

Streaking Toward the Playoffs

**Chris Melis Shoots From the Baseline
as the Greeley Quakers Crush Somers
and Extend Their Winning Streak to 14**

Westlake Hangs On for a Thrilling Win Over the Panthers

By Rob DiAntonio

Every time Westlake built a lead, the Pleasantville Panthers kept clawing back.

It was down to the wire and a wild finish, but Westlake held on for a 47-45 win over the host Panthers in last Friday afternoon's league contest.

Trailing by two points, Pleasantville's Brendan O'Neill had a wide-open look at a corner 3-pointer with five seconds left. The shot rimmed out and Rich Petrillo grabbed the loose ball. He was fouled and hit both at the line with 3.5 seconds left to put the Wildcats up by four.

"I've got to make those free throws for my team," Petrillo said. "My team means a lot to me and to get this win over Pleasantville means a lot. We've been struggling as of late, but the team really worked hard tonight."

Christian DeJesus of the Panthers was fouled on a three with 0.3 seconds left. He made the first two and intentionally missed the third. He missed the rim, however, resulting in a dead ball. Westlake was granted possession and was able to hang on for the thrilling win.

"We called timeout and told them we're not contesting a shot," Westlake coach Chad Charney said. "We made it interesting (when we fouled them) because now they're shooting three shots with us up by four. The last 10 seconds of the game was a little bit of a mess."

Westlake was up 30-22 in the third quarter, but Pleasantville went on a 7-0 run to cut the deficit to a point. The run was capped off by a top-of-the-key 3-pointer from Dan Melillo.

The Wildcats answered with two

free throws from sophomore Carter Falkenberg. He then secured a steal and scored at the buzzer to send his team into the final quarter with a 34-29 lead.

"He's coming off an ACL injury," Charney said of Falkenberg. "He's a running back in JV football and got hurt in the middle of the season. He missed the first half of the basketball season. He was great for us all summer and he had kind of a breakout game today. For a sophomore to take control and bring the ball up against pressure, he did a great job."

Petrillo agreed that Falkenberg came up huge for the team.

"He made plays and made his free throws," he said. "Everything you could ask for from a backup point guard. He did everything we needed."

The momentum stayed on Westlake's side early in the fourth quarter when Petrillo nailed a three to stretch the lead to eight points. "He's been making big shots all year," Charney said. "He's a very good shooter."

After Petrillo made three 3-pointers in the first half, the Panthers were more wary of him in the second half.

"They were setting a nice screen to set him up for those shots," Panther coach Bob Jordon said. "We did make an adjustment and he didn't get as many open looks after that."

Melillo's runner in the paint trimmed the Westlake lead to 41-36 with just over three minutes to go. But Westlake star post player Tyler Tsiakaros answered inside. Matt Martin then made two free throws for the Wildcats to give them a 45-38 lead.

The Panthers had one last run in them. Garrett Carney made two free throws with 54.4 seconds left to cut the deficit to



Panther Brendan O'Neill goes in for a layup as Wildcat Mike Mancuso pursues.



Wildcat Mike Mancuso drives past Panther Garrett Carney.

45-43 and set the stage for the drama that followed with five seconds to go.

Westlake had built a 21-11 lead in the second quarter, but Pleasantville fired back in what was a theme throughout the game. After the Panthers went scoreless for the first five-and-a-half minutes of the second quarter, DeJesus finally broke the ice. Drew DiPietro nailed back-to-back 3-pointers to trim Westlake's lead to 21-19.

"That's been the story with our kids all season," Jordon said. "Defensively, they battle and really work hard. I think Westlake got up by 10 a couple times and they battled back. We're just at that point where we're trying to get over the hump and we seem to be coming up short. But it's all their heart and effort. We're not out of games; they really work hard."

Petrillo sank a 3-pointer with just one second left in the half to send Westlake into the break leading 24-19.

Petrillo and Tsiakaros scored 17 points apiece to lead Westlake, while DeJesus paced the Panthers with 13 points. Carney added nine points and Melillo had eight.

Westlake (9-9) was scheduled to host Briarcliff on Monday, Feb. 11, then conclude the regular season by welcoming Valhalla for a 6 p.m. game on Wednesday.

"We had a couple injuries early on and we lost a couple games that I think maybe we should have won," Charney said. "We're full strength now and I think this team has the capability of going on a run. We've got to shore up some stuff defensively. Right now, if the seeds worked out, I think



Wildcat Carter Falkenberg passes as Panther Dan Melillo defends.

we'd be in a good spot."

Pleasantville (5-12) was scheduled to travel to Eastchester on Feb. 11. The Panthers square off with rival Briarcliff at 4:30 p.m. on Feb. 13.

