

## RIM RUN

**Spencer McCann Scores Inside  
as Briarcliff Wins a Home Game  
Against Westlake Last Tuesday**



# Valhalla Falls to Irvington as the Playoffs Approach

By Danny Lopriore

The Valhalla boys' basketball team moved into the final days of regular-season play with an up-and-down performance in a 58-44 loss at Irvington High School Saturday.

Looking to secure a spot in the upcoming Section 1 playoff brackets, the Vikings, now 10-8, showed signs of life after falling behind early and then fighting back from double-digit deficits throughout the game against a highly-regarded Bulldogs (16-2) squad.

"We certainly hope to be prepared for the playoffs," Valhalla head coach Richard Clinchy said following the game. "Always first, is rebounding. We don't have a large team. We rely on a couple of guys, so rebounding has to be better to go anyplace (in the playoffs). No doubt about it. We had maybe three or four offensive rebounds. That's not enough against a good team like Irvington."

Ethan Bartlett led the Vikings scoring with 15 points and Orlando Clarke added 11 points and nine rebounds. Clarke was instrumental in two comeback runs.

The Vikings struggled getting more than one shot at the basket in each possession and Irvington played tough defense and grabbed most of the stray rebounds, allowing only 15 points in the first half.

Clarke knows his team needs more consistency to make a successful playoff run.

"We're looking to be more consistent," the Viking senior said. "We had a bad first half, but played well at times. We played better and started inching our way back in the second half. In the playoffs, you have to be consistent and play four quarters."

The Vikings trailed 15-3 midway through the first quarter, but pulled to within 16-12 early in the second quarter, sparked by Bartlett and Jordan Rush, who each hit a key 3-pointer. Clarke had hit two 3-pointers for the Vikings' only points of the first quarter.

"When we first started this season, we had problems finding each other, but we've improved a lot at the end of the



Orlando Clarke of Valhalla scores on a fast break in the fourth quarter of Saturday afternoon's game at Irvington.

season," Clarke said. "We have guys who can score, and we have the ability to play good defense if we work hard. Those are the keys."

Irvington point guard Colby Martins handled the offense and had a game-high 21 points, with teammate James Rhodes adding 17. Rhodes scored eight points in the fourth quarter to help close out the game for the Bulldogs, who stretched out leads of as much as 18 points early in the fourth quarter.

Drew Drayton-Bay (four points), Nick Petrilli (five), Marco Mazza and Jordan Rush (three each) and Sean Kelly (two) also contributed to the Vikings' scoring. Valhalla hit on eight 3-point field goals, but made just seven of its 14 shots from the free-throw line.

"We need better ball movement to be successful," Clinchy said. "We have to be better rebounding, handling the ball and getting the ball out on the break. We couldn't run the way we'd like to. That's our strength."



Valhalla senior Ethan Bartlett fires up a jump shot in the second half of Saturday's game at Irvington.



Marlin Wise tosses up a left-handed shot in the lane in Valhalla's loss at Irvington on Saturday.



The Vikings' Drew Drayton-Bay shoots the ball late in the second quarter against the host Irvington Bulldogs.



Valhalla junior guard Jordan Rush dribbles the basketball during Saturday's afternoon's game.



Valhalla head coach Richard Clinchy calls out a play for his Vikings in the first half vs. host Irvington.



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# Bears Dominate Early and Late to Beat Westlake

By Andy Jacobs

Almost all of a 16-point fourth-quarter lead had been whittled away when Briarcliff boys' basketball coach Cody Moffett was forced to call a timeout with just over three minutes remaining in last Tuesday night's home game against Westlake.

"What startled me was our defensive intensity changed," Moffett would admit later. "That's what we needed to address during the timeout. That was the only thing we did address."

Apparently his Bears got the message. They outscored the Wildcats 13-3 over the game's final few minutes to thwart the Westlake comeback bid and win 64-48. Senior guard Jack Ryan connected on his fifth and sixth 3-pointers of the evening during the closing spurt as the Bears cooled off a local rival that had won seven of its eight previous games.

