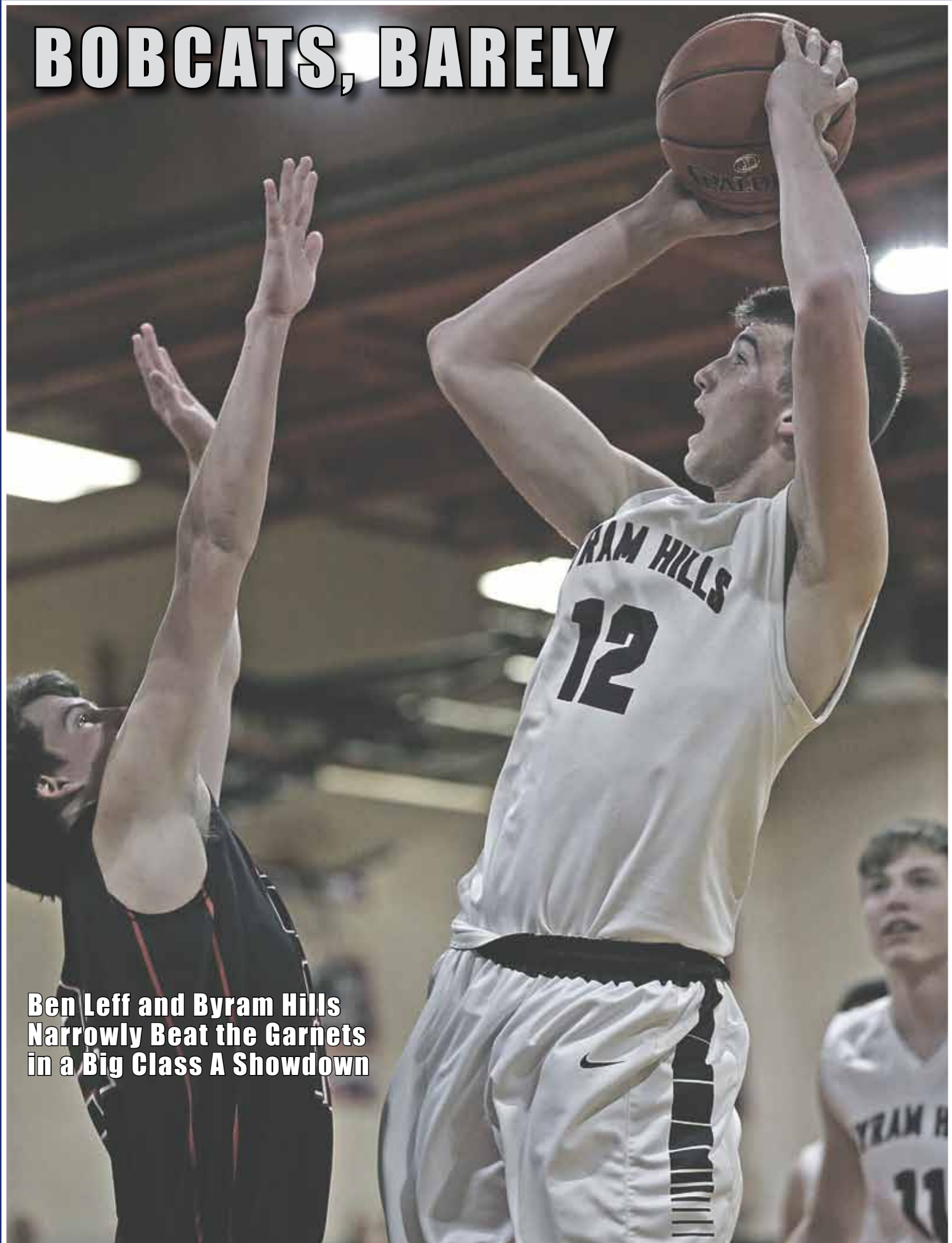


## BOBCATS, BARELY

**Ben Leff and Byram Hills  
Narrowly Beat the Garnets  
in a Big Class A Showdown**



# Renzulli Sparks Quakers to a Win Over Byram Hills

By Rob DiAntonio

When Section 1 Division 2 contenders Horace Greeley and Byram Hills meet on the ice, it's usually a nip and tuck game.

The Quakers, however, weren't looking to play a down-to-the-wire contest on Sunday evening.

Greeley dominated from the early going, cruising to a 7-1 victory over the Bobcats at Brewster Ice Arena.

Ryan Renzulli, a senior captain and the Quakers' go-to scorer, sparked the team with three goals and two assists.