"Unfortunately, we struggle field-goal-percentage wise," Jordon said. "We're putting up open shots, but they're missing. We don't have the size to necessarily pound it inside, so we have to take a lot of perimeter shots. If it's a great day we'll do well and if it's not we struggle a little bit."

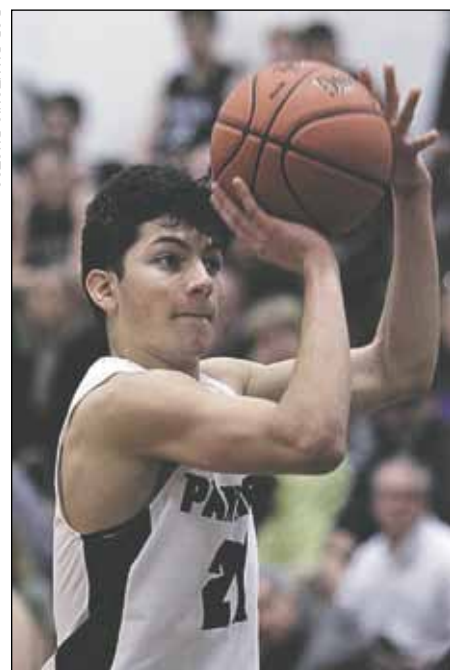


Westlake Tyler Tsiakaros and Pleasantville's Aidan Lynch battle for a board.



Rich Petrillo of the Wildcats nails a three just before halftime.

ROB DIANTONIO PHOTOS



Christian DeJesus of the Panthers takes a foul shot.

Quakers Continue Their Winning Streak by Beating Somers

By Andy Jacobs

Midway through the third quarter last Thursday evening, Horace Greeley's Nick Townsend was racing up the side of the court with the ball as a pair of Somers Tuskers were backpedaling on defense. Without hesitation, the Quakers' 6-4 center suddenly dribbled behind his back and cut to his left, leaving both defenders flatfooted in the lane as he swept past them for an easy left-handed layup.

The dazzling play by Greeley's precocious freshman put an exclamation point on a game he began dominating earlier in the night with 10 first-quarter points. His game-highs of 29 points and 15 rebounds paved the way to a lopsided 71-47 home victory over the Tuskers that clinched a second successive league title for the Quakers.

"He just continued to do what he's been doing all season," said Quakers head coach Felix Nicodemo after Townsend led his 16-2 team to a 14th straight win. "Rebounding, being aggressive, playing through tough foul calls and being an unselfish player. What I saw from him tonight was what I've been seeing all season, someone continuing to get better."

The Tuskers, forced to play with 6-foot-5 senior center Max Germaine sidelined by illness, had no answer to the relentless Townsend under the basket. Nearly three minutes into the second quarter, with his team already behind by 13 points, Somers coach Chris DiCintio yelled to his players, "He's a freshman and he's dominating."

"You know what, I would say he took advantage of the opportunity with the big out," said Nicodemo about Townsend, who compiled his lofty stats playing just the first three quarters. "I think each game he's continuing to get better and better."

Somers had held the Quakers to their lowest scoring output of the season, just 39



Greeley junior Sean Dunleavy rises high in the air to block a shot by Bennett Leitner of Somers in the first half of Thursday's game.

points, but still lost by eight in the teams' previous meeting almost three weeks earlier. This time, the Tuskers jumped ahead 4-0 with two early layups. But a 3-pointer 48 seconds into the contest by Michael Salore ignited a 9-0 Greeley burst and the Quakers never trailed again.

A layup by the Tuskers' Charlie Weissman did tie the game at 16 apiece with 2:52 to go in the first quarter, but then the Quakers closed the period on a 10-0 run that began with a Chris Melis put-back and ended with a Townsend layup on a feed from Melis, the talented junior forward who finished the night



Noah Shar fires a jump shot from right of the key in the first half of Greeley's lopsided win over the Somers Tuskers.



Horace Greeley freshman Nick Townsend sends a shot in the lane over two Somers defenders during last Thursday's 71-47 Quaker victory.

with 12 points and 14 rebounds.

"We knew we were gonna come out and play against a very aggressive defensive team," said Nicodemo. "Since that game (in mid-January at Somers), we wanted to get better at our zone offense because of how good they are defensively. We came out ready to go because we knew a league title was on the line at home. So we wanted to take advantage of that opportunity."

The Quakers' 10-point lead after one quarter quickly grew to 13 on a Townsend and-1 basket 30 seconds into the second. But the Tuskers were still within 40-29 before Greeley ended the half on an 8-0 spurt that began and ended with buckets from Townsend, who had 21 points by the break.

