

Smooth Sailing for Skylar

**Skylar Sinon and the Bobcats
Cruise Past the Nyack Indians
in the First Round of Sectionals**

Defense, Balanced Scoring Lift Greeley in Playoff Opener

By Danny Lopriore

The Horace Greeley boys' basketball team put its season-long practice principles to work Saturday, dominating all aspects of the game in a 63-55 victory over visiting Arlington in the opening round of the Section 1, Class AA tournament.

Employing head coach Felix Nicodemo's defense-first philosophy, the Quakers played nose-to-nose, switched and boxed out, pressing Arlington's guards. They forced errant passes and off-balance shots to build an early 14-5 lead.

The fourth-seeded Quakers (16-5), advanced to Friday's quarterfinal where they will host No. 12 seed Suffern in a 4 p.m. start. Suffern upset No. 5 New Rochelle 51-49.

"The keys to the game were defensive pressure, contesting, because they are a shooting team, and outworking them," Nicodemo said. "That's why we were successful and what it takes to win in the tournament."

Nicodemo referred back to a four-point early-season loss to Arlington as a turning point for his Quakers.

"We played them early in the season, the fourth game in six days, off a back-to-back," he said. "We missed 13 free throws and they hit about 10 3-pointers and we lost by four. From there we knew what the game plan was and won 12 games in a row. I used that as a motivator the whole week."

The motivation worked and the Quakers clicked on defense and offense.

Christopher Melis led the Quakers in scoring with 20 points and rebounding with 10 as he used his size and quickness to break down the Arlington defense, hitting six of 10 free throws. The Quakers outrebounded Arlington 30-20 in the game, leading to a transition offense and several quick baskets.

"We're always told to run, get a rebound, and push the ball," Melis said. "Every time we outwork a team we win, so we know the other guy can get a shot and make it. That's hard for teams to defend."



The Quakers' Jeremy Block draws a crowd as he tries to score inside against visiting Arlington in the sectional playoffs.

Jeremy Block finished with 17 points and Brandon Gecaj added 13 points and six rebounds. Each player talked about the defense first.

"We practice defense every single day. It's like fun for us, talking to each other and playing as one," Block said. "Every time a screen comes, we switch and just a look at each other right away, not verbal sometimes and its cool."

Arlington edged back in the game after trailing 21-9 midway through the second quarter, pulling to within 24-16 early in the third. But the Quakers put together a 14-0 run, led by Melis with six points and Block with five, for a 38-16 lead.

Greeley made 16 of 22 free throws, while Arlington managed to make just six of 12.

When asked about the personality of his teammates and his team, Block said each player understood his role and each depended on Nicodemo's team-first mentality.

"It's also that we play well as a team together, unselfishly," Block said. "Nobody wants to do too much, and everyone plays a role and enjoys it. Defense is not about one on one



Greeley senior captain Brandon Gecaj fires a jump shot from the left corner in the first half of Saturday's Class AA sectional game.

and offense depends on passing and being unselfish. That's what makes us successful."

Nicodemo has several practice days to build toward a chance at a Class AA title.

"We want to continue to do what we do well and improve on things we are not as strong in," Nicodemo said. "The little things are the big things. If we outwork the opponent, we're good. The toughest thing about us is we are balanced. They play to each other's strengths. That's what makes it hard to scout us."



Horace Greeley senior guard Ryan Sullivan dribbles past midcourt during the Quakers' Class AA playoff win over Arlington.



Greeley's Chris Melis sends up a shot in the lane during the first half of Saturday's playoff game.



Noah Shar of Greeley is pressured as he handles the ball in Saturday's opening-round playoff victory over the Admirals.



Greeley head coach Felix Nicodemo watches his team in the first half of Saturday's playoff game vs. Arlington.



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Fox Lane Eliminated by the Rams in the Opening Round

By Andy Jacobs

When Fox Lane guard Xander Alvarado rose out of the left corner nearly two minutes into the fourth quarter late Saturday afternoon and drained a 3-point basket to cap a 13-1 run that gave the Foxes their first lead of the entire day, it seemed all the momentum had shifted in their direction.

