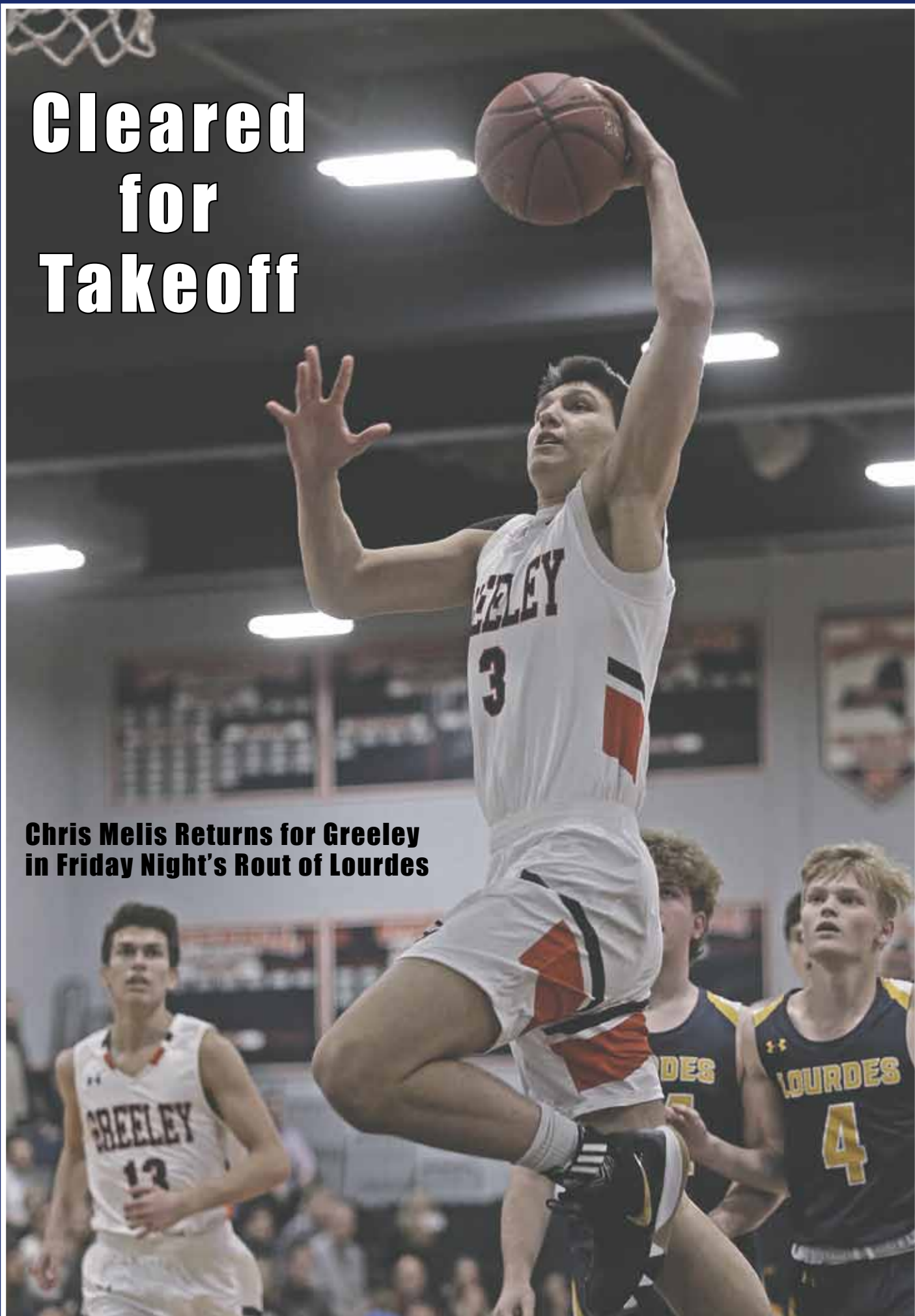


## Cleared for Takeoff

**Chris Melis Returns for Greeley  
in Friday Night's Rout of Lourdes**



# Bears Hold On for a Big Home Win Against Fox Lane

By Andy Jacobs

There were similarities aplenty between the Briarcliff and Fox Lane boys' basketball teams as they matched up against each other last week at the halfway point of the 2019-20 season.