"He was flying tonight," Greeley coach Dan Perito said. "I saw it in warmups and I kind of had a good feeling that he was going to be on his game. He was going right from the start, speed with and without the puck. He was generating scoring chances for himself and setting up other people. He was all over the scoresheet."

Renzulli's biggest goal came late in the second period after the Bobcats got on the board with a goal from Michael DiMarco, cutting the Quakers' lead to 3-1.

The speedy star skated coast-to-coast through multiple Byram defenders and his wristed found the back of the net, giving Greeley a three-goal lead once again.

"That was big because we've had an issue in some of our games where we get out to a lead and we let teams crawl back in," Perito said. "To shut the door there and put it back to a three-goal lead before the end of the second period was big. It

was a momentum swing."

Greeley added three goals in the third period to put any hopes of a Bobcat comeback out of reach.

"We didn't have any momentum tonight," Byram Hills coach A.J. Cloherty said. "We didn't show up, flat out. I love my team, but I'm an honest person. Horace Greeley is a great team, definitely one of the best teams in our section. But I don't think we're a 7-1 goal differential."

Renzulli started the game with a goal on a feed from Jake Potter less than five minutes in. Jake Cronin tapped in a rebound to make it 2-0 with 10:09 to go in the first period. Dylan Mutkoski and Charlie Spar notched the assists.

Mutkoski, Potter and Ben Cohen added goals for the Quakers. Liam Whitehouse dished out two assists.

Greeley held Byram Hills to just 16 shots and kept star forward Ethan Behar (1A), who recently returned from an ACL injury, scoreless.

"They stepped up," Perito said of his defense. "We've got a solid senior core on defense, except for one freshman back there. That was probably one of the most all-around team games we've played to this point in the season."

Cloherty said that while Greeley is a great defensive team, the Bobcats' forwards made it easy for the Quakers by continually trying to attack the middle of the ice.

"And when you don't make the in-game adjustments that we were telling our team to do, it's a recipe for disaster," Cloherty said. "We were victims of doing the same thing over and over, thinking things were



Greeley's Dylan Mutkoski beats two players up the ice.

going to go differently.

"I think 50 percent (effort) is an overestimate for what we gave tonight. We don't mind mistakes. They happen, but it's what you learn from them."

Ben Sfarra made 32 saves for the Bobcats. Ben Madden stopped 15 shots for the Quakers.

A night earlier, Mutkoski had a monster six-goal game for the Quakers in a 6-3 win over New Rochelle. Potter passed for three assists in the Greeley victory. Potter also tallied four goals in a 5-3 win over Rye on Jan. 9.

Byram Hills (3-8) battled with defending Section 1 Division 2 champion John Jay on Jan. 11, but gave up a third-period lead to fall 5-4.

The Bobcats had a 3-2 advantage in the third period, but three straight goals from the Indians turned the tables. Jesse Rosenberg netted a late goal on a penalty

shot to cut it to 5-4.

"They got a little bit of puck luck," Cloherty said of John Jay. "Their fifth goal went in from behind the goal line and off one of our defensemen's knee and in. We got it to 5-4 and we were buzzing and almost got the equalizer but just didn't have enough time left on the clock."

Rosenberg scored all four goals in the loss. Behar had two assists.

The Bobcats will face Pawling in their next game on Jan. 19 at 7:30 p.m. at Brewster Ice Arena.

"We're 2-2 in our last four games, since we got everybody back and healthy," Cloherty said. "John Jay and Greeley are two of the top teams probably in the state right now. We were happy with the way we played against John Jay. We thought that was a good indication of what we can

*continued on page S-7*



Ryan Renzulli, No. 24, and Jake Potter celebrate a goal.



Bobcat Will Cohen looks up the ice.



Byram's Jesse Rosenberg controls.



Quaker Jake Potter looks to pass.



Quaker Ryan Renzulli looks to move the puck.

ROB DIANTONIO PHOTOS



# Bobcats Edge Rye in a Dramatic Class A Showdown

By Andy Jacobs

On a night when the basketball was slipping through finger tips as often as it was dropping through the rim, when players were hitting the deck more than they were hitting shots, it figured that the outcome would finally be decided by some sort of serendipity.

Mike Kalian's off-the-dribble, on-the-move 3-pointer from near the top of the key with the shot clock about to expire banked high off the backboard and straight through the basket in the waning moments Thursday night, lifting host Byram Hills to a dramatic 41-34 victory over the Rye Garnets in a key showdown of Class A title contenders.

"I can tell you what it wasn't," said Bobcats head coach Ted Repa about the game-clinching shot by his senior point guard. "It wasn't coaching. I mean, that was just a kid making a play down the stretch. We caught a break there because it was a two-point game, so they would've had a chance to tie or win."