But just 10 seconds later, Cole McGrath answered with a 3-point shot for visiting Clarkstown North, igniting a 10-0 spurt over the next three minutes that helped carry the Rams to a 52-48 victory over the Foxes in the opening round of the Section One, Class AA playoffs.

"I think tonight summed up our season," said Fox head coach Mike Tomassi shortly after Josh Olsen's desperation half-court heave at the buzzer fell short. "You know, playing great at times, I think we can play with anybody in the section. And then being inconsistent and not playing great at times when we don't look very good. And tonight summed that up."

Though the score was tied on four different occasions in the first quarter, the seventh-seeded Foxes never got a lead. The Rams, seeded 10th, built a 17-12 advantage after the opening eight minutes and then stretched it to 32-23 at halftime. North's lead reached double digits before the second half even began as Mike Louzada, the game's high scorer with 22 points, made one of two technical free throws.

The Foxes had struggled on the defensive end of the court throughout the opening half and Louzada's layup 30 seconds into the third quarter, followed by a free throw from Nick Ovchinnikoff half a minute later, gave Clarkstown its largest lead of the day, 36-23.

"Disappointing," said Tomassi, "because you scout. You spend a lot of time scouting and drawing up a game plan and you don't come out and execute it. Disappointing just because we preach being physical. We preach defense is an



Fox Lane's Josh Olsen battles Clarkstown North's Nick Ovchinnikoff for a loose ball in the second half of Saturday afternoon's Class AA sectional game.

attitude and to step up and make plays for your team, and the first half we didn't defend at all. You can't beat good teams not playing 32 minutes."

But the Foxes soon responded with back-to-back baskets from center Preston McKenney and were on their way to an extended 17-3 stretch. Two free throws by Devin Hunter, who scored 10 of his 11 points after intermission, closed the third quarter and brought Fox Lane within 39-35.

A floater in the lane by Hunter with 6:53 remaining in the game narrowed the Rams' lead to just two points. Just 38 seconds later, Alvarado, who led the Foxes with 21 points, nailed the fourth of his five 3-pointers, sending Fox Lane into the lead for the first time and its student cheering section into a frenzy.

But Alvarado's trey out of the corner turned out to be just about the last hoorah for Fox Lane this season. McGrath responded with his own 3-pointer from the left elbow with 6:04 left on the clock and the Foxes went scoreless for over four minutes. Louzada's old-fashioned



Fox Lane's David Thompson tries to drive past Cole McGrath of Clarkstown North during the Section 1, Class AA playoff game won by the visiting Rams.

3-point play with 3:03 to go sent McGrath to the bench with his fifth foul and restored the Rams' double-digit advantage.

Still, the Foxes were not quite done yet. Alvarado scored on a floater in the lane while getting fouled. He hit the free throw, cutting the Clarkstown lead to seven with 1:50 remaining. Two free throws by Hunter got the Foxes even closer 15 seconds later.

McGrath scored a layup on a long pass over the top of the Fox Lane press, giving the Rams a 52-45 margin. Alvarado's final 3-pointer cut the deficit to four points with 1:09 still to go. A baseline runner from Alvarado brought the Foxes within 52-50. They closed to 53-52 after John Rocco Trumpbour rattled in a pair of free throws with nine seconds left. Louzada made the first of two foul shots a second later, then missed the second after getting iced by a Fox Lane timeout.

But by the time Fox Lane managed to gain control of the ball after a rebound battle along the baseline, there were just three seconds on the clock. Having to go the length of the floor, the Foxes wound up with a pass to Olsen, who took a dribble past midcourt, then fired a 40-foot jump shot that landed far short of the rim as the buzzer sounded.

"This team all year's been resilient," said Tomassi. "The issue's been putting it together and being consistent. I thought we kind of were coasting in the first half. We were struggling defensively. Second half, we definitely picked it up. I think defensively and offensively executed a little bit more. But it came down to every time we needed a big stop or a big rebound, we didn't get it."