Ryan, who finished with a game-high 23 points, erupted for eight of them in the game's opening three and a half minutes as Briarcliff jumped out to a 10-0 advantage. The Wildcats finally got on the scoreboard with 4:18 left in the first quarter when Joe Mazzariello made one of two free throws. But back-to-back baskets by Spencer McCann and Jackson Gonseth then stretched the Bears' cushion to 14-1.

"That's a rough start, especially in this place," said Wildcats coach Chad Charney, whose team scored the last five points of the period but still trailed 19-10. "The first quarter was a real disappointment."

Even more disappointing for the Wildcats was the absence of primary offensive weapon Tyler Tsiakaros after the first few minutes. The latest of several



The Bears' Jack Ryan dribbles past midcourt in the win over Westlake. He scored a game-high 23 points.

Westlake players to be hit by the flu bug, he was limited to just three minutes of playing time.

"Without Tyler in the game, he's averaging about 20 points a game right now, that's a big loss," said Charney. "We needed Tyler tonight to really compete against an elite team like this."

The Bears' big first-quarter lead was cut to seven points when Mazzariello fed Joe DiLiberti for a layup 50 seconds into the second period. But a Ryan 3-pointer midway through the quarter built the Briarcliff margin back up to 24-12. Then three Ryan free throws after he was fouled on a long jump shot with 1:36 to go in the half left Westlake behind 29-15.

"Very disappointing," said Charney about watching the Bears' senior sharpshooter score 14 first-half points. "We've been saying it for the two years I've been here, we can't let him get open, can't leave him. I don't know how many threes he finished with, maybe six, but they were all open looks. So it was really frustrating because we've been stressing it all week."

Briarcliff, leading 31-18 at halftime, began the third quarter with a layup by Gonseth, who scored 13 of his 15 points after intermission. Two free throws by Gonseth then gave the Bears their largest lead of the game, 17 points. They matched that margin when Tucker Wexler drove through the lane for a basket that gave them a 43-26 cushion with just over two minutes left in the quarter.

Westlake trailed by 15 points heading to the final period and still trailed 51-38 after a Gonseth bucket with 4:18 to go. But then a Terence O'Brien 3-pointer, followed soon by consecutive baskets from Mazzariello, sliced the Briarcliff lead to just six points with 3:10 still on the clock. The late exploits from Mazzariello,



Briarcliff guard Miles Jones is closely guarded by Westlake's Terence O'Brien in the first half of last Tuesday's game.

the Wildcats' senior point guard who scored 14 of his team-high 17 points in the second half, came as little surprise to the Bears' Moffett.

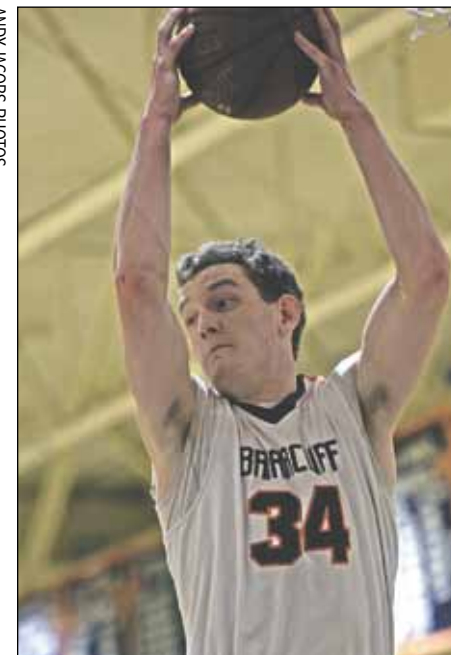
"Yeah, we always put our best defender on him, just try to keep him in front, try to contain him, make him work for his shots," he said. "Different things like that, and I thought we did a pretty decent job of it at times. But when you've got a solid player that's got some talent, you're only going to be able to hold him down so long. But, thankfully, we were able to do enough."