Greeley, leading 48-29 at halftime, got two more baskets from Townsend in the first 50 seconds of the third quarter. Moments later, Weissman, the Tuskers' power forward, fouled out of the game and Somers all but raised the white flag with five new players summoned onto the court. The Quakers were already ahead by 21 points when they ran off 11 straight points, a streak started with a Jack Elser layup and capped by a 3-pointer from the right elbow by Christoph Sauerborn. The Tuskers closed the third quarter with a trey from Dylan Berliner, but headed to the fourth trailing 63-34.

By the time the final period began, Nicodemo had already removed both Townsend and Melis from the game and the Quakers' bench had a chance to get some extended playing time. But Somers never got any closer than 22 points over the final eight minutes, which was witnessed by a diminishing-by-the-minute home crowd.



The Quakers' Christoph Sauerborn glides in for an easy bucket in the home win over Somers.

The Quakers had closed the first quarter on a 10-0 run, the second on an 8-0 spurt and the third 11-3, much to the delight of their coach.

"Yeah, that's something we pride ourselves on, closing out quarters," Nicodemo said. "I feel like if we're gonna compete for a sectional championship, that's what we're gonna have to do — close out quarters defensively."

The Class A playoffs are just a week away and Nicodemo has been able to keep the minutes down for the starters as the Quakers built big leads in their recent matchups.

"We've been fortunate the last three games, Chris and Nick have sat the whole fourth quarter," said Nicodemo. "It's very fortunate because you wanna be able to rest those guys as we move onto sectionals. We have two more league games and our goal is to finish out the league undefeated and put ourselves in the best position for a top seed."



Greeley junior forward Seth Brail dribbles out of the backcourt as Somers' Declan Talleur chases from behind.



Jack Elser of Greeley hits a shot from the foul line in the second quarter of last week's game against Somers.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS

Local Wrestlers Win Titles at the Sectional Championships

By Tony Pinclaro

When Fox Lane junior Quincy Downes was younger, he was looking for a winter sport to play.

Even though his father, Kevin, was a successful basketball coach at Mahopac and Yorktown, Downes felt competing on the hardwood, was not for him. So, Downes, who had been playing winter lacrosse, opted to follow his mother's advice and begin wrestling.

"It was not an enjoyable experience, at first," said Downes, with a laugh. "When I was in eighth grade, I started going to the Empire Wrestling Academy, where I made a lot of new friends and I started enjoying myself."

Downes has made wrestling an enjoyable experience for himself, but not for his opponents. He continued showing why he is among the best in New York after winning the Section 1 Division I 160-pound title on Sunday afternoon at Clarkstown South High School. Along with fellow champion and teammate Jake Hoffman (99 pounds), the duo led Fox Lane to a second consecutive team title as nine Foxes placed in the top six.

Since the inception of the large-school, small-school format in 2004, Fox Lane has won seven large-school titles, including three under current coach Anthony Rodrigues.

"Even though our team is young, we work hard and showed we can rise to the occasion," said Downes, now 41-5 this season. "We still have a lot to improve on, but, overall, we're a strong team."

Downes and Hoffman qualified for the New York State Division I Wrestling Championships, Friday-Saturday, Feb. 22-23, at the Times-Union Center in Albany.

Downes won his first title with an 8-3 decision over Gavin Fiacco of John Jay-Cross River. Downes preceded the championship win with two pins and a 10-0 major decision in his first three matches.

The final score was not indicative of the match as Downes, seeded first, was in control from the match's opening 20 seconds, when he executed a takedown.

Earning the top seed brings expectations and nerves to some wrestlers, but Downes felt he remained calm and composed.

"I was not really paying attention to where I was seeded or anyone else was seeded," said Downes, who now has 132 career wins. "I just wanted to go out, have fun and wrestle my best. Winning feels good and now I'm looking forward to wrestling my best at states."

Hoffman continued his outstanding freshman year by winning the 99-pound title with a 10-6 verdict over top-seeded Angelo Centrone of Mahopac. Hoffman is now 42-7 this season.