The loss to the Rams was the Foxes' second this year after an eight-point loss, also at home, a couple of months ago.



Fox Lane guard Xander Alvarado, who scored a team-high 21 points, tosses up a left-handed shot in the first half of Saturday's playoff game vs. Clarkstown North.

But Tomassi can at least look forward to having most of his players return again next season.

"We're young, so we've got nine guys coming back," he said. "Hopefully this one stings for them, but we've got to get better if we wanna get to where we wanna get to. You know, County Center's always our goal, league championship is always our goal, and we didn't accomplish any of those this year."



Fox Lane center Preston McKenney lines up a shot just inside the 3-point line during the Class AA sectional game on Saturday afternoon.



John Rocco Trumpbour of Fox Lane searches for an open teammate as he holds the ball at the top of the key vs. Clarkstown North.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



The Foxes' Anthony Melendez rises for a shot under the basket in the first half of Saturday's playoff game.

Valhalla Tops Hastings In Dramatic Playoff Opener

By Danny Lopriore

The Valhalla boys' basketball team opened the Section 1, Class B playoffs Friday evening with a game that had all the elements of a Hollywood movie, including an injured star, dominant hero, reserve player heroics, comebacks, an animated coach and last-second shots, all in a 59-55 overtime victory.

Playing without senior team leader Ethan Bartlett, who injured his left ankle just prior to the game, senior Orlando Clarke played the lead role in "Remember the Vikings", by scoring 18 points and gobbling up 15 rebounds.

The seventh-seeded Vikings (13-8) will try to produce a thrilling sequel when they advance to the next round of the playoffs against Irvington. No. 10 Hastings was eliminated.

"We all knew we had to do more and that everyone had to contribute to make up for Ethan, who is our main rebounder and scorer" said Clarke, who played the entire game except for 50 seconds. "I looked for my shots and really concentrated on getting rebounds. We had to step up because we haven't had a sectional win in a long time."

Magical and dramatic, from the opening credits and introductions to the final scenes.

Junior Jordan Rush scored on a put-back layup at the buzzer to send the game into overtime tied at 50-50 and classmate Nick Petrilli scored the eventual game-winning bucket to make the score 57-55 with less than five seconds left in overtime. Rush finished with 12 points and Petrilli added 10.

"I honestly had no idea exactly how much time was left until I heard the buzzer, but I tried to stay in the moment and make a good shot," Rush said. "This is my first year on varsity, so getting a playoff win as a team is amazing. Everyone stepped up when we needed them."

The list of role players included junior



The Vikings' Orlando Clarke sails past a trio of Hastings players as he gets to the basket during Thursday night's playoff game.

John Lynch, who was inspirational, playing tough defense, running the floor, rebounding and making big shots. Lynch made a steal and scored the final basket of the game to close out the Jackets.

Junior guard Eric Reyes, who has also been slowed by injuries this season, played the role of game saver, hitting a 3-pointer to tie the score at 45-45 with less than a minute to go in regulation time.

"Eric is one of our shooters, he was injured this year but came back strong," Clarke said. "He came up big. John (Lynch) is our high-energy guy, the most active on the team. We just were not going to lose."

The teams stayed within two or three points of each other with six lead changes in the game as Hastings, hampered by injury to their own star player, Justin



Drew Drayton-Bay of Valhalla dribbles out of the backcourt in the Vikings' overtime playoff win over the Yellow Jackets of Hastings.



Valhalla junior Jordan Rush, whose last-second basket sent the game to overtime, wins a race to the ball in the Class B sectional win over visiting Hastings.

Carballo, fought hard. The Yellow Jackets extended to a nine-point lead midway through the third quarter before the Vikings took over the screenplay.

Down 47-38 late in the third, Sean Kelly made a 3-pointer and Lynch scored four of his six points to close the gap to just five points after three quarters. Clarke donned his superhero cape and scored seven of the Vikings' next 10 points to pull the Vikings to within 46-45. The teams traded baskets the rest of the fourth quarter until Rush forced the movie's final scenes with his tying bucket.