Both teams have captured a sectional title in their very recent past, but don't have nearly the same firepower now they did then. And each of them arrived last Wednesday evening still stuck on four victories and desperate to get back to the .500 level.

So it shouldn't have been any surprise that the latest rendition of their annual nonleague clash would come down to the final possession of the evening, which turned out to be a well-defended fall-away jumper at the buzzer by the Foxes' Will Crerend that fell short of the rim. The host Bears, sparked by several key 3-pointers in the fourth quarter, managed to hang on for a 41-39 victory.

"I think we mirror them a lot," said Bears head coach Nick Friedman shortly after his team had thwarted the Foxes' late comeback bid. "They're a lot like us. Even if their record isn't great, they're gonna be in every game they're in. So we knew it was gonna be grind-it-out."

"Yeah, I thought it was two teams that were struggling a little bit, two teams that desperately needed a win," said Fox Lane coach Mike Tomassi. "I thought we were the more talented team, but obviously talent means nothing if you're not gonna play hard. Credit to them. They play hard, they defend, they do some really nice things. And we didn't capitalize on certain things, so that's what happens."

The Bears, now 5-6, led for virtually the entire contest. Aidan Murnane got them on the scoreboard 20 seconds after the opening tip with a 3-point shot from the top of the key and then three baskets from sophomore forward Elliott Jones helped build a 9-2 lead midway through the first quarter.

A bucket by Crerend a minute into the



Briarcliff guard Aidan Murnane tries to dribble past Fox Lane's Trey DiCarlo in the second half of last Wednesday's game, won by the host Bears.

game turned out to be the last one Fox Lane would manage in the opening quarter. The Foxes, with 1-for-7 shooting from the field and five turnovers, found themselves trailing 10-3 after the first eight minutes.

"Oh, it killed us, it killed us," said Tomassi about the Foxes' first-quarter struggle. "After the first quarter, it was an even game. We spotted 'em seven and we were down seven at half. We lost by two, so that means at some point we outplayed them and made up some points. So that first couple minutes killed us, and it's been consistent. We'll look at it as a coaching staff, but we've got to come out of the gate better because it's been killing us all season."

A 3-pointer by A.J. Panarese, who finished with a game-high 13 points, stretched the Bears' margin to 13-5 a couple of minutes into the second quarter. But then the Foxes went on a 9-0 spurt, taking their only lead of the night on a Crerend layup with 2:42 left in the half. Two more 3-point shots by Panarese then fueled a 10-2 Briarcliff response that provided a 23-16 halftime advantage for the Bears.

"It makes it a lot easier if you hit a few 3s," said Friedman. "You make free throws and layups, usually you win. We didn't hit free throws tonight, but we hit some 3s so we were able to get away with it."

The Bears still held a seven-point edge midway through the third quarter after a lefty toss in the lane by Chris Park. But a pullup jumper by Crerend near the foul line late in the period brought the Foxes to within 30-26 heading to the final quarter.

The Foxes' Aidan Hicks drained a 3-pointer that cut the Bears' lead to 33-30 with 6:22 remaining. Briarcliff sophomore guard Jayden Larregue then answered with two treys a minute apart and suddenly the Bears had a



Elliott Jones of Briarcliff hauls in a rebound during the Bears' home win over Fox Lane.

nine-point cushion. But Oliver Shevick, who scored eight of his nine points in the fourth quarter, sparked a late Fox surge and his double-pump, hanging layup with 1:15 to go capped a 9-2 run that cut the deficit to just two points.

Fox Lane squandered a chance to tie with a turnover on a fast break with 37 seconds on the clock. The Bears, though, left the door open by coming up empty on a 1-and-1 free-throw opportunity. With Crerend trapped in the corner, the Foxes called a timeout with 17 seconds left. Eventually they had to inbound the ball one last time with 6.4 seconds remaining.

Crerend wound up with it and quickly cut to his left. With the final buzzer about to sound, he rose in the air just to the left of the foul line. The Bears' Murnane was draped all over him and Crerend's fall-away shot attempt landed short and to the right of the rim as time expired.