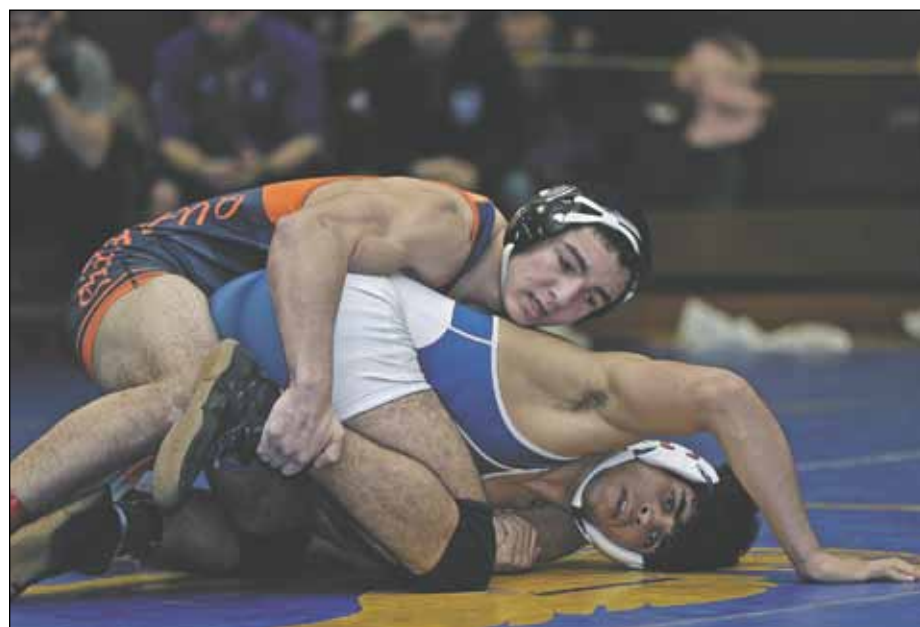
Senior Amos Rivera (120) and sophomore Lucas Friedman (152) were runners-up.

Pleasantville junior Aidan Canfield was prophetic.

Following a loss to Pearl River's Dante Simeti in the Section 1 Division II Dual-Meet Championship in December, Canfield started thinking about February.

"It was a close match with a score of 4-4 heading into the third period and he took me down to my back and pinned me," Canfield said. "After that loss, I knew I would see him in the sectional finals."

Canfield was on point as the two wrestled for the Section 1 Division II 138-pound title, but this time with a



Horace Greeley's Aaron Wolk is in control on his way to pinning Ben Rivera of Carmel in the Division 1 championship match at 170 pounds on Sunday afternoon.

different result.

Canfield posted an 18-10 major decision to win his first sectional title and earn a berth in the New York State Division II Wrestling Championships, Friday-Saturday, Feb. 22-23, at the Times-Union Center in Albany.

Joining Canfield in Albany are teammates and fellow champions – Victor Perlleshi (132), Len Balducci (120) and Quinn Egan (103). It was the third consecutive title for both Perlleshi and Balducci. It was Egan's first as he pinned his opponent in just 24 seconds.

Following the loss to Simeti, Canfield knew what he had to do when they wrestled again.

"I really focused on moving my feet more and just scoring points rather than trying to win," said Canfield, a sectional fourth-place finisher and runner-up his previous two years. "My focus going into the match was to keep scoring points relentlessly and if I did that I knew the

win would come.

"Winning this means the world to me. I worked so hard for this and it feels amazing to get it done. My first thought after the match ended was just, 'Wow I just did that!' I knew I could do it, but once I actually did it felt unreal."

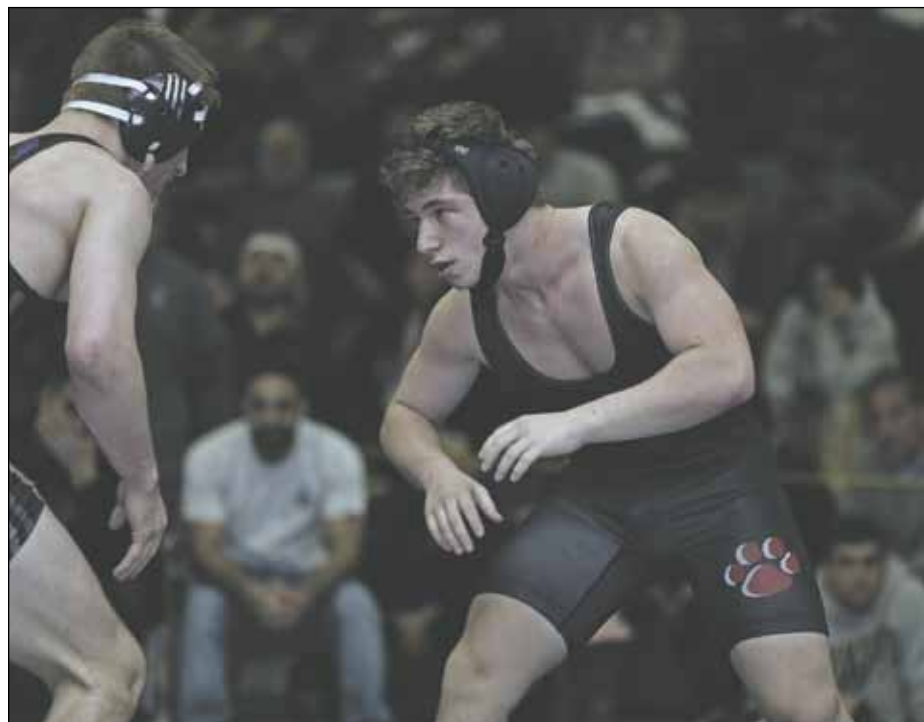
Along with winning the title, Canfield was selected as Champion of Champions.