Fortunately for the Bears, currently 14-4 this season, they came out of the timeout Moffett had to call after Mazzariello's toss in the lane capped a 12-2 Westlake run and then completely dominated the rest of the way. McCann ignited the 13-3 finishing spurt with an old-fashioned 3-point play, and then 20 seconds later Ryan drained a 3-pointer from right of the key while falling down.

O'Brien answered with a 3-point shot, but it hardly mattered because Ryan then connected on his sixth trey, from the right corner, stretching the Briarcliff lead back up to 60-48 with two minutes to go. After



The Wildcats' Matt Martin shoots the ball from the left corner against host Briarcliff.



Jackson Gonseth of Briarcliff pulls down a rebound during last week's 64-48 victory over visiting Westlake.

baskets by McCann and Gonseth restored the 16-point lead the Bears had earlier in the quarter, Moffett was able to clear his bench for the final half minute.

"We played well, but I thought our defense is what set the tone," he said. "From that point on, the offense just kind of flowed."

For the Wildcats' Charney, the final minutes after the Briarcliff timeout brought nothing but disappointment.

"We knew exactly what play they were gonna run," he said. "We drew it up in the timeout and we just didn't execute defensively. We thinned out a little bit and let Jackson get the ball right in the middle for a wide-open layup. And then we had an empty possession and then two threes (by Ryan) in a row. Definitely frustrating because I think we compete with them, but you've got to play 32 minutes against a team like this."



Westlake point guard Joe Mazzariello takes the ball to the basket in the first half of Tuesday's game at Briarcliff.



Westlake senior Terence O'Brien searches the floor for an open teammate as he dribbles out of the backcourt in last Tuesday's game.



# Examiner Publisher Fulfills Base

By Adam Stone

**"M**ets fantasy camp," my childhood friend Jeff Ahn texted me out of the blue on a Saturday evening in early September. "What do you think?"

The moment I received the text I knew I had a big decision to make. Since starting The Examiner almost exactly 10 years earlier, I had barely spent seven waking minutes away from work, let alone seven days. As for my family, I'm there for nearly everything, and I quickly realized the camp would conflict with my older daughter's cherished annual talent show, a school event co-chaired by my wife no less.

For those not familiar with fantasy camp, it's a vacation experience where attendees get to live out their sports dreams, in professional uniforms, coached by former professionals, playing on professional fields, officiated by real umpires. I had been familiar enough with the opportunity to know exactly what Jeff was asking about.

As much as I would miss my family, it dawned on me that I was already pondering ways to celebrate my company's 10th anniversary, and what better way than living out the ultimate Mets fan fantasy?

Several days after the original text, having weighed all the factors, I updated Jeff on my decision:

"I'm all in!" I exclaimed.

What eventually followed in late January at the Mets immaculate spring training complex in Port St. Lucie, Florida was a week like no other, a dream come true, a virtual return to childhood.

## Beer, Stretch, Laundry

One of the first mind-blowing experiences was walking into the clubhouse, and seeing our personalized uniforms (which staff would launder for us daily) neatly hanging in our personalized lockers. Seeing "Stone" emblazoned on the back of my Mets home and away jerseys was certainly a thrill, and as I walked through the clubhouse I was excited to see all the amenities available to us, from the seemingly endless supply of free beer chilled in the deli-sized fridge to the training room area where the staff would eventually help us stretch out our sore muscles and apply all sorts of magical potions to aid our aching middle-aged bodies. (30 is the minimum camper age.) In fact, as we hit the field for the first time, a camp-wide stretch was led by a staff member from the Mets Fantasy Camp sponsor, Hospital for Special Surgery.

## Early Rust

Feeling relatively limber, it was time for the nearly 100 campers (including two brave and awesome women) to be evaluated by the 16 or so former Mets in attendance. We split into groups of about 20, rotating between the facility's various baseball fields to test our skills in all facets of the game. At one station we flagged fly balls in right field, shot from a



Examiner Publisher Adam Stone, who batted .412 for the week with a .583 on base percentage including a league-leading three hit by pitches, jogging to first base.

cannon-like machine at home plate, manned by Mets World Series legend Mookie Wilson, a fabulously nice guy. In left we were fed liners in the outfield by speedster Rodney McCray — famous for running through a wall when in the minor leagues — and had to rifle the ball back to him. (The night prior, at a welcome dinner, when asked if he was still in good shape, McCray lifted his shirt to show us his six-pack abs. Question answered.)