Vikings coach Richard Clinchy was producer/director of a "life imitates art" script. Clinchy screened the movie "Hoosiers" earlier this week and when his star was injured used another pre-game film to motivate his cast of characters.

"We used every motivational thing we could," Clinchy said after a jubilant

celebration following the game. "We did watch Hoosiers two days ago, and I showed them another film with the lights out before the game. I won't reveal which one. Ethan is such a big part of what we do. This was a total team effort, a great win for the kids."

With leading scorer Carballo hobbled by a leg injury, Chris Rotiroti scored 21 points and Sebastian Scioscia added 19 to lead the Yellow Jackets (10-11). Rotiroti hit the go-ahead basket with four seconds remaining in regulation time.

The plot thickened when the Vikings changed zone defenses in the third quarter.

"We changed defense four minutes into the second half," Clinchy said. "I didn't want to go to it in the first half. I didn't want to give them time to adjust and the kids played it very well. It was a very exciting win for us."

Sophomore Drew Drayton-Bay contributed seven points and five rebounds and Kelly, another sophomore, added three.

Bartlett, who was wearing a boot to support his rolled ankle as he celebrated the win, said he hoped to be back in his leading-man role in the next round of the playoffs.

"The guys played great," he said. "I think I might be ready to play the next game."

Movie fans stay tuned.



ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS

The Vikings' John Lynch sets his sights on a loose ball in the paint during the 59-55 overtime win over Hastings in the first round of sectionals.



Nick Petrilli of Valhalla shoots the ball from the left corner vs. Hastings.



Valhalla coach Richard Clinchy directs his team in the second half of Thursday's playoff win over Hastings.

Quakers Turn the Tables on Yorktown in Outbracket Game

By Andy Jacobs

When the 2018 sectional tournament's seeding and schedule were announced last week, the players on the Horace Greeley girls' basketball team must have responded with a collective groan.

After all, the Quakers found out they'd be facing Yorktown, a team that had already beaten them twice during the regular season, including a 27-point drubbing very recently.

So first-year head coach Sarah Schum knew she would have to call upon all her powers of persuasion to convince her team that the third meeting might have a different outcome.

"Oh, you use all the clichés," she would admit last Wednesday evening. "It's hard to beat a team three times. We're rivals, we're crosstown, you know what they're doing. We watched a lot of film. I told them I'll get them some new plays to get them a little bit of confidence."

Only moments earlier, Schum had looked on with pride from the sideline as her players discovered the third time can indeed be the charm. Just 14 days after getting crushed up in Yorktown, the Quakers returned to the same gymnasium and emerged with a 44-38 victory over the Huskers in a Class AA outbracket playoff game.

Brianna Gadaleta finished with a team-high 13 points despite sitting the entire third quarter with foul trouble, while Jessica Harris scored nine and both Rachel Janis and Safia Gecaj added eight as the 19th-seeded Quakers brought a disappointing end to the 14th-seeded Huskers' season and advanced to the tournament's opening round.

"I put them through a rigorous two days of adjustment and practices where we changed a lot of stuff," said Schum. "And they rose to the occasion today."

In a seesaw contest in which the lead



Horace Greeley's Safia Gecaj shoots the ball in the Quakers' Class AA win over host Yorktown.

changed hands 10 times, Greeley scored the first five points of the fourth quarter to break a 31-31 deadlock and never trailed again. Gadaleta, summoned from the bench 20 seconds into the period after sitting with three fouls the whole second half, immediately provided a big lift for the Quakers, connecting on a 3-point shot moments after stepping back onto the floor.

"Yes, three right off the bat," said Schum of the trey Gadaleta made to give Greeley the lead for good. "Brianna Gadaleta is a special, special player. Thankfully she's only a junior, so I get her next year too. But she's special and this team depends on her and they look to her and she rises to the occasion."