The matchup between two talented teams that began the evening with identical 7-2 records could not have been much closer. Neither one was able to build a lead any larger than four points until the Bobcats ended the game with a 10-2 advantage. There were nine lead changes, six of them after halftime, and the biggest run of the night was Byram's 7-0 spurt bridging the second and third quarters.

"I was concerned about this game," admitted Repa. "They're athletic and they're quick and relentless. They do the things well that we've kind of struggled with so far. And, on the flip side, we have

the size that's gonna give them problems.

The early moments of the contest began as inauspiciously for Byram Hills as possible. Rye scored the first four points of the game as the Bobcats turned the ball over on each of their first five possessions. They didn't get on the scoreboard until nearly three minutes had elapsed, when Kalian went to the line and made three free throws.

Another three and a half minutes passed before Byram got its first basket of the game, an off-balance toss from around the foul line by Michael Parrotta that enabled the struggling Bobcats to take a 5-4 lead into the second quarter. But the Garnets, who went scoreless for the final 6:13 of the opening period thanks to their horrendous outside shooting, retook the lead just 13 seconds into the second quarter on a 3-pointer from Sam Poole.

The Bobcats were trailing 14-10 before Jon Trongone followed his own miss with a floater from the left baseline with just over three minutes left in the half to start the 7-0 Byram run that was the game's longest. With 90 seconds remaining, the Bobcats were finally able to get the ball inside for the first time to 6-foot-7 senior center Ben Leff, whose layup tied the score. A free throw a minute later by Mike Caporale gave Byram a 15-14 halftime edge.

"It's very frustrating when we turn the ball over, and that's obviously something we've got to work on," said Repa after watching his team struggle mightily against the Garnets' effective zone press. "I think we had 11 (turnovers) at halftime and there certainly were some in the second half. I told one of the refs in the fourth quarter, 'Man, I've got a headache.'



The Bobcats' Mike Parrotta tries to shoot the ball over Rye's Thomas Flaherty in the first quarter of last Thursday's game.

It was very stressful."

On their first possession of the second half, the Bobcats' lead grew to three points on a 12-foot baseline jumper from Leff, who scored a team-high 12 points and added 14 rebounds. But a 9-2 Rye spurt, ignited by a Thomas Flaherty 3-pointer, gave the Garnets a 23-19 lead midway through the third quarter. They were still ahead by three points before Leff's two free throws with 33 seconds left brought Byram Hills to within 27-26 heading to the final period.

Rye's Matt Tepedino, the game's high scorer with 14 points, drilled a 3-pointer to open the fourth quarter, but then the Garnets went scoreless again for nearly four and a half minutes. Still, they were clinging to a one-point lead after Tepedino's runner from left of the lane with 3:07 left on the clock. The Bobcats, after almost turning the ball over, answered with a Trongone 3-pointer from the right corner and never trailed again.

Leff made both ends of a 1-and-1 free-throw opportunity with 1:47 to go, but a basket by Quinn Kelly 15 seconds later brought Rye to within 36-34. The Garnets had a chance to retake the lead following another Byram turnover, but with 53 seconds left Flaherty's 3-point shot from just left of the key caromed off the rim.

That set the stage for the heroics from Kalian after a Bobcat timeout. He wound up with the ball with the shot clock quickly winding down, took one dribble to his left, rose off one leg and fired up a high-arching desperation shot over the outstretched hands of Kelly. The ball wound up caroming off the backboard and right into the basket, giving the Bobcats a five-point



Byram Hills guard Mike Kalian dribbles up the floor in last week's game against Rye. His 3-pointer late in the fourth quarter sealed the Bobcat victory.

cushion with 17 seconds remaining.

The Bobcats, aided all evening by their raucous student cheering section, added a pair of free throws with 3.8 seconds to go by Willy Samsen, who scored all seven of his points in the second half.

"Rye's always a big rival," said Repa. "Coach (John) Aguilar over there does an amazing job and he's got that program running real strong. So it's been a big game for the last few years and we've had some great runs. I was happy to come out with a 'W'. I wasn't sure it was gonna go that way."

The Garnets only managed to score two baskets over the game's final seven and a half minutes and got outscored 15-4 in crunch time.