On another field, Brooklyn native Kevin Baez, a former Mets shortstop, took notes as we tried to turn double plays in the middle infield, and scoop balls at first base. (We'd later learn that Baez previously coached at a baseball camp Jeff and I had attended along with other friends back in our teen years.) Nelson Figueroa, a former Met and now a smooth-talking broadcaster with the team's SNY TV station, helped oversee the pitching evaluation. Despite some insightful tips from the effusive Figueroa about arm position, once I sailed a pitch well above the catcher's head and past a fence behind him, I decided to reject Jeff's suggestion that I pitch during the week like I did growing up. I could still throw relatively hard but command was proving elusive, especially as I was still shaking off the rust.

## Take That, Turk!

The highlight of the evaluations for me was the hitting station, where I batted against John "Bad Dude" Stearns, a legendary tough guy of his era, still a commanding presence at 66. Good natured chop-busting is central to the culture of the camp, and during fielding drills I struggled with a couple throws, still trying to regain form after decades away from competitive baseball. The evening before my friends and I were hanging out at the hotel bar, and

bantered for much of the time with former Mets pitcher Turk Wendell, a colorful character best known for his many superstitions, including brushing his teeth between innings. So once I stepped into the batter's box, already friendly with Turk, he was eager to talk a little trash from behind the backstop where he was scouting the "talent." Feeling comfortable at the plate, I crushed a few balls to left-center field, earning praise from Stearns. "Good," he said after one hit. Then I whacked another. "Good job," he said again. This time a bomb. "Good job, two more," Stearns barked. And another ball smacked to the outfield. "Somebody mark this guy down," Stearns instructed his fellow former pros scouting the campers.

"He can't throw," Wendell replied tauntingly. Soon after the comment, another pitch from Stearns followed, and I again deposited it to deep left. "Put him at first base," Stearns roared after the final hit, responding to Wendell's jab. "Rotate. Next!"

## Band of Brothers

Once the evaluations were complete, the former players went behind closed doors to draft fair teams. Camp organizers do allow requests for friends to be together, and Jeff and I were placed on the same squad, along with two other friends of Jeff, his college buddy Jonathan Meisel, a slick fielding, line-drive hitting shortstop, and Jeff's fellow youth baseball coach for their sons' team, Joel Sunshine, an all-around good player with a pitching leg kick uncannily similar to that of former Met and fantasy camp roving coach Dwight "Doc" Gooden.

One of the greatest parts of the week was bonding with teammates. It was striking to me how baseball served as the common denominator for this group of guys — stran-

gers mostly — coming from such diverse backgrounds. I quickly became close with Joel, a Long Island attorney, and Jon, an Atlanta-based pediatric surgeon. That was more expected, since Jeff connected us all. But within a matter of a day or two our entire team really gelled, like we were high school teammates who had grown up playing ball together. I talked movies and politics with Mike Vrabel, a commercial pilot with U.P.S. and former Air Force captain from Sparta, New Jersey. I discovered that my teammate Sal Alfieri, a soulful restaurateur living in Dallas, was undergoing dialysis but was nevertheless intent on living life to the fullest at fantasy camp. From learning about Colonel Wally Rustmann's military career and Tom Kopin's forthcoming first child, Jonathan Webb's southern roots and Pat Ponath's visit to the Iowa "Field of Dreams," Tod Wooley's golf and ski trips to Dave Merbaum's law practice, we shared our back stories with one another. As unofficial team poet and Springsteen devotee Mike Vrabel put it, we became a "band of brothers," despite coming from vastly different backgrounds and perspectives. Congress could learn a thing or two from the culture of team sports.