"Unfortunately, before the timeout, we had a play called and we had guys not knowing where they were supposed to be,"



Fox Lane's Trey DiCarlo drives along the left baseline past Briarcliff forward Elliott Jones in last Wednesday's game.



Fox Lane freshman guard Oliver Shevick tries to shoot over Briarcliff's Elliott Jones from the left baseline.

said Tomassi. "Maybe it's the pressure of the situation. They had a trap, we called a timeout to draw something else up. We don't come out and execute that either. So at that point, it was just try to get a good shot and pray for the best."

"We still made too many mistakes down the stretch," said the Bears' Friedman, "but we were able to pull this one out, which we really needed."

They really needed it after two heartbreaking losses at home earlier in the week to Westlake and Croton, games the Bears led late in the fourth quarter.

"Tonight was huge," said a relieved Friedman. "Tonight was everything. We don't play again for eight days, so it would've been a really rough stretch to kind of mentally have to deal with that."



Fox Lane senior guard Will Crerend tries to score inside in between Briarcliff's Jayden Larregue (left) and A.J. Panarese during the first half of last week's game.



The Bears' A.J. Panarese drives toward the basket in Wednesday evening's game against visiting Fox Lane.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



# Quakers Crush Lourdes to Conclude a Productive Week

By Andy Jacobs

Horace Greeley basketball fans had an abundance of things to cheer about on Friday night, from the deft shooting touch displayed by Nick Townsend to the trio of emphatic blocked shots by Sean Dunleavy to the lightning-quick fast breaks finished by Christoph Sauerborn.

And just when it seemed there was nothing that could top it all, the moment many of them have waited for all season finally arrived. Star forward Chris Melis was summoned onto the court for the first game action of his senior season.

Just a couple of months removed from shoulder surgery, he stepped onto the floor with 1:45 left on the clock, made two familiar forays to the basket and returned to the bench before the final buzzer. Though he only contributed two points, the return of Melis provided an emphatic ending to a dominant performance by the Quakers, who overwhelmed visiting Our Lady of Lourdes 82-46.

"Feels great, no complaints," said Melis about his repaired shoulder after making his cameo appearance late in the contest. "I've been working so hard to get back on the court to help my teammates, who have had my back since I got hurt. It's just been a long journey, but it feels good to finally achieve my goal. And I know I'm gonna play more in the future."

Long before Melis made his much-anticipated return to a standing ovation from the Greeley faithful, the Quakers, now 9-3 and riding a six-game winning streak, gave their guests from Dutchess County a dazzling demonstration of their postseason potential. They opened up the game with a 7-0 burst, and later went on a 10-0 blitz highlighted by back-to-back 3-pointers from Townsend that stretched their lead to 21-7 late in the first quarter.

"Yeah, we talked about a fast start," said Quakers head coach Matt Simone. "We talked about finishing each play, finishing each quarter and finishing the game today. I said at the beginning of the year, the difference is this team truly executes our game plan and they buy into what we're doing game by game. It's clearly showing with our level of play."

By the time the first-quarter scoring was



Greeley sophomore Nick Townsend tries to get to the basket in the Quakers' 82-46 rout of the visiting Our Lady of Lourdes Warriors.

finished by Townsend's fourth basket from the perimeter, the Greeley lead was 23-10 and the sophomore center already had 14 points.

"Yesterday when we were going over the scout and stuff in preparation for today," said Simone, "I was talking to the guys that other guys were gonna have to step up because this team's big, they're physical, and this team has the ability to take Nick out. He must've taken that a little bit personally with me saying that because he went and showed that regardless of the size the other guy's got, he can score and he can get his points any which way."

Townsend finished the evening with game highs of 26 points and 17 rebounds. His put-back basket with a couple of minutes left in the first half gave the Quakers a 38-16 advantage. Leading 40-21 at halftime, Greeley scored the first six points of the third quarter, capped by a 3-pointer from the right corner by Sauerborn, who wound up with 16 points to go along with five steals.