"It shows how much respect I have from my peers," said Canfield of his recognition. "As wrestlers, we all know the hard work it takes to get to the top of the podium."

Canfield said the team compiled an impressive resume this season, capped by the sectional performance.

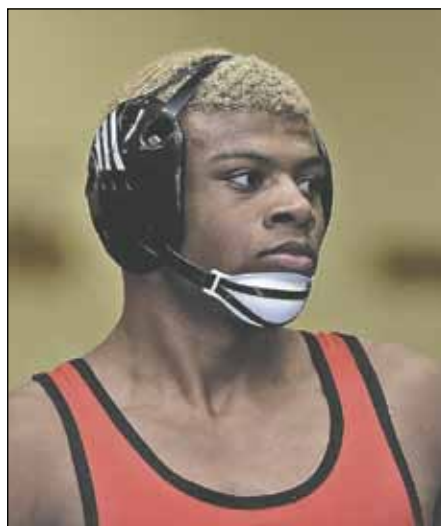
"Although we didn't capture the team title, we still had many accomplishments, including most section champs ever in one year, Section 1 Dual-Meet champions

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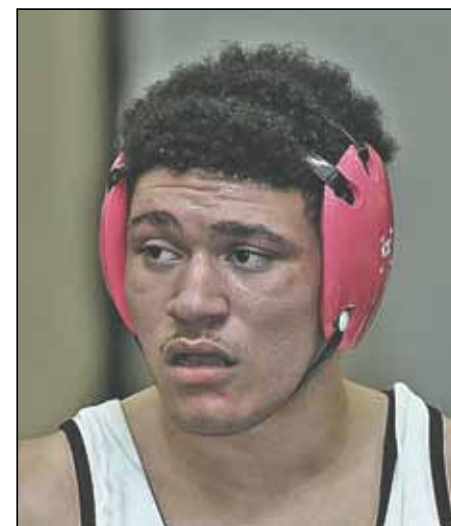


Alex Behar of Byram Hills looks for a takedown in the 182-pound championship match against Jake Logan of New Rochelle during Sunday's Division 1 finals at Clarkstown South High School.

ROB DIANTONIO PHOTOS



Fox Lane's Quincy Downes.



Pleasantville's Jaden Kammer reached the finals at 182 pounds.

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and we are the first and only team to win a match at the state dual-meet championships.”

The **Horace Greeley** tandem of Aaron Wolk and Matthew Schreiber did it again – winning their second consecutive Division I sectional title.

Wolk came away with the 170-pound title by virtue of four pins and Schreiber was the 106-pound champion as a result of three pins and a major decision.

Wolk, now 41-1 this season, raised his Horace Greeley program record to 152 wins.

The Brown University-bound Wolk is happy to have won another sectional title and own the most career wins, but there is something even better than individual honors.

“It’s pretty cool, but the best thing I will remember are all of our team wins, especially the big team wins,” he said.

Wolk added it was also exciting that he and Schreiber, who are good friends, began wrestling on varsity as freshmen, have won two consecutive sectional titles and will be returning to states together.

Schreiber now owns a 30-4 season record and has 136 career wins.

Byram Hills, in its first year combined with Westlake, Valhalla and Briarcliff, came away with two finalists and a fourth-place finisher for coaches Joey and



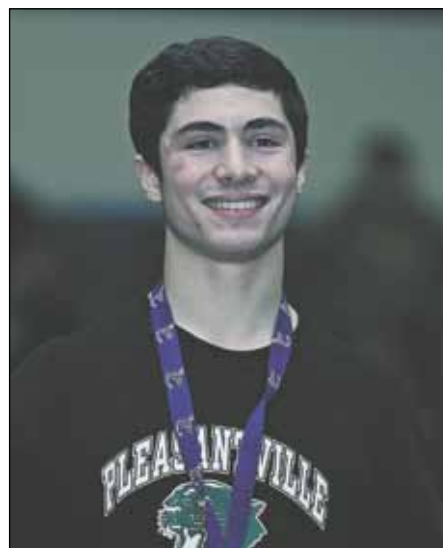
Aidan Canfield of Pleasantville, the winner at 138 pounds, became a first-time sectional champ on Saturday.

Peter Grippi.