It was Gadaleta who scored the game's first basket on a lefty toss in the lane 70 seconds after the opening tipoff. Her left-side 3-pointer with 2:35 to go in the opening quarter enabled Greeley to build its largest lead of the evening, 11-5. But Yorktown scored the last seven points of the period, grabbing a one-point edge with Ashley Zeolla's put-back bucket at

the buzzer.

The second quarter began with Yorktown getting a 3-pointer from Kat Severino, who scored a game-high 18 points, then two free throws by Jesse Barer. With 5:47 left in the half, Greeley suddenly found itself facing its largest deficit of the night, six points. But a couple of inside baskets by Gecaj and then Helen Matthews' right-baseline drive for a layup in the final minute allowed the Quakers to close within 21-19 at halftime.

Despite the absence of Gadaleta for the duration of the third quarter, Greeley still managed to start the second half on an 8-2 run and wound up outscoring the Huskers 12-10 in the period. Janis and Harris each had a pair of baskets in the quarter and the Quakers tied the game at 31 apiece when Kat Genda fed Janis for a layup with five seconds remaining.

Schum blamed herself for keeping her primary scorer on the court with two fouls in the first half, but credited her other players with stepping up when Gadaleta finally did sit.

"I selfishly kept her in with two (fouls)," she said. "I probably should've taken her out. But we didn't start her in the third. I told her if we got down six, don't even look at me. Just check in. And the rest of her teammates picked her up. They did a great job and they allowed her to sit on the bench for the entire third quarter so we could save her for the fourth when we really needed her."

Gadaleta's 3-pointer 30 seconds into the fourth quarter broke the final tie of the game and the Quakers later opened up a five-point advantage when Harris made a left-corner 3-pointer. They were trying to hang onto a 40-38 lead with 15.9 seconds on the clock. Janis missed two free throws, but Gecaj got an offensive rebound, was fouled and proceeded to make her two foul shots with 12.4 seconds to go.

"Rachel and Saf are good friends," said Schum, "and as soon as the timeout was called after Saf hit the two free throws, Rache said you always have my back. That's how this team is. They look out for each other."

The Huskers' last gasp came as Zeolla



Greeley junior Brianna Gadaleta uses her left hand to shoot the ball in traffic during the first half of last Wednesday's outbracket game at Yorktown.

missed on a layup try with five seconds remaining. Gadaleta provided two clinching free throws with 3.8 seconds left and soon the Quakers were celebrating some special payback for a team they had struggled against this season.

"It's big," said Schum about advancing to the first round. "I mean, it's big for the kids. They deserve to have this feeling tonight. They've been working hard all year. I came in with a completely different system and I've been asking a lot of them. They deserve to get the benefits of all the hard work they put in when no one's watching."

Even though the Quakers' season predictably ended in the opening round on Saturday at third-seeded Albertus Magnus, Schum thinks her team made a lot of progress in her first year at the helm.

"I've told them it's going to be a process changing Horace Greeley girls' basketball," she said. "And I got them shirts saying 'BE THE CHANGE' at the beginning of the year. And everyone kind of bought in and we're doing it. It's a wonderful little family we're starting to form"



Horace Greeley sophomore Jesse Harris handles the ball in the Class AA outbracket win at Yorktown.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



Greeley's Kat Genda protects the ball from Yorktown's Mackenzie Merson near midcourt during the Quakers' 44-38 outbracket win last Wednesday night.



Greeley senior guard Rachel Janis pushes the ball up the floor as Yorktown's Ashley Zeolla chases in last week's outbracket sectional game.



Greeley head coach Sarah Schum looks on from the sideline in the second half of last week's postseason win over Yorktown.



Briarcliff's Jack Ryan pushes the ball up the court in the second half of last Thursday's lopsided Class B playoff win over visiting Pleasantville.



Pleasantville freshman guard Julia O'Reilly searches up the floor as she tries to dribble out of the backcourt in the Panthers' first-round playoff game.



Pleasantville's Charlie McPhee passes the ball as Briarcliff's Spencer McCann provides a menacing deterrent to the basket in last week's Class B playoff game.