The fourth quarter began with the Quakers in front by a lopsided 61-32 margin. Townsend and the rest of the starters departed midway through the period, and the Greeley offense was paced by Carter Salore, who provided three treys, much to the delight of the home fans. The largest lead of the night, 77-38, came after a bucket from junior forward Dylan Andersen with

three minutes remaining.

With the crowd chanting his name, Melis, cleared to play for over a week now, at last made his season debut in the final moments. He quickly got the ball, drove into the lane and scored on a runner. Moments later, he took off from just inside the foul line, intent on dunking the ball. Though he played barely a minute, it was a rousing start to his comeback from injury.

"He was itching to get back in," Simone said. "So in a Friday night home game, a lot of fans here, I thought it was a good opportunity to kind of get him in and back into playing. I was happy for him. He was excited. The fans were excited. The team was excited. That was the best thing to see, his teammates were up cheering. They wanted him to go in more than he wanted to go in."

The appearance by Melis provided a fitting ending to a week in which the Quakers won three times at home, including a 73-54 victory over Spring Valley last Monday in which Townsend erupted for a career-best 42 points, to go with 22 rebounds.

The tandem of Townsend and Melis was

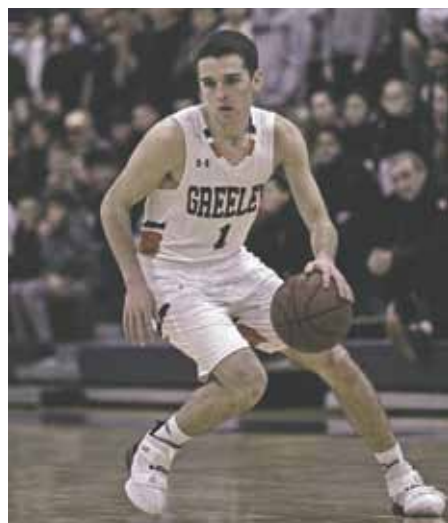


Christoph Sauerborn pushes the ball up the court past Andrew Rappleyea of Lourdes during Friday night's Greeley home game.

expected to make the Quakers one of the favorites to win the Class AA sectional title this season. But the two of them were sidelined as Greeley lost both of its games decidedly in the recent Slam Dunk Tournament at the Westchester County Center.

"It was hard, but it's a learning experience," said Melis about the adversity the Quakers endured that weekend. "We get better from every game, and we're just gonna take those games and move forward. Those games were preparing us for late February and March, when they really count."

"He just brings such a different dynamic to our team because he's another guy that can do so much," said Simone. "It adds a whole different element to our team that we're definitely excited to have back."



ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



Greeley's Sean Dunleavy handles the ball out beyond the 3-point arc in the first half of the Quakers' home game vs. Our Lady of Lourdes.

Greeley star forward Chris Melis had reason to smile as he made his season debut on Friday night.



The Quakers' Will Laforteza tosses up a runner in the lane in Friday's win over Lourdes.



Horace Greeley sophomore guard Connor Melis takes the ball to the basket in the second half of Friday's game.



# Bobcats Storm to an Easy Victory Over Sleepy Hollow

By Rob DiAntonio

Following a season-opening loss to defending section champion Tappan Zee, the Byram Hills girls' basketball team has been on a roll.

The Bobcats' latest victim, visiting Sleepy Hollow, was defeated 69-27 on Friday afternoon.

With a guard-heavy team, Byram Hills' success has been dependent upon pushing the ball on offense and knocking down outside shots, according to head coach Tara Ryan.

"Defensively, we get quite a few steals, which has been great," said Ryan, whose team is 9-3. "When we're able to do that, it just ups the offense. We're still trying to work on really seeing the ball down low, boxing out and rebounding. That'll be a key to our future success."

An early burst had Byram Hills out to a 21-6 lead after just one quarter. Sleepy Hollow found some life in the second quarter, outhustling the Bobcats to loose balls and offensive rebounds.

The Bobcats' Olivia Picca made a steal, then found Stefana Latella on the fast break with six seconds left to send Byram into halftime leading 30-14.

Two threes from Sleepy's Isabella Meyer right after halftime trimmed Byram's lead to 12 points, but the Bobcats quickly regained the momentum. A corner jumper from Latella was followed by two free throws by Jennifer Mui. Latella's steal and layup had the Bobcats leading 38-20.

