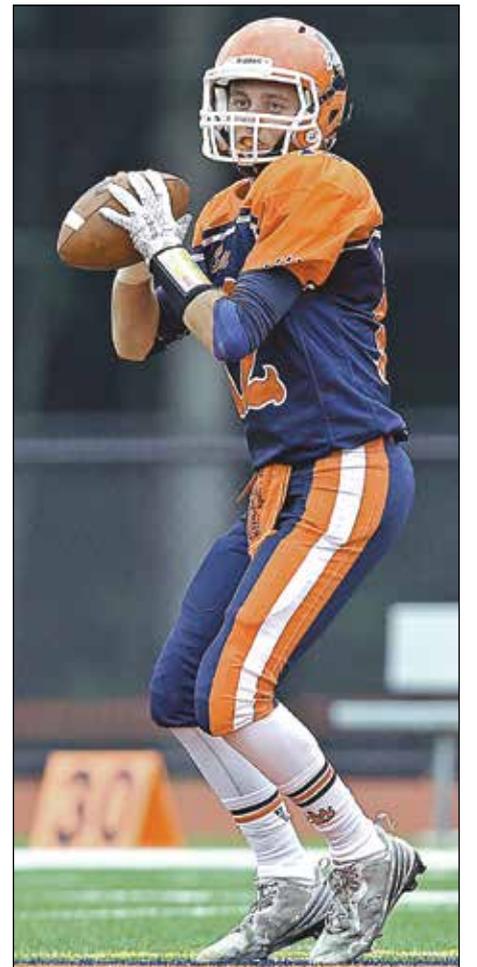
Above right: Quarterback Joe Canonaco drops back to pass during a Bears' home game early in the season.

Right: The Bears' Alex Jacobs boots the ball into the back of the net past an out-of-position goalkeeper.

BRIARCLIFF Fall 2015 A Look Back



The Bears' Ryan Celaj finds some room to run as he carries the football near the left sideline.



Setters Seeking Redemption as They Begin the New Season

By Andy Jacobs

New Pace University head coach Matt Healing admits last year's disastrous 5-23 finish that he witnessed as an assistant wasn't much fun for anyone.

"It was tough," he said, looking back on a season that ended with 13 consecutive losses. "A perfect storm of a lot of different hindrances."

That perfect storm ended the disappointing two-year reign of longtime Division 1 coach Pat Kennedy, who earned his 499th career victory midway through the season and then never triumphed again as his Setters went winless over the final six weeks of their schedule.

"We've got to persevere," added Healing. "And that's what we're trying to do this year. A lot of guys are set on redemption and having a bounce-back year. I think we've proved that we can clearly compete."

The Setters displayed their competitiveness by splitting a pair of down-to-the-wire games at the season-opening ECC/NE-10 Challenge at Queens College. Then last Wednesday evening, Pace fans got their first glimpse of the Setters with Healing at the helm and had much more to cheer about than they did toward the end of the 2014-15 campaign.

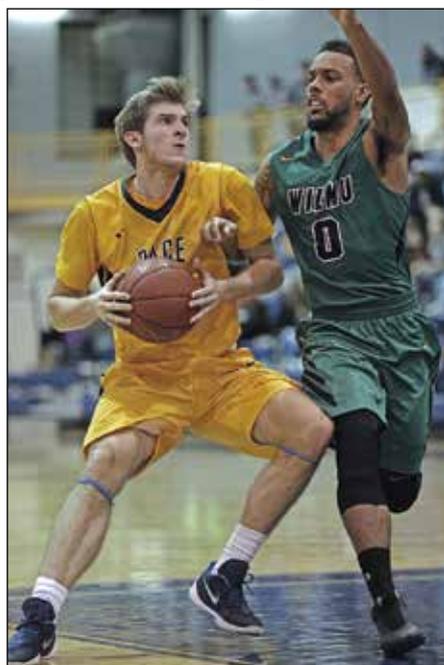
In a game the lead changed hands 18 times and neither team ever led by more than six points, the Setters wound up losing 62-61 to the Wilmington University Wildcats. A desperation, fall-away jump shot by Setter guard Bryan Rivers fell short at the buzzer as Pace dropped its home opener at the Goldstein Fitness Center.

"We fought really hard," said Healing. "We're very proud of our effort. We asked our guys to just come into the game and fight and play their hearts out, and they did that. That's all we're really asking for right now."

A 3-pointer by Tyaire Ponzon-Meek from left of the key with 1:19 remaining provided Wilmington with its winning margin as the



New Pace coach Matt Healing directs the Setters during last Wednesday's home-opening game.



Pace freshman Luke McLaughlin tries to get to the basket as Wilmington's Drew Johnson II defends.