## Three Ducks on the Pond

Some of the serious conversations aside, the week was dominated by laughter, with new inside jokes being developed seemingly minute-by-minute. It was also a thrill to be back around the sounds of the game. Not just the distinctive and magnificent sound of a wood bat squarely hitting a round ball but also the inane yet delicious chatter that permeates all baseball dugouts. It had been more than 20 years since I had reminded a teammate up at bat that there



Batting against former Cy Young Award runner-up Pete Schourek.



# ball Dream at Mets Fantasy Camp

were “three ducks on the pond,” and turned out I missed that kind of ridiculous verbal mishmash more than I realized.

Dugout life also helped reintroduce me to the art of cleanly cracking sunflower seed shells with my teeth. But when I wondered aloud to my wife before departing for the trip whether the week might also include a new tobacco chewing habit, she informed me I should remain in Florida if I started dipping. (I made sure to pack Big League Chew bubble gum instead.)

Each of the eight teams were assigned two coaches from the roster of former pros, and we were managed by Doug Flynn and Bobby Wine, both former Gold Glove winning infielders. At 79, Wine possessed incredible baseball knowledge and intuition from a lifetime around the game. It was best on display when before one pitch he called out to Jeff in centerfield to move in and shift closer towards left field to a spot Wine had in mind for a righty pull hitter, and a moment later the ball was struck to Jeff’s new spot in shallower left-center. Flynn, a gifted storyteller, mesmerized us over lunches and dinners with stories, from what triggered various bench-clearing brawls in his day to insights into the personalities and work habits of some of the era’s all-time greats, from Big Red Machine teammate Pete Rose on down.

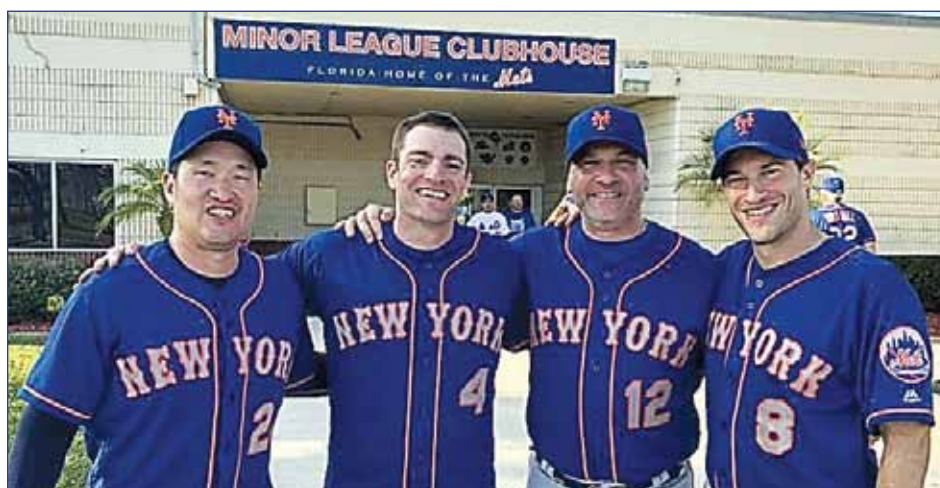
## Front Row Stone

Despite ultimately beating a catcher’s tag at home-plate during a mid-week game, I probably didn’t endear myself to Flynn when I ran through his stop sign at third base to score a run, but he got me back a day later by helping to propagate my new nickname, “Front Row.” One morning, late for the camp-wide morning stretch, with all the campers already separated in about seven rows of 14, I decided the best thing to do was to position myself in front of the front row, by myself, so I wasn’t cramping anyone’s space by stretching too close to them, with the lines already formed. That was a mistake. One of the leaders of the stretch quickly noticed where I was standing, and dubbed me Front Row. With Flynn leading the way in subsequent days, my teammates rooted me on using my unfortunate new monicker. (“C’Mon, Front Row, you got this!”)