"We knew we wanted to sit in a zone tonight," Ryan said of the defense. "We

knew about No. 10 (Meyer), she did a great job hitting her shots. But it's just high hands. It's the little things we were trying to get done tonight."

Beth Corelli cut, received a pass and finished on an inbounds play. Back-to-back 3-pointers from Mui and Gabby Ripka pushed the Byram Hills lead to 48-22 with two minutes left in the third quarter.

"At halftime, we talked about playing as a team and don't worry about individual stats," Ryan said. "Let's just get the job done and be super aggressive. On the defensive side, we can get those turnovers and that's when our offense really starts to spark. I think we put a lot of pressure on Sleepy Hollow."

The Bobcats led 48-25 after three quarters. Byram then went on a 13-0 run to start the fourth.

Latella led Byram Hills with a game-high 18 points. Corelli tallied 15 points, while Mui netted nine points. Sophia Villani and Olivia Barry had seven points apiece for a deep Bobcat squad that had nine different players score.

"I think that's going to be a key for us to win some really big games at the end of this year," Ryan said of the team's depth. "Someone's going to get hurt or people are going to get into foul trouble. It's got to be the next person ready to step up. Tonight, that's what we talked about at halftime especially. Can we rely on you to step up? Our entire team was able to do that tonight and prove why they're ready for varsity Bobcats."

But Byram Hills fell to defending Class B state champion Irvington 68-39 in the Autism Classic on Sunday.

The Bobcats, who were eliminated by Somers in the sectional quarterfinals last season, return to action when they travel



Byram Hills guard Jen Mui sets her sights on the rim in the win over Sleepy Hollow.



Olivia Barry goes up strong in the 69-27 victory by Byram Hills on Friday.

to Fox Lane for a 4:15 game on Friday, Jan. 24.

"We have four seniors and everybody else is still young," Ryan said. "We've had this crew for a couple of years. My main juniors have been on the team since eighth grade before I was here. They've all been able to grow up with each other and really play. This is their third or fourth year playing with each other and it's getting to a higher level. It's really great to see."

The goal is to get to semifinals at the Westchester County Center and potentially more.

"We're trying to get a Gold Ball like pretty much everybody else," Ryan said. "That's one of the reasons we picked up a County Center game this year. We want to get used to playing in there."



The Bobcats' Olivia Picca starts a drive to the basket during Friday afternoon's home game.



The Bobcat's Gabby Ripka fires up a 3-point from the left corner vs. visiting Sleepy Hollow.



Byram Hills guard Beth Corelli rises for a jump shot just inside the 3-point line in Friday afternoon's game.



Stefan Latella lines up a baseline shot in the Bobcats' win over the Headless Horsemen.

ROB DIANTONIO PHOTOS





Fox Lane’s Adam Maiorano sends a wrist shot into the net for the game’s first goal in Sunday night’s 4-1 win over Mt. Pleasant.



Michael Donoghue of the Mt. Pleasant IceCats moves the puck up the ice in the first period of Sunday’s game vs. host Fox Lane.



The IceCats’ Aditya Sridhar stays ready during a faceoff in Sunday evening’s game against Fox Lane.



Michael Gallery of Fox Lane gets set to pass the puck in the Foxes’ win over the IceCats at Brewster Ice Arena.

# *focus on* ICE HOCKEY

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



Patrick Carcano of the Bobcats controls the puck in the third period vs. the visiting Carmel Rams.



Zack Berger of Byram Hills celebrates after scoring the Bobcats’ second goal in Thursday night’s game vs. Carmel.



Mt Pleasant goalie Ben Bottiglieri is poised to stop the puck as Fox Lane’s Adam Maiorano makes a rush to the net in the second period of Sunday night’s game.



Jake Wollman of Fox Lane controls the puck near center ice in the third period of the 4-1 win over Mt. Pleasant.



Byram Hills’ Austin Carlin takes the puck up the ice in Thursday’s home game against the Carmel Rams.



The Bobcats’ Owen Fleischer awaits a faceoff in front of Bobcat goalie Lucca Trotta during the third period at Brewster Ice Arena.