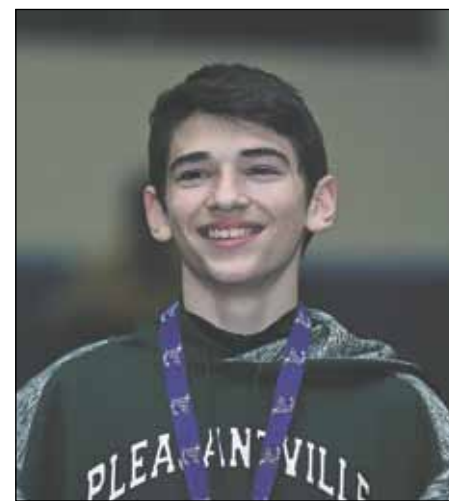
John Fortugno was the 106-pound runner-up and Alex Behar finished second at 182 pounds. Behar faced 2018 New York State Champion and currently undefeated Jake Logan of New Rochelle, who won his third straight sectional championship.

Justin Fortugno reached the championship semifinals and finished fourth in the 99-pound weight class.

Behar, a junior, finished with a 29-4 record and classmate John Fortugno went 26-7 this season. Justin Fortugno, a freshman, had a season-best 31-9 record.



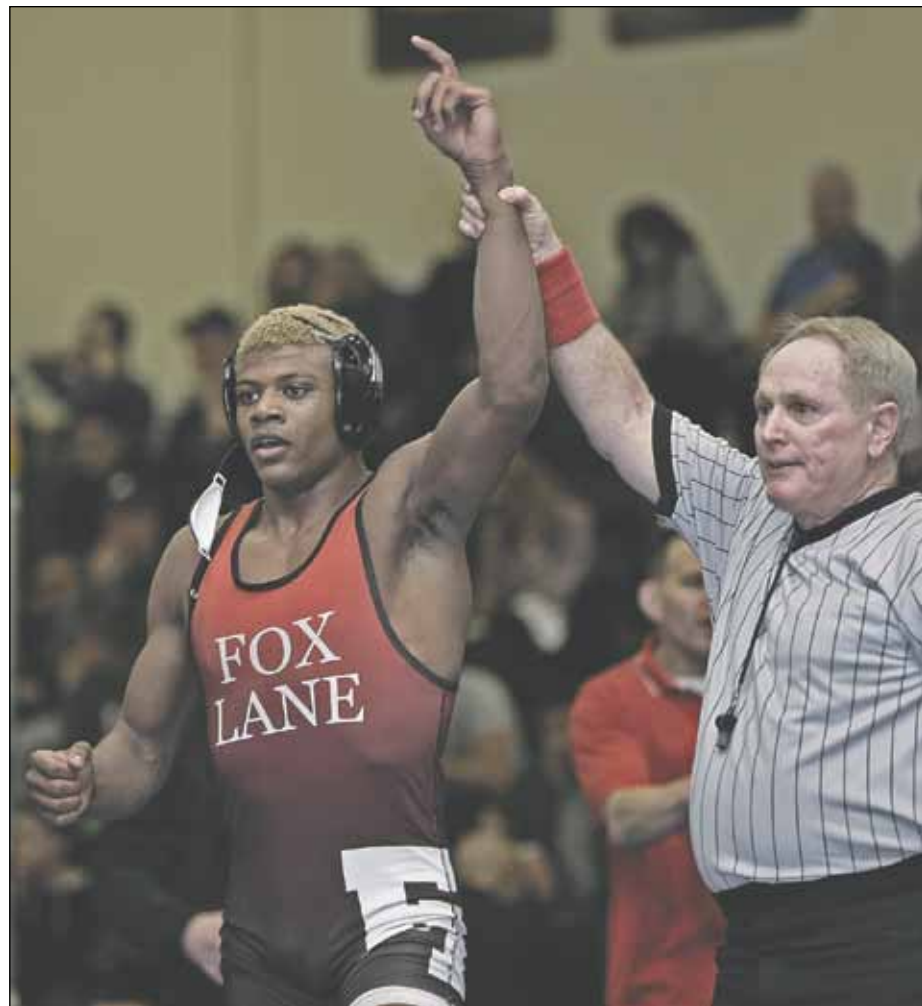
Pleasantville's Len Balducci



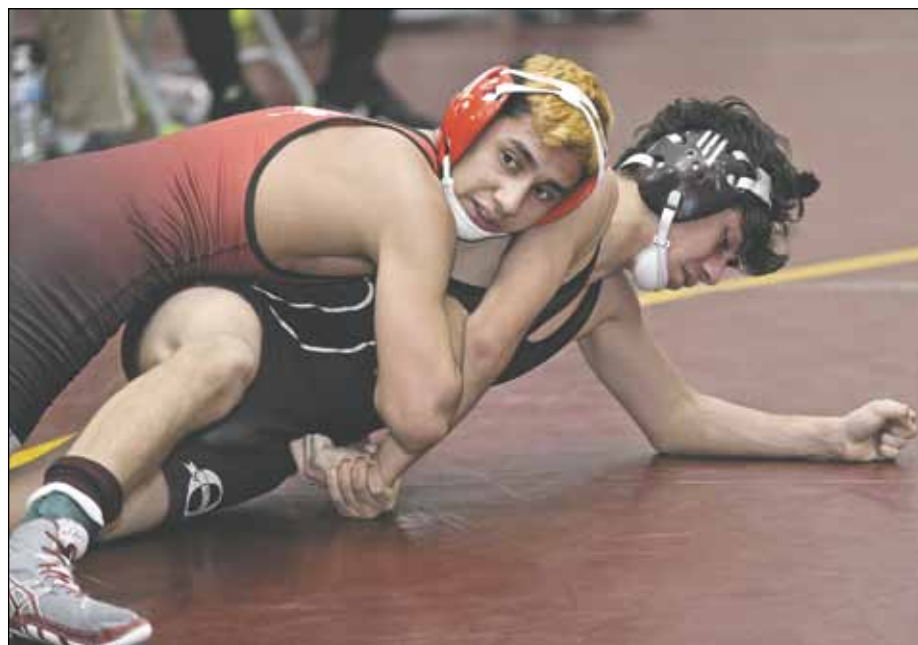
Pleasantville's Quinn Egan



Pleasantville's Victor Perleshi, the champion at 132 pounds, poses with teammate Sebby Senande, who also reached the 132 title match.



Fox Lane's Quincy Downes has his arm raised in triumph after defeating Gavin Fiacco of John Jay (CR) by an 8-3 decision in the 160-pound Division 1 final.



Fox Lane's Thomas Prisco has control during one of his matches at 145 pounds at Sunday's Section 1 wrestling championships.

focus on **PLEASANTVILLE Girls' Basketball**



Analiese Picart eyes the basket as she moves through the lane against the visiting Croton-Harmon Tigers.



Panther freshman Dakota Corey goes up for two points in the overtime victory over visiting Croton-Harmon last Thursday afternoon.



Pleasantville point guard Tina Matica pushes the ball up the court just ahead of teammate Paige Long during the second half of last Thursday's 70-62 overtime win.



Sophomore forward Lila Donahue passes the ball in the first half of last Thursday's overtime victory against the Tigers.



The Panthers' Jenna McAllister fires a jump shot from the left wing in the second half of the overtime win last Thursday afternoon.



Pleasantville sophomore Julia O'Reilly dribbles the ball just beyond the 3-point arc in the Panthers' home win over Croton.



Panther guard Mary Grace O'Neill dribbles the ball across the midcourt line in last week's home game vs. Croton.

PANTHER Track & Field