Speaking of bad names, our squad was assigned what I consider the worst team name in baseball history, “Fair & Honest.” Think about it. “Let’s Go Mets!” has a wonderful ring to it. Try cheering on a team named Fair & Honest. Painful. I guess no week can be 100 percent perfect.

## Losing But Laughing

The Fair & Honest crew got off to a more than fairly slow start on the field, losing our first three games despite having what we considered a pretty talented team. Speaking of talent, there was a wide range of ability levels at the camp. A couple of the guys had played



From left, childhood friend Jeff Ahn and Stone with camp teammates Joel Sunshine and Jonathan Meisel outside the clubhouse following a game.

*“...I was already pondering ways to celebrate my company’s 10th anniversary, and what better way than living out the ultimate Mets fan fantasy?”*

— EXAMINER PUBLISHER ADAM STONE

Division 1 college baseball and even some pro ball, while others just loved the game and had barely competed since Little League. Most guys, like me, fell somewhere in the middle. But we all shared a love of the game, and although everyone wanted to win, a spirit of encouragement and support blended seamlessly with everyone’s competitive fire. Even though the Fair & Honest crew didn’t advance to the championship game under the lights at First Data Field (that was won by a team led by a former Rice University pitcher mixing nearly 80 mile per hour heaters with nasty breaking balls), we did win three of our last four games and, as far as I’m concerned, led the league in team chemistry, with barely a minute passing all week without a laugh.

## Golden Memories

On the final evening, we gathered for an awards dinner and cocktail party, and I erupted with excitement when Jeff was deservedly named camp-wide Rookie of the Year and, separately, our team’s Most Valuable Player. Having played high school baseball with Jeff down on Long Island, his excellent play came as no surprise but it was still wildly impressive to watch him dominate the competition all week, both at the plate and on the mound. As for me, I did end up batting a healthy .412 with a .583 on base percentage for the week (not that I checked the camp stat book) and despite one comically brutal inning at third base, played solid enough defense in the outfield and at first base.

In the clubhouse one afternoon, as a group of guys were in the hot-tub unwinding, one of the camp veterans from another team mentioned how the week comes down to a series of little moments that marinate over time

and become great, lifelong memories. So true. Here are some of mine:

I remember catching a fly ball in left field with one out and the bases loaded and firing a perfect one-hopper to the catcher to prevent the runner on third from advancing on a tag up.

I remember unloading a perfect relay to the third baseman from left and nearly nailing a runner at home.

I remember the first time making good contact at the plate in a game, and getting robbed by the shortstop.

I remember a joyous sigh of relief after my first hit in a game, after struggling in the first day’s games.

I remember reaching second on a double, then noticing two brothers from the other team speaking to each other in their native Italian tongue, unsuccessfully trying to lure me off the bag and fool me with the hidden ball trick.

I remember batting against former Cy Young Award runner-up Pete Schourek in our game against the pros, hitting a ball “out of the stadium,” but unfortunately out of the stadium behind the backstop, foul, before striking out on a deadly off-speed pitch.

I remember getting all the outfielders (four outfielders, in fact) to shift to right field against former Met lefty hitter Mackey Sasser, with Sasser, on the next pitch, expertly serving a liner to left, making fools of us amateurs.

I remember meeting former Mets manager Terry Collins at a local restaurant/bar, and then bumping into him again a couple nights later, even though he was not affiliated with the fantasy camp.

I remember shooting the breeze with Doc Gooden, a childhood hero, and eventually exchanging text messages with him about possibly attending a friend’s son’s Bar Mitzvah.

I remember posing for a photo with Eric Hillman, a 6’10” former Met pitcher who wasn’t even the tallest guy at camp; that distinction belonged to fellow camper Alan Herbert, a happy-go-lucky resident of Taunton, England who stretched an incredible 7’2” and attended not just our week but also the first week, a rare two-week camper.

I remember former Met Lenny Harris telling me the story of how he was gipped of the single-season pinch hit record.

I remember receiving compliments on my swing from former Mets outfielder Ron Swoboda during an impromptu one-on-one batting practice session between games.