Lucca Conigliaro of Byram Hills chases after the puck along the boards in Thursday night’s home loss to Carmel.



# Pleasantville's Bernarducci Reaches Another Milestone

By Tony Pinciario

When Bob Bernarducci began his coaching career, first at Irvington and currently at Pleasantville, he took a philosophical approach.

"I take it one year at a time," said the understated Bernarducci.

His annual outlook is now at 37 years and in his team's triumph over Scarsdale last week, Bernarducci etched his name into legendary status with his 400th career win.

Bernarducci is the fifth Section 1 wrestling coach with 400 career victories, joining Dennis DiSanto (Somers and Mahopac), Fred Perry (Arlington), Joe Amuso, Sr., (Fox Lane) and Brian Tompkins (Sleepy Hollow). Bernarducci and Tompkins are the deans of Section 1 wrestling coaches.

"I remember, vividly, when I got my 200th win and thinking that was a pretty awesome accomplishment," Bernarducci said. "I never envisioned getting to 400 wins.

"Four hundred wins means a great deal to me. I always admired Joe Amuso's success as a coach, and to be in the same company as him is an honor."

Bernarducci began his coaching career at Irvington and had five sectional champions -- Lenny Balducci and two-time winners Dan Macca and Chris Balducci. Chris Balducci was also a state champion and Lenny's younger brother. After seven years at Irvington, Bernarducci came to Pleasantville in 1990.

Bernarducci quickly established the Panthers as a perennial power prior to the Division I (large school), Division II (small school) format being introduced in 2004. Since 2004, Pleasantville has been a small-school powerhouse.

Ironically, Bernarducci wound up being reunited with the Balducci family in Pleasantville as Lenny's sons -- Len, a senior, and Michael, a junior -- have been major varsity contributors. Len is a three-time Section 1 champion and New York State place-finisher.

Len said the team was well aware its coach was nearing 400 wins, so it was a goal to get it for Bernarducci.

"It's very special for all of us because hitting 400 wins is a huge milestone and knowing you helped him get to that is an awesome feeling," said the three-time sectional champ. "And knowing that he coached both my dad and uncle is really cool."

First-year Mahopac coach Steven

Tornambe was Bernarducci's assistant for 13 years. He credits Bernarducci with making him the coach he has become.

"He taught me everything I know about coaching," said Tornambe, twice a sectional champion for Ossining and a New York State place-finisher in the late 1990s. "I also learned my biggest lesson that winning isn't everything. If you stick to the plan and believe in your teaching and coaching, the wins come and that's obvious.

"It couldn't have happened to a better person. Bob is Mr. Pleasantville and a great role model and great friend to me. He has been giving back to the sport of wrestling for years and he made me feel that I can do the same."