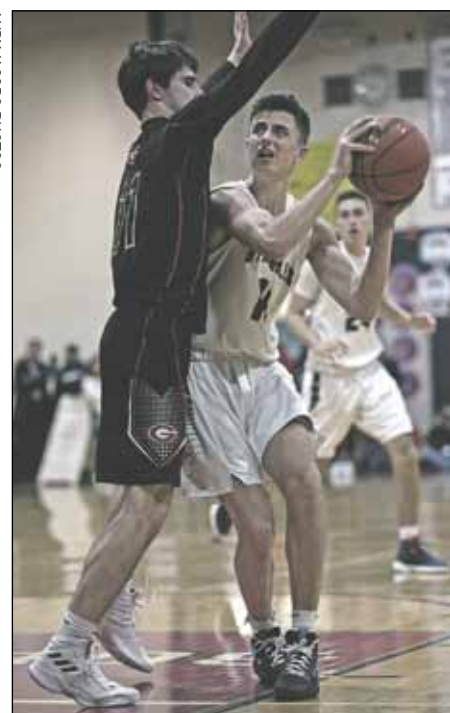
"We hang our hat on defense," Repa said. "We're holding teams to really low scoring outputs. So that can keep us in the game even when we're terrible on offense. If we can tighten up the offense while maintaining that defense, you know, we've got a shot to be pretty dangerous."



Byram Hills center Ben Leff tries to call a timeout during a scramble for a loose ball in the first half of last Thursday night's home game vs. Rye.



The Bobcats' Willy Samsen gets inside for a layup in Thursday's win over Rye.



Jon Trongone of Byram Hills is pressured by Rye's Quinn Kelly during the second half of last week's 41-34 Bobcat victory.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



# Valhalla's Third-Quarter Run Dooms the Wildcats

By Andy Jacobs

By the time the Valhalla boys' basketball team returned to the court for the start of the second half on Saturday afternoon, intermission was just about over and the refs were ready for play to resume.

None of the Vikings got a chance to take even a single warmup shot.

As it turned out, it hardly mattered. Valhalla began the third quarter with a 14-3 spurt to break open a game that had been tied at halftime and went on to defeat rival Westlake 58-51 in the championship game of the third annual Lt. Charles Garbarini Memorial Basketball Tournament, hosted by Pleasantville High School.

"Yeah, it was kind of strange," said Vikings head coach Richard Clinchy afterwards about his team's lack of a halftime warmup while he was still downstairs talking to his assistant. "That's not the way you want to start things. Luckily it worked. At halftime, I sort of leave them on their own to get ready. I just tell 'em to get a lot of shots. And I assumed that's what they did before I got up here."

In a game that featured big runs by both teams in the first half, it was the Vikings' quick start in the third quarter that proved decisive. Junior point guard Sebastian Pacheco, who finished with a team-high 12 points, had four baskets during Valhalla's third-quarter blitz. Tied at 24 apiece at the break, the Vikings opened up an 11-point cushion with just under three minutes left in the period.

"It was disappointing, the third-quarter start, because they (the Vikings) didn't run anything different," said Westlake coach Chad Charney, whose tired team was playing its fifth game in seven days. "They didn't really make any adjustments. They ran the same things."

Trailing by 14 points, the Wildcats closed the third quarter with a 7-0 burst, getting a basket and two free throws from Tyler Tsiakaros, who wound up with a game-high 25 points, and then a 3-pointer by Richie Petrillo. But the fourth quarter began with the Vikings' Marlin Wise and Sean Kelly each hitting 3-point shots and Nick Petrilli adding a layup.

The Vikings' sudden 51-36 advantage proved to be too much for Westlake to overcome. Even though the resilient Wildcats immediately answered with a 13-3 run, highlighted by 3-point jumpers from Matt Martin and Petrillo, there wasn't enough time left on the clock. Petrillo's right-of-the-key trey narrowed the Valhalla lead to 54-49, but only 46 seconds remained.

Valhalla, now 7-3, sealed the outcome when Wise made both ends of a 1-and-1 opportunity with 33 seconds to go and Petrilli scored on a fast-break layup with 16 seconds remaining.

"They're not gonna give up," said Clinchy about the vanquished Wildcats. "This is a huge rivalry. And I said to



Valhalla's Sebastian Pacheco tries to score in traffic during the Vikings' 58-51 victory over Westlake in Saturday's championship game of the Lt. Garbarini Memorial Basketball Tournament.

my team before the game, 'Look, there's gonna be ups, there's gonna be downs. Just don't go down when it's not going our way. Keep your focus, keep your spirit, keep your intensity. That's what we want.' And I think we did let it drop. To their credit, they did it to us. But it did not surprise me that they kept coming."

The Vikings had begun the game as if they would run Westlake right out of the gym. After the Wildcats scored the first basket of the day, Valhalla erupted for 12 consecutive points that featured four straight fast-break layups. Drew Drayton-Bey, inserted into the contest when John Lynch was sidelined by an injury, connected on a 3-pointer at the buzzer to give the Vikings a 17-7 lead after one quarter.