Setters missed their final five shots from the floor, including three during a hectic 30 seconds in the lane on their next-to-last possession of the contest. A put-back basket by sophomore center Victor Jusino with 95 seconds to go had broken a 59-59 tie and given Pace its last lead.

"Unfortunately for us," said Healing, "last year, we didn't get to go through some of the growing pains of figuring out how to win some close games because we weren't in a lot of the games, especially in the last half of the season. We're going through some of that now, but we're gonna get it fixed."

As their season spiraled downward with the lengthy losing streak that brought the coaching change, the Setters were routed in one game after another. They lost all but one of them by at least 11 points, and half a dozen times the margin was more than 20. But even though this year's roster still has seven players who had to endure those dismal final weeks, Healing is convinced much better days are not that far away.

"We've just got to learn how to win some of these close games," he said. "We've got a lot of character on our team. It didn't show for a variety of reasons last year. But, again, they're determined to show that last year wasn't really what Pace basketball is all about. And they're doing that."

Facing a Wilmington team that had also split its first two games, the Setters went on an 8-0 run to turn an early 18-14 deficit into a four-point lead. Shelton Mickell started it with a 3-pointer from the right corner, then freshman Ryan Peterson followed with another trey and Rivers added a couple of free throws.

A ferocious two-handed dunk by Kyle Pearson, who led Pace with 17 points, gave the Setters a 26-23 edge with 2:22 left before halftime. But Wilmington closed the half with an 8-3 spurt and took a two-point lead at the break.

Another impressive jam by Pearson and



The Setters' Kyle Pearson fires a jump shot in last Wednesday's game.

a 3-pointer by Peterson 45 seconds later enabled the Setters to take their largest lead of the night, 44-38, with just over 13 minutes left in the game. A trey by Trey Richards with 4:44 left on the clock finally gave Wilmington its first advantage in more than 12 minutes. But the lead changed four more times in the final minutes, setting the stage for the last-second try by Rivers.

The Wildcats' Ponzon-Meek misfired on the front end of a one-and-one with 11 seconds to go. The Setters, trailing by a point, called a timeout with 7.2 seconds left, but still had to go the length of the court.

"We knew they were probably gonna press us there on that last possession," said Healing. "So we had to go into our press-break offense. It's tough because the clock is ticking and you only have a few seconds there, maybe a split second, to make a decision. 'Do I run the play or do I break it off and try and make a play?'"

As it turned out, Rivers, a sophomore point guard getting extra playing time in the absence of Mike DeMello, out with a hand injury, pushed the ball past midcourt and wound up taking a jackknife 17-foot jump shot to avoid the hand in his face just to the left of the lane. His shot fell well short of the basket as the horn sounded.

"Yeah, it came down to the last few seconds and we didn't totally get the shot we wanted," said Healing. "That was a team, Wilmington, that's very offensively talented. You could see they had some guys make some big shots when the game was on the line. They're scoring 80 or 90 points a game and we held them to 35 percent shooting and we outrebounded them. All of the keys to victory that we were focusing on, we pretty much won. It's just a shame that we couldn't come out on the winning end."

But the Setters, who were just 1-19 a year ago in the Northeast-10 Conference, closed their week by defeating visiting Le Moyne 65-60 on Saturday afternoon in their NE-10 opener. A put-back layup by Rivers with 30 seconds remaining gave Pace, which scored



Bryan Rivers of Pace rises under the basket to score on a reverse in last week's home opener.



Sophomore forward Victor Jusino battles on the offensive boards in Pace's 62-61 loss to the Wildcats.

the game's final eight points, the lead for good.

"The wins are gonna come," predicted Healing. "We're just trying to put out a good product on the floor. For us, it's gonna come down to defense, rebounding, toughness. That's what we're looking for. That's how our players are judged every game and they know that. But they're doing a heck of a job. We're excited about the future of the program and we're excited about the future of our season."

Westchester Knicks Now 4-0, but Summers Gets Injured

By Albert Coqueran

The Westchester Knicks are 4-0 and their completely revamped roster and new coaching staff has rejuvenated fans at the Westchester County Center. The local Knicks, the NBA Developmental League affiliate of the New York Knicks, outscored the Sioux Falls Skyforce, 34-21, in the fourth quarter to beat the Miami Heat D-League affiliate, 107-94, on Friday during a home game.

Nonetheless, the local Knicks' third win and second at home this season did not come without consequences. The Knicks' leading scorer, DaJuan Summers, reached for his foot and fell to the court at the top of the key on defense with 1:41 remaining in the game.

Summers grimaced in pain as he lay on the court in the fourth quarter after posting his second double-double of the season with 18 points and 11 rebounds.

The Knick forward was carried off the court by the team trainer and teammates, ending his evening on the court. Summers' injury is to his left Achilles tendon, although the extent of his injury as of Sunday was not yet known. Summers is the leading scorer and rebounder for the Knicks, averaging over 25 points and 10 boards per game.