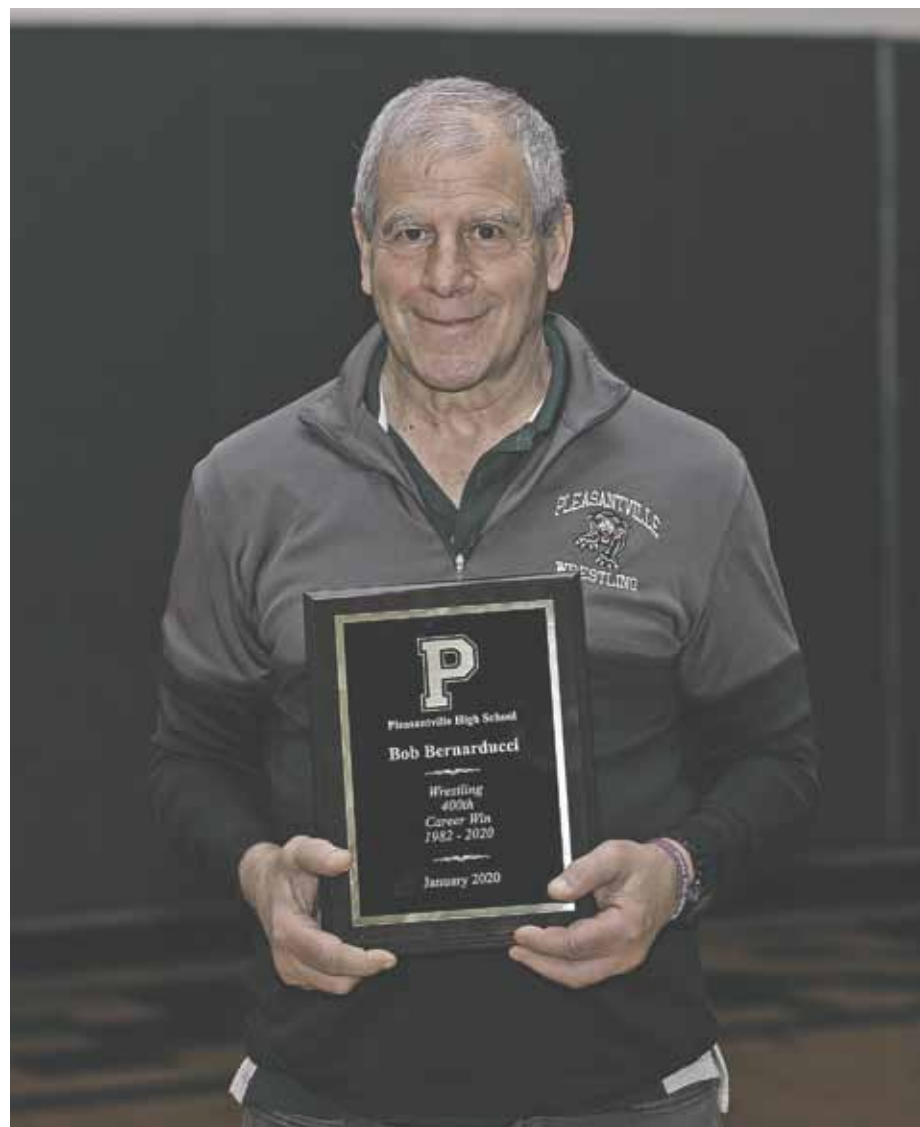
Along with coaching for 37 years, Bernarducci taught Special Education for 22 years and has been teaching physical education the past 15 years. Throughout his career, he has coached numerous wrestlers and has enjoyed working with each and every one, none more so than his sons, Kevin and Brian, the current Eastchester wrestling coach.

"One of the highlights of my coaching career has been being able to coach my sons, Kevin and Brian," Bernarducci said. "I also am very proud of the accomplishments of many of my former wrestlers. The dedication and determination that many of my former wrestlers have shown not only on the mat but in life always gives me a great deal of joy. There is nothing better than when a former wrestler visits and tells me how much wrestling meant to them."

Bernarducci gets to share his coaching and teaching passion with Brian, a third-grade teacher in the Eastchester School District. Prior to becoming Eastchester's coach, Brian was Irvington's coach, so he saw plenty of his father, especially during sectionals.

"My dad has always been the biggest influence and complete role model in my life," Brian said. "As I have gotten older, I understand how lucky I've been to have such a hard-working father who puts so much passion into teaching and coaching. He is the main reason I chose to follow in his steps. I saw how much he gets out of teaching and coaching and how much impact he has made on so many lives.

"Seeing my dad get 400 wins is amazing, but the way he gets high school kids, year after year, to compete their hardest is not that surprising. Being a part of the



Pleasantville wrestling coach Bob Bernarducci holds the plaque he was given before Wednesday's home match vs. Putnam Valley to honor the 400th coaching victory of his career.

Pleasantville wrestling program has always meant that the team is more important than any individual. Individually, everyone will tell you how my father motivated them and helped them reach goals they didn't think were possible."

Bernarducci and his Pleasantville team finished fifth in the Westchester County Wrestling Championships on Sunday. The Panthers were the highest-finisher among small schools.

Pleasantville had two champions, senior Len Balducci (120 pounds) and freshman Christian Perleshi (99 pounds). Both were awarded the most outstanding wrestler honors for their respective grade.

Harrison Halesworth (170) finished third and Quinn Egan (113) and Michael Balducci

(145) placed fourth.