"John Lynch is usually our energy guy, but he hurt himself," said Clinchy. "We put Drew in and that was a real pick-up for us. Just his energy and athleticism, his rebounding. He's a tremendous athlete,



Westlake's Tyler Tsiakaros, who scored a game-high 25 points, dribbles toward the midcourt line in the Wildcats' tournament game on Saturday afternoon.



Valhalla's Marlin Wise (top) and Sebastian Pacheco both come down with a rebound during the Vikings' tourney win over Westlake this past weekend.

probably the best athlete on the team."

But the Wildcats, despite having to play overtime against Rye Neck just 20 hours earlier, bounced right back in the second quarter, answering with a 14-2 run that was sparked by Tsiakaros and Petrillo. Tsiakaros, a senior forward, scored the Wildcats' first eight points, hitting on a pair of 3-pointers after scoring inside. Petrillo drove for two buckets, and when Hamad Azhar then made a layup with 2:30 left in the half Westlake had a 21-19 lead.

"That's a very good team with two really good players that we had to focus on," said Clinchy, praising Tsiakaros and Petrillo. "And the rest of them are all solid. Tyler and Richie, I mean those guys can score. You go out on Richie, he can go past you. Very athletic. Tyler inside is just a load. You're just trying to double-team and do something, steal the ball."

Fatigued or not by their grueling week, the Wildcats turned the ball over far too many times against the Valhalla pressure defense to come away with a victory.

"We were a little tired today," said Charney. "But Valhalla is as good as advertised. I think we can definitely play



Joseph Ragusa of Westlake is pressured by Sebastian Pacheco of Valhalla as he dribbles into the frontcourt during the title game of the third annual Garbarini Memorial Tournament.



Marco Mazza of Valhalla sends a left-handed shot over Westlake's Frank Malandrucolo along the left baseline in Saturday's championship game.

with them. I don't know what the final turnover count was, but we had to have 25 turnovers, at least. Between that and giving up maybe another 20 offensive rebounds, we're lucky to even lose the game by seven. That's not a real good recipe right there."

The Wildcats had begun their day with a morning shoot-around and a walk-through that Charney anticipated would have them ready for the Vikings.

"You've got to take care of the ball," he said. "When a team's pressing like that, you know what you're getting before the game, the 1-2-2 trap and all that pressure. We can't have 30 turnovers and expect to win."



Westlake guard Matthew Martin shoots the ball in the third quarter of Saturday's game against rival Valhalla.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



# Briarcliff Overwhelms the Panthers in Tournament Final

By Andy Jacobs

The Briarcliff girls' basketball team accomplished a highly improbable feat on Saturday afternoon.

Without scoring a single point in the fourth quarter, the Bears still won.

A dominating first quarter that ended with the Bears on a 20-2 run paved the way to a lead as large as 32 points and Briarcliff went on to defeat archrival Pleasantville 54-41 in the championship game of the third annual Lt. Charles Garbarini Memorial Basketball Tournament.

Alana Lombardi erupted for 13 of her game-high 15 points in the opening quarter and Kacey Hamlin finished with 14 to reach the 1000-point plateau for her career as the Bears overwhelmed the host Panthers during the first 24 minutes of the contest and improved their lofty record this season to 10-1.

The milestone basket by Hamlin, a 10-foot shot she banked high off the glass from just left of the lane, came late in the third quarter with the Bears leading by 30 points. Then with most of the Briarcliff starters watching from the bench in the fourth, the Panthers managed to make the final score a lot more respectable, outscoring the Bears 17-0.

"The fourth quarter was a little ugly," conceded Briarcliff coach Don Hamlin. "After Kacey got her 1000th, I think we all exhaled. I don't even know. We just kind of lost a little bit of focus. A lot of people who don't get a lot of minutes got to play, so that was good for us. And, to their (the Panthers) credit, they kept on playing hard."

But long before the surprising final quarter, the Bears made sure everyone in attendance knew which team would be receiving the impressive championship trophy at the end of the day. The senior guard Hamlin, who had already reached 500 assists and rebounds earlier this season, opened the scoring with a drive



Briarcliff's Alana Lombardi sails to the basket for an easy layup during the first quarter of Saturday's tournament final vs. host Pleasantville.

through the lane that gave Briarcliff a lead it never came close to surrendering.

Lombardi soon followed with a 3-pointer from the right elbow before Pleasantville freshman guard Tina Matica gave the many Panther fans on hand a glimmer of hope with a 3-point shot at the other end. But the Bears then exploded for 13 straight points, 10 of them from Lombardi, over a dizzying two-and-a-half minute span to open up a whopping 18-3 lead.