Adrian Rippstein is the Section 1 Class B Champion in the 55m hurdles (7.74)! Adrian also won a silver medal in the 55m Dash (6.82).



Adriana Catalano earned a silver medal in the 1500m (4:50.35).



Izzy Kapoor ran 9.16 for a bronze medal and a school record in the 55m Hurdles.

Westchester Knicks Win ‘Battle of the Burbs’ in Double-Overtime Thriller



The Knicks' Billy Garrett, who scored 39 points, grabs a rebound in front of teammate Stephen Zimmerman in Saturday night's game.

The Westchester big early deficit and 134-130 double-over the Long Island League game on the Westchester Guard Billy just under 14 points erupted for 39 to their second home win in 24 hours. The Knicks found themselves trailing 21-7 a little more than five minutes into the game as Long Island's Dzanan Musa exploded for 11 of his team-high 30 points.



Knicks overcame a came away with a overtime victory Nets in an NBA G Saturday night at County Center. Garrett, averaging a game this season, help lift the Knicks

But the Knicks quickly answered with a 10-0 run to get back in the contest and the game was close the rest of the way, with 15 lead changes and 16 ties. Long Island had a chance to win at the end of regulation time, but Theo Pinson's 3-pointer at the buzzer fell short. The Nets' Jordan McLaughlin had a shot to win it in the first overtime, but his jumper, too, fell well short as time expired.

That set the stage for the second two-minute overtime period and a 3-pointer by the Knicks' Devon Baulkman with 47 seconds left that broke the final tie of the night and gave Westchester the lead for good. The Knicks, currently 22-16 and in fourth place in the Eastern Conference, have home games next Wednesday and Friday at 7 pm (Feb. 20 and 22), then host the Lakeland Magic on Sunday, the 24th at 3:00.



Dzanan Musa, the 2018 first-round draft pick of the Brooklyn Nets, dunks the ball in Long Island's game vs. the Westchester Knicks.



Long Island guard Theo Pinson is forced into a difficult shot along the right baseline during Saturday's game against Westchester.



Jameel Warney of the Westchester Knicks comes down with a rebound.