I remember former Met Todd “Tank” Pratt telling us how once you step to the plate, even if it’s your brother pitching, the hitter must embrace the mentality of wanting to destroy and humiliate the man on the mound, because that’s what he’s trying to do to you.

I remember almost being nominated for a “Golden Rope,” the award handed out to the previous day’s best player at the morning meeting, but having one of my “achievements” — getting hit by several pitches — announced as that of one of my gracious teammates.

I remember receiving the first highlight reel of the previous day’s games one morning in my hotel room, and seeing myself multiple times in the two-minute video, hitting and fielding, and in that moment marveling again at the camp’s unbelievable attention to first-class quality and detail.

## Was it Heaven?

As the week continues to unfold in my mind like a great dream you don’t want to end, I think back to that text from Jeff five months ago: “Mets fantasy camp. What do you think?”

I think it was the most fun I’ve ever had, beyond description, beyond words.

“Is this Heaven?” Shoeless Joe Jackson famously asks in “Field of Dreams.”

“No,” Ray replies, “it’s Iowa.”

That scene resonates for anyone lucky enough to feel emotionally attached to baseball. But, for me, it rings truer than ever following my weeklong visit to Mets Fantasy Camp, a seven-day dream come true that only enhanced my love for our National Pastime.

Was it Heaven? No, it’s Port St. Lucie.

## STATS FOR THE WEEK

**.412 Batting Average**  
**.583 On-Base Percentage**  
**7 Hits**  
**17 At Bats**  
**9 Runs**  
**5 RBI**  
**1 Double**  
**4 Walks**  
**3 Hit By Pitches**





Sophomore Alana Lombardi scored the 1000th point of her varsity career late in the fourth quarter of Briarcliff's win at Westlake last Tuesday.

focus on

# GIRLS' HOOP



Briarcliff's Julia Barbalato and Westlake's Angelina Guarnieri keep their eyes on the rim as they wait for a rebound in the second half of last Tuesday's game.



Briarcliff junior guard Kacey Hamlin pushes the ball up the floor in the Bears' lopsided win over host Westlake last Tuesday afternoon.



Westlake's Jamie Perfito (right) and Riley Neglia surround Briarcliff's Jordan Smith as they await a rebound in last week's game.



Paige Long shoots the ball during Pleasantville's home game on Saturday. Her two big baskets in the final minute lifted the Panthers over Croton.



Pleasantville eighth-grade point guard Christina Matica had seven assists in the win over Croton.



Kaitlyn Ryan of Briarcliff shoots the ball from the right baseline in last week's victory at Westlake



Briarcliff freshman center Jordan Smith is fouled as she tries to shoot in the lane over the defense of Westlake's Angelina Guarnieri (left) and Jesi Oswald.



Pleasantville freshman Jenna McAllister dribbles the ball in Saturday's game. She scored 17 points in the Panthers' 51-50 win over Croton.



Briarcliff's Maddie Plank fires a jump shot in the second half of last Tuesday's win at Westlake.



Lila Donohue of Pleasantville gets to the basket in the second half of Saturday afternoon's game against the Croton Tigers.



# A Shorthanded Goal Lifts the Quakers Past Masuk

By Andy Jacobs

Over the past few weeks, the Horace Greeley hockey team has displayed quite a flair for the dramatic.

The Quakers did it again on Saturday night.

Dillon Rusiecki's shorthanded, breakaway goal in the final 70 seconds lifted the host Quakers to yet another come-from-behind victory at the Brewster Ice Arena, this time 2-1 over the Masuk Panthers. The heroics by the senior co-captain enabled Greeley to complete a third-period comeback for the third consecutive weekend and even its record this season at 8-8.

"That's kind of been our M.O.," said Quakers head coach Dan Perito after watching his team step up once more in the third period. "We kind of start slow and then pick it up as the game goes along."

Facing the Panthers from Monroe, Connecticut, Greeley found itself following the familiar recent habit of falling behind. Masuk controlled the puck during the game's early minutes and eventually got on the scoreboard first as Paul Khorkin fired a shot from the right point and Brock Butkovsky knocked home the rebound with 4:43 remaining in the opening period.