"It sure does (take something away from our third win). DaJuan is a great basketball player, but he is even a better guy and you pull for a guy like that," said

Westchester Knicks head coach Mike Miller. "He is right there at the NBA level and when he went down our concern is his well being."

Summers' teammates, despite winning their third straight game, were obviously distraught by his injury. Local Knicks forward Sean Marshall, the Player of the Game against the Skyforce with 20 points and six rebounds, spoke emotionally about his teammate after the game.

"Obviously the team is praying for him and hoping his injury is not too serious," said Marshall. "We would love to have him on the team. Obviously he is a great player and even a better person in my limited time getting to know him. Hopefully everything works out."

Summers did miss the Westchester Knicks' next game, an 86-85 victory over the Canton Charge on the road to improve to 4-0 this season. Knicks center Jordan Bachynski led all scorers with 21 points, while securing eight rebounds and blocking six shots. Marshall had 17 points and six rebounds, while guard Wesley Saunders stepped up in Summers' absence, adding 14 points and seven rebounds.

The Westchester Knicks remain undefeated so far this season and on top of the Atlantic Division in the NBA D-League. They have already proven that they can win on the road, which was a feat they accomplished only once last season,



ALBERT COQUERAN PHOTO

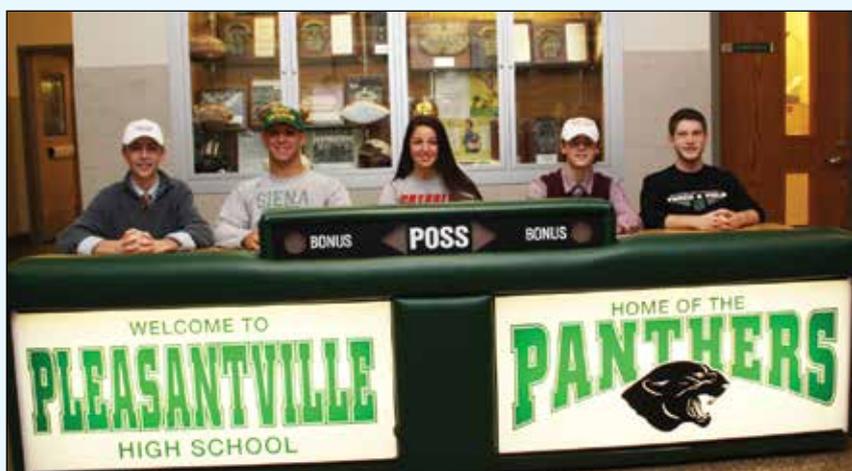
Westchester Knicks leading scorer DaJuan Summers had his second double-double of the season with 18 points and 11 rebounds against the Sioux Falls Skyforce on Friday. But in the fourth quarter, he fell to the court in pain, while sustaining an Achilles injury, and had to be carried off the court.

against the Charge back on January 10.

The 2015-16 Westchester Knicks are not the 10-40 overall or 1-25 road team they were last season. The local Knicks are

vastly improved. But if Summers, their top scorer, is sidelined for any length of time, it will be a devastating loss.

Ready for the Next Level



ART CUSANO PHOTO

Five Pleasantville High School students signed letters of intent last Wednesday to compete in NCAA athletic programs next fall. Pictured, left to right, are Aidan McDermott, who will play golf for Lafayette College in Easton, Pa.; Jack Drillock, lacrosse, at Siena College in Albany; Nicole DiFabio, lacrosse, at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.; Hayden McBride, lacrosse at Walsh University in North Canton, Ohio; and Eric Hughes, track at SUNY Binghamton.

Anthony Sardo Signs With D1 Monmouth Lacrosse

In a brief afternoon ceremony, and in front of an overflowing contingent of family and friends, Westlake High School senior Anthony Sardo Jr. signed a letter of intent to play Division 1 lacrosse for Monmouth University in Long Branch, New Jersey. The Hawks entered Division I lacrosse in 2014 and are part of the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC).

Before the signing, many coaches, teachers and teammates spoke about Anthony's contribution to the sport. Westlake lacrosse coach Hunter Bernard congratulated Anthony for his leadership and for being a role model to younger lacrosse athletes. "This day resonates throughout our program.

Anyone who puts on a Westlake jersey will know they can reach this level," he said.

Anthony began playing lacrosse as a fourth grader on the very first youth lacrosse team in Mount Pleasant. Since then, Athletic Director Donna Pirro said he ignited a spark for Mount Pleasant lacrosse with his athleticism, play and work ethic. She noted that Anthony excelled as a three-sport athlete at Westlake, which made it that much harder to earn a Division 1 scholarship. She congratulated him on making Westlake history in the sport.