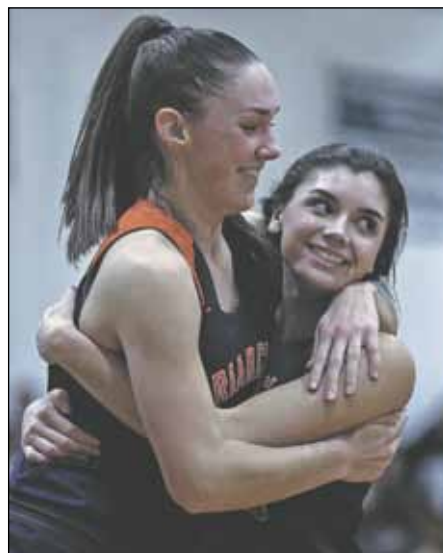
The Panthers' Mary Grace O'Neill got inside for a basket to end the Bears' streak, but the quarter ended with Hamlin drilling a left-corner 3-pointer, Kelly O'Donnell scoring on a layup and then Hamlin feeding sophomore center Jordan Smith inside for another layup. The teams went to their benches at the end of the quarter with Briarcliff holding a 25-5 advantage.

Even though Lombardi, who made six baskets in the opening quarter, only added two points the rest of the way, the damage was already done.

"She's legit," said coach Hamlin about his star junior. "She's a really, really good player. When she's on fire like that, she's impossible to stop."



Pleasantville's Analiese Picart and Briarcliff's Jordan Smith set their sights on a rebound in Saturday's tournament championship game won by the visiting Bears.



Briarcliff's Kacey Hamlin (right) is hugged by teammate Kelly O'Donnell after scoring the 1000th point of her varsity career in Saturday's tourney win over Pleasantville.

Pleasantville's first-year head coach, Dillon Clark, was left to ponder how to get his emerging 7-4 team out of the gate quicker. The Panthers had to overcome an early 12-2 deficit at Westlake in the opening round of the tournament a week earlier.

"Yeah, I think it's somewhat of a bugaboo with our young group right now," he said. "How do we start the game well and not dig ourselves a hole? Other games, we were able to climb out of it. Obviously against a team of this caliber, that's not the case. We'll have to come together and figure out how we can correct that going forward."

The Bears' Smith, who wound up with 10 rebounds and three blocked shots, scored on a put-back to start the second quarter. But the Panthers managed to play even with Briarcliff over the final six minutes of the period and, after a right-elbow 3-pointer by the Bears' Ashleigh Fortunate with just five seconds to go, left the court trailing 34-12 at halftime.

P'ville's O'Neill opened the second half with a 3-point shot, but then Briarcliff answered with its second big offensive explosion of the game. The Bears went on a 13-0 blitz that included three baskets by junior guard Julia Barbalato and two more from O'Donnell. Their lead was 51-21 when Hamlin, a fifth-year varsity veteran needing 14 points at the start of the day to reach 1000, achieved the milestone with 1:25 left in the third quarter as her giddy teammates instantly jumped off the bench to congratulate her.

"Oh yeah, it's pretty cool," said coach Hamlin about watching his daughter score her 1000th point on a day when it wasn't even certain she could play after getting hurt against Valhalla earlier in the week. "Her two older sisters (Angela and Taylor) got to do it. She's done it. She's more proud of the 500 assists and 500 rebounds, but it's a great accomplishment for her."

Pleasantville, trailing 54-24 at the start



Kaitlyn Ryan of Briarcliff gets set to pass the ball in the first half of Saturday's championship game of the annual Lt. Garbarini Memorial Basketball Tournament.

of the fourth quarter, got some measure of consolation by outscoring the Bears 17-0 over the final eight minutes. Freshman guard Dakota Corey, who finished with a team-high 11 points, scored seven of them in the period. The game ended with backcourt mate Matica providing the Panthers with their final basket of the afternoon, a 3-point shot from the left wing.

"No, the girls did not quit," said Clark. "You've got to remember we only have one senior and no juniors. All freshmen and sophomores. So the team we're rolling out there maturity-wise is not the same as everybody else. We're a work in progress and we'll look to take it a step at a time."

The Bears, meanwhile, can now look forward to the imminent return of senior star Maddie Plank, expected to play for the first time this season in Thursday afternoon's game at Westlake.

"We have about a month before the playoffs," said Hamlin, whose team's only loss came to Class AA's Roy C. Ketcham. "So it would be nice to, knock on wood, hopefully stay at full strength."



Jenna McAllister of Pleasantville is closely guarded by Ashleigh Fortunate of Briarcliff as she prepares to pass the ball.