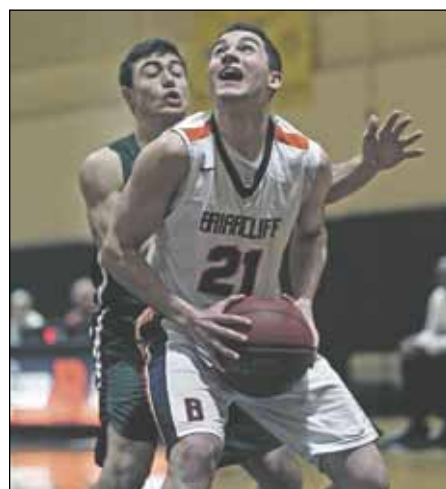
Pleasantville eighth-grader Christina Matica dribbles up the floor in the Panthers' playoff game vs. visiting Hastings Thursday afternoon.

focus on

BASKETBALL 2018 Section 1 Playoffs



Ben Leff finished with 21 points and 10 rebounds in the Byram Hills win over Nyack on Friday evening.



Briarcliff's A J Panarese tries to score in the lane in the second half of the Bears' playoff win over Pleasantville.



Analese Picart of Pleasantville finds herself surrounded as she tries to score inside during last Thursday's Class B playoff game vs. Hastings.



Olivia Picca of Byram Hills shoots a 3-pointer in the Bobcats' easy Class A outbracket win over Roosevelt last Wednesday afternoon.



Pleasantville's Brendan O'Neill and Briarcliff's Tucker Wexler battle for position as they await a rebound in Thursday's Class B sectional game.



Nick Salzarulo of Pleasantville hauls in a rebound in the second half of the Panthers' season-ending playoff loss to rival Briarcliff.



Byram Hills coach Ted Repa makes a point to Mike Parotta in the fourth quarter of the Bobcats' 71-51 Class A playoff win over visiting Nyack.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



Willy Samsen of Byram Hills fires a 3-point shot from beyond the top of the key in the Bobcats' rout of Nyack in the first round of sectionals.



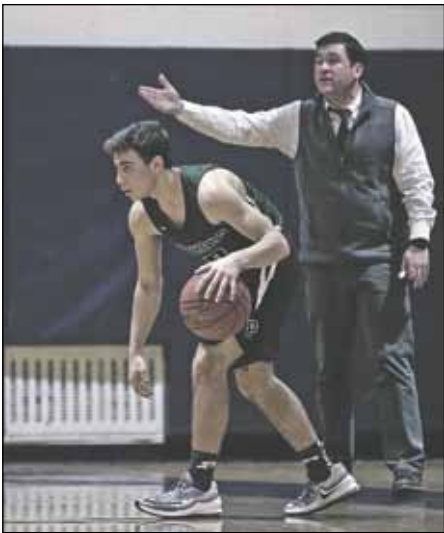
Maggie Walsh of Byram Hills dribbles the ball during the Bobcats' rout of Roosevelt last Wednesday afternoon.



Dakota Corey, a Pleasantville eighth-grader, is sandwiched by a pair of Hastings Yellow Jackets in the first half of last Thursday's Class B sectional game.



Jack Lorenzo of Byram Hills dribbles up the floor during Friday's 71-51 playoff win over the Nyack Indians.



Pleasantville junior guard Danny Melillo dribbles the ball in the right corner as his coach, Chris Welsh, directs the Panthers in Thursday's playoff game at Briarcliff.



Byram Hills guard Jennifer Mui lines up a shot from the left corner in the first half of last Wednesday's outbracket victory over Roosevelt.



Briarcliff junior point guard Miles Jones sends up a runner from the left baseline during the Bears' 52-24 rout of Pleasantville.



Pleasantville's Paige Long sets her sights on the basket as she gets into the lane vs. visiting Hastings.