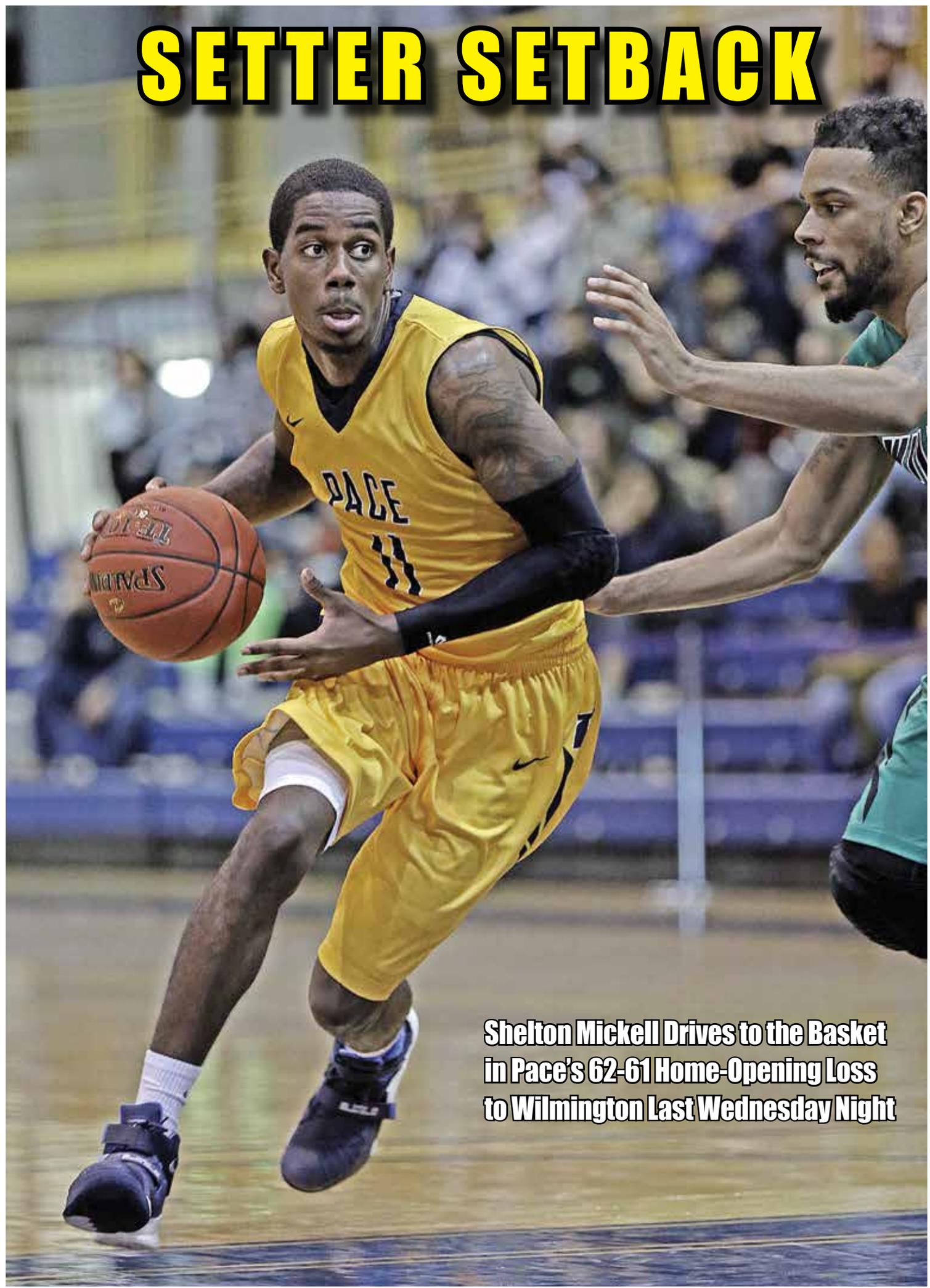
An honor roll student, Anthony is a five-year varsity starter at the attack position and was a three-time All League selection and All-Section Honorable Mention last year. He is a two year captain and is Westlake's all-time leading scorer with 173 goals and 73 assists over his career. Anthony also plays for two travel teams: Prime Time and Moonlight Lacrosse. This summer and fall, he participated in the New York Lacrosse Association Showcase, Philly Showcase, Adrenaline Fall Invitational and Inside Lacrosse Recruiting Invitational.



Westlake's Anthony Sardo poses with his family after signing his letter of intent to play lacrosse at Monmouth.

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

SETTER SETBACK



Shelton Mickell Drives to the Basket in Pace's 62-61 Home-Opening Loss to Wilmington Last Wednesday Night

ANDY JACOBS PHOTO