Pleasantville freshman guard Dakota Corey pushes the ball up the court in the Panthers' game against rival Briarcliff on Saturday afternoon.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



# Third-Period Woes Send Foxes to a Pair of Losses

By Rob DiAntonio

For the first 34 minutes of hockey, Fox Lane was more than competitive in games with Carmel and Pearl River last week.

But the third period ended up being the Foxes' undoing, which resulted in two losses.

Fox Lane was tied with Carmel heading into the third, but the Rams erupted for a 3-0 run over the first two minutes to pull away for a 7-3 victory on Friday afternoon at Brewster Ice Arena.

"They're a great team and they came out fired up," Fox Lane coach Charles Berger said. "We decided to play 34 minutes of hockey. We didn't show up for the third."

The first goal came just nine seconds into the third period when Brendan Murphy gave the Rams a 3-2 lead. They added another goal just under a minute later. Murphy capped off the run with 15:06 to play, extending the advantage to 5-2.

Fox Lane got a goal back when Adam Maiorano lit the lamp with 11:52 left in the game. Jake Wollman had the assist.

But the Rams didn't let the Foxes get any closer. They added a goal about two minutes later before sealing the win 20 seconds after that.

After struggling offensively for the first period-and-a-half, the Foxes scored two quick goals to take a 2-1 lead. The first came from Daniel Leader with 3:24 left in the second. Maiorano notched the next goal just 18 seconds later on a feed from Wollman.

"We were doing what we had preached:



Adam Maiorano of the Foxes controls.

get pucks to the net and keep shooting," Berger said of the quick scoring surge. "A couple of them went in. We had an opportunity to stretch the lead to two, but we hit the post and it didn't go in. I think that was a big difference there at the end of the second."

Carmel answered with 1:27 left in the second period to send the game into the final period deadlocked at 2-2.

Backup goalie Max Rauch made 19 saves in net for the Foxes. "He's our emergency goaltender," Berger said. "He jumped in tonight and did a phenomenal job."

Two nights later, Fox Lane had a three-goal lead against Pearl River in the final period. Another third-period implosion, however, resulted in a 10-7 loss for the Foxes at Brewster Ice Arena.

After Jared Goldstein's goal put Fox Lane up 7-4 with 12:36 to go, Pearl River sprang to life and went on a five-goal run.

"You've got to play 51 minutes," Berger



Michael Gallary looks up the ice.

said. "One or two goals isn't a big deal. You've got to keep fighting. As soon as you give up on playing team defense and skating, it doesn't matter who you're playing, you'll lose. You've got to play a full game."

Fox Lane had difficulty containing Sean O'Connor, who scored five goals for the Pirates.

Charlie Della Penna tallied two goals for Fox Lane, which started the game by jumping out to a 5-1 lead.

The Foxes, who dropped to 5-7, will look to bounce back when they face Nyack/Tappan Zee at 4:10 p.m. at Palisades Ice Arena on Wednesday, Jan. 16. They then face the Icehawks again two days later at 4 p.m. at Brewster.

"I think we've come a long way," Berger said of how he evaluates the first half of the season. "We're playing well and are starting to move the puck better. I just think we've got to get more pucks to the net and be a little bit less selfish and a lot more positive. If we can do those things, this team can go places."



Adam Maiorano advances the puck along the boards.



Fox Lane's Daniel Leader moves the puck up the ice.



Max Rauch gets set in goal as Charlie Della Penna tries to clear.



Daniel Leader celebrates a second-period goal.



Fox Lane coach Charles Berger speaks with the team during a break in the action.



# Perlleshi and Wolk Impress at Eastern States Classic

By Tony Pinciario

Victor Perlleshi walked out the gymnasium last January with an eighth-place finish at the prestigious Eastern States Wrestling Classic.

The Eastern States is considered one of the marquee wrestling tournaments on the east coast as it features the top wrestlers from the tri-state area (New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania) as well as New England. Nine states and 174 schools were represented at Eastern States.

Even though Perlleshi would have preferred a higher finish, he came away with valuable intelligence.

"The experience helped me because I knew what to expect in the tournament and I learned that I had to elevate my game even more to do well at Easterns," he said.

Perlleshi, seeded fifth, executed his approach and ripped his way through to the 132-pound final with four pins, all in the first period, totaling 3:44. Despite a 5-2 loss to second-seeded Justin McDougald (Niagara Wheatfield/Section 6) in the final, Perlleshi reinforced his reputation as one of the premier wrestlers in New York.

Horace Greeley senior Aaron Wolk also had an excellent Eastern States, placing second in the 170-pound weight class.