Despite outshooting Masuk by an 8-5 margin over the first 15 minutes, the Quakers trailed 1-0 heading to the second period. But the complexion of the game really started to change once the Panthers' TJ Scalia was whistled for a tripping penalty with just under six minutes left in the second period. Greeley peppered Masuk goalie Tag Weiss with shot after shot on the power play and kept up the pressure the rest of the period.

"Yeah, that power play gave us a lot of



Greeley's Ryan Renzulli controls the puck during Saturday night's victory over visiting Masuk at Brewster Ice Arena.

momentum going into the third period and at the end of the second," said Perito. "Definitely we had at least four or five chances, golden opportunities, and we just couldn't capitalize."

When the teams skated off the ice after the second period, with the Quakers still trailing 1-0, Perito had a simple message for his players.

"All I said to 'em was, 'Look, there's nothing we've gotta change.' As far as the lines, we didn't change much. Kept going with the third line as well to rest the other guys. And we got a goal from a guy that doesn't usually score a lot, in Tony (Girardi). That gave us a little life there in the third period. From there, we were able to take advantage."

The goal by Girardi, a sophomore defenseman, came just over two minutes into the final period on a shot from straightaway just a few strides inside the blue line. The resilient Quakers, who had overcome a 4-1 third-period deficit to win in overtime against Byram Hills two weeks earlier and then battled back from 4-2 down last week with three late goals against the combo team of Brookfield/Bethel/Danbury, were back in business once again.

"For whatever reason," said Perito, "we



Greeley senior co-captain Dillon Rusiecki heads up the ice for his late-game breakaway goal that gave the Quakers a 2-1 win over Masuk at the Brewster Ice Arena.

can't get out to an early lead and keep things rolling. But we never say die and we're always there in the third period."

Though the Quakers wound up outshooting Masuk 13-9 in the final period, the score remained the same for 11 minutes following the tying goal by Girardi. But the Panthers' prospects for a victory suddenly increased after a skirmish in front of Greeley goalie Arye Wolberg left Masuk on a 90-second power play with just 1:53 left on the clock.

"I love that we have guys that want to stick up for teammates, stand up for our goalie as he's taking some shots here or there," said Perito. "But I told them there's a time and place for that. You can't do that with a minute and 53 left, tied 1-1 in the third period. Gotta be smarter."

The Quakers were desperately trying to kill off the Panther power play when the puck somehow wound up on the stick of Rusiecki, who quickly burst out of the defensive zone with no one in his way. He headed straight down the ice, crossed

the blue line and then wristed a shot past Weiss for the game-deciding goal with just 1:09 left to play.

"Of all those guys we want on a breakaway, he's definitely one of them in a key situation like that," Perito said of Rusiecki, who also had the tying goal with three minutes left in last week's win over the BBD Ice Cats. "The puck shot out to their point. He saw that loose puck and then it was like a cannon off his butt. He was able to shoot up and then take off."

Now with even more wind in their sails, the Quakers will conclude their regular season with a game at Suffern next Friday, then back-to-back home contests against Fox Lane and Pawling on Saturday and Sunday. According to Perito, the win over Masuk will pay dividends down the road.

"They were a big, physical team," he said. "I think that's good going into the playoffs, to get tested like that."



ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



Horace Greeley senior defenseman Zach Lampe awaits a faceoff in Saturday night's game vs. Masuk.



Dillon Rusiecki celebrates after scoring the game-deciding goal on a breakaway with the Quakers down a man late in the third period vs. Masuk.



Greeley head coach Dan Perito watches his team skate against Masuk in the second period on Saturday night.

The Quakers' Dylan Mutkoski has control of the puck behind the net during the come-from-behind win over the Masuk Panthers.



# ExaminerSports

## Saturday Squeaker



Jenna McAllister Drives to the Basket in Pleasantville's Tense One-Point Win Over the Visiting Croton-Harmon Tigers

ANDY JACOBS PHOTO



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