Long Island Nets center Alan Williams shoots the ball over the Knicks' Jameel Warney at the Westchester County Center.



Westchester's Sekou Wiggs shoots from the top of the key in Saturday's win over Long Island.



Paul Watson of the G League Knicks takes the ball to the basket from the right baseline.



Nets forward Drew Gordon shoots the ball from the free-throw line.



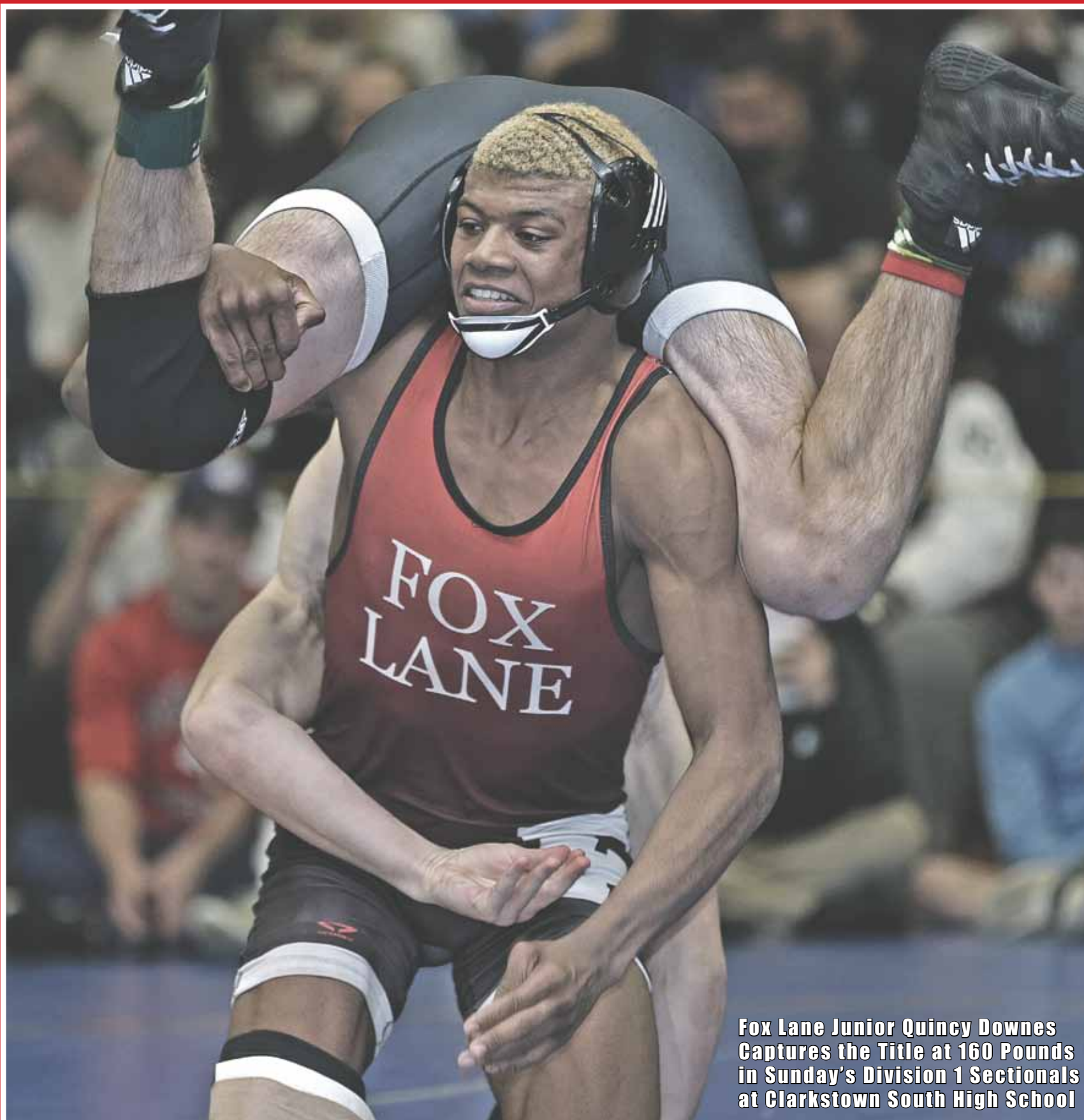
Mitchell Creek of the Long Island Nets dribbles out of the backcourt as Westchester's Devon Baulkman tries to catch up in the second half of Saturday night's game.



Kevin Olekaibe dribbles across midcourt in the Westchester Knicks' double-overtime win at the County Center.

ExaminerSports

UPS AND DOWNES



**Fox Lane Junior Quincy Downes
Captures the Title at 160 Pounds
in Sunday's Division 1 Sectionals
at Clarkstown South High School**