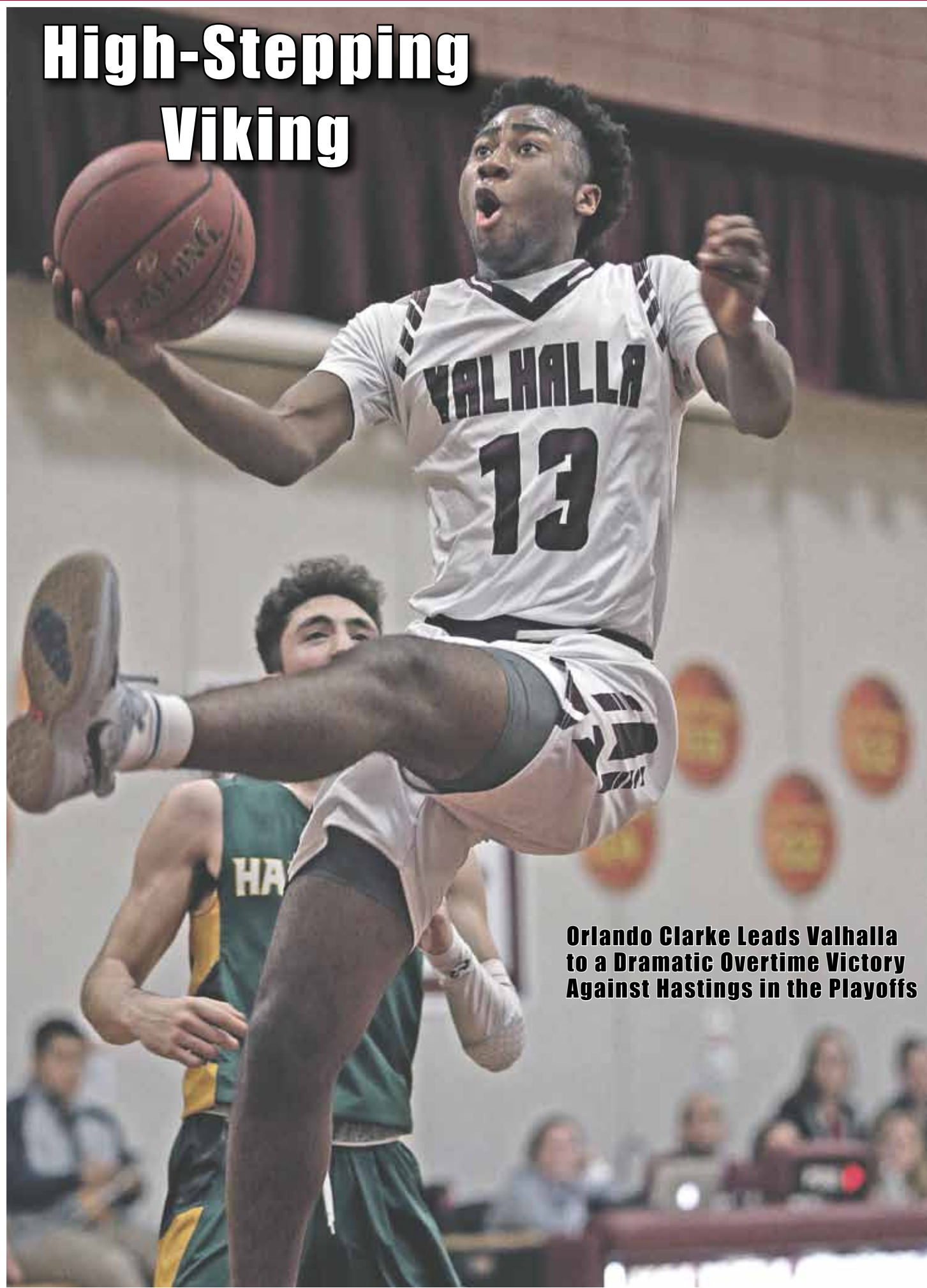


Byram Hills senior guard Skylar Sinon drives to the basket in the second half of Friday's playoff victory against Nyack.



Stefana Latella of Byram Hills concentrates on a free throw during the Bobcats' home win over Roosevelt last week.

High-Stepping Viking



**Orlando Clarke Leads Valhalla
to a Dramatic Overtime Victory
Against Hastings in the Playoffs**