Perlleshi and Wolk, along with their respective teams, will be wrestling in the Westchester County Championships Saturday at Yonkers High School.

Perlleshi didn't waste any time establishing himself as a prime contender for the 132-pound title as he registered pins in his first two matches on day one.

"The two first-period pins gave me a lot of confidence going into the second day," said Perlleshi, who will look to

win another Westchester County title Saturday. "I knew if I kept wrestling really hard that I'd do well. And I was just trying to make a name for myself."

Perlleshi went into the tournament with a perfect mindset.

"I worked really hard this week at practice," said the two-time Section 1 Division II champion. "Eastern States was on my mind every practice and I knew I had to have a good practice week leading up to the tournament."

"I honestly didn't care about my seed. I was just really excited to get another chance to compete at such a tough tournament."

Pleasantville coach Bob Bernarducci always knew Perlleshi was an excellent wrestler and now so does the remainder of the state.

"Vic wrestled great all weekend," Bernarducci said. "He was aggressive and focused. He now feels like he can compete with anyone in the state, and I agree. I think Vic served notice that he can't be overlooked at states."

While Perlleshi and teammate Len Balducci were at Eastern States, Pleasantville finished fourth at the Hen Hud tournament.

Christian Perlleshi, Quinn Egan, Sebby Senande and Eli Cuniffe were all runners-up.

Wolk, like Perlleshi, was also seeded fifth at Eastern States. Wolk lost 2-1 to Ross McFarland of Phoenix (Section 3) in the final. Last year, Wolk finished third.

Wolk earned a berth in the final with a thrilling victory over Wantagh's Matt Rogers, seeded fourth, in a semifinal. Wolk secured a takedown with time winding down to earn a 6-5 victory.

It is the second consecutive year Horace



Greeley's Aaron Wolk

Greeley had an Eastern States' finalist. Last year, Jacob Ferreira wrestled New Rochelle's Jake Logan in the 182-pound final.

"Aaron wrestled great all weekend and found ways to win big matches against great competition," Horace Greeley assistant coach Mike DeBellis said. "Aaron's heart is there and he is a fierce competitor."

Wolk said that finishing third last year at Eastern States made him realize that he could wrestle with the best in the Northeast. With this in mind, Wolk was prepared.

"When I practice, I work to get a little better each time, and set an example for the younger wrestlers on the team, whether or not I have a big tournament

coming up," Wolk said.

Despite facing a one-point deficit with time evaporating quickly in his semifinal match, Wolk remained composed and focused on what he needed to do.

"When I was younger, my mistakes and what I thought were poor reffing decisions caused a lot of stress during the match," Wolk said. "Now, I maintain my focus and I know no matter how little time is left I always have a chance to win. That's one of the great things about this sport."

"I'm happy to have reached the finals, but of course I'm not satisfied. I have a lot of work to do and fortunately I have the best coaches in the state to help me, Anthony Tortora, Mike DeBellis, and Empire Wrestling Academy."

## Renzulli Sparks Quakers to a Win Over Byram Hills

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do. But we just put up a goose egg tonight with our performance. We're just going to try to regroup and with our much-different-looking team against Pawling, hopefully we can get back on the winning side of things."

Greeley (11-1) returns to the ice when it travels to Danbury Ice Arena to face



Ethan Behar and Byram Hills will look to regroup after the loss to Greeley.



Byram's Ben Mautner rips a slap shot.

Bethel/Brookfield/Danbury on Friday at 7:50 p.m. Two nights later, the Quakers square off with Pearl River at 8 p.m. at Brewster Ice Arena.

"We're at a good place record-wise, but there's always room for improvement," Perito said. "I'd like to be more efficient on the power play and in some of our neutral zone stuff. Overall, I think we're in a good place and are trending in the right direction."



Greeley coach Dan Perito talks with the Quakers before the start of the third period.



# ExaminerSports

## WESTLAKE VS. VALHALLA



ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS

Action from Saturday afternoon's Westlake victory over Valhalla in the consolation game of the third annual Lt. Charles Garbarini Memorial Basketball Tournament included, clockwise from top left, Westlake's Rebecca Lovett pulling down a rebound; Viktoria Hudd dribbling in the backcourt; the Wildcats' Jamie Perfito and the Vikings' Gabriella Miletsky vying for a rebound; Westlake senior guard Emily Sardo shooting a second-half jump shot; the Vikings' Shelby Sekinski protecting the ball from Viktoria Hudd; Viking sophomore Lauren Ally securing a rebound; and Sophie Sproul of Valhalla trying to score inside as Westlake's Julie Lyden defends.