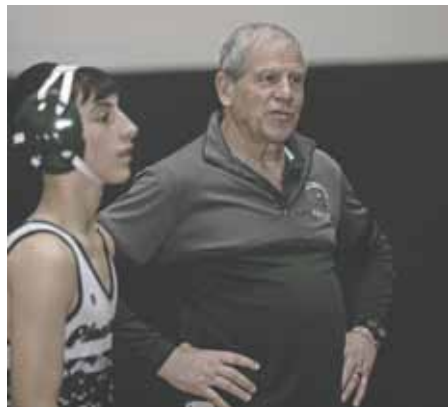
Fox Lane and coach Anthony Rodrigues won the team title yet again, amassing 235.5 points.

The Foxes had 12 place-finishers, led by 170-pound champion Quincy Downes.

Thomas Prisco (152), Jake Hoffman (120), Griffin Zegras (195) and Sam Dixon (126) were all runners-up.

Horace Greeley captain Isabella Garcia was the 106-pound runner-up and teammate Diego Weiss was sixth at 106.

The combined Byram Hills/Briarcliff/Valhalla/Westlake team featured two champions, John Fortugno (106) and Alex Behar (182). Justin Fortugno (113) placed second.



ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



Bob Bernarducci now has 400 coaching wins, and counting.

Bob Bernarducci watches intently as his Panthers wrestle against Putnam Valley last Wednesday afternoon.

## Exami Blast

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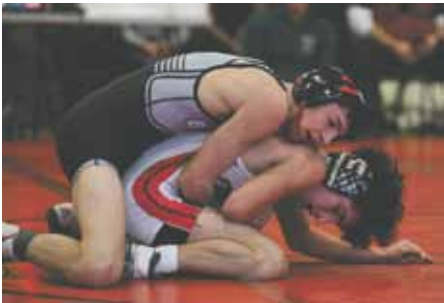
*The WHITE PLAINS*

**Examiner**





Fox Lane’s Quincy Downes won the county title at 170 pounds on Sunday, helping the Foxes to the team championship.



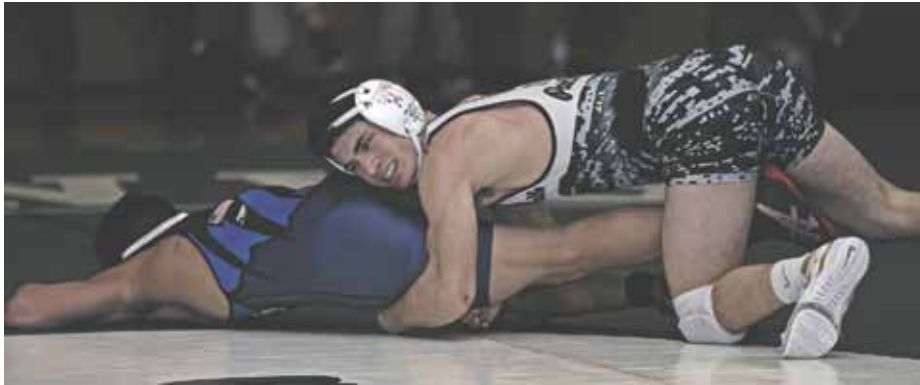
ROB DIANTONIO PHOTO  
Byram Hills’ John Fortugno defeated Fox Lane’s John Stamatelos in the semifinals on his way to the 106-pound title at the Westchester County Championships on Sunday.



ROB DIANTONIO PHOTO  
Alex Behar of Byram Hills squares off with Hen Hud’s Michael Tosi in the semifinals. Behar won the 182-pound title.



Pleasantville’s Christian Perlleshi won the title at 99 pounds in Sunday’s Westchester County Championships.



Pleasantville standout Len Balducci earned the title at 120 pounds at the county championship this past weekend at Lincoln High School in Yonkers.



Greeley guard Jesse Harris dribbles past midcourt in Friday’s win home win over Nanuet. She had a team-high 15 points.



Greeley sophomore Kaylin Genda tries to work her way under the basket in the first half of Friday night’s game vs. Nanuet.



Kat Genda drives the left baseline during Horace Greeley’s 49-44 come-from-behind win over Nanuet.



Horace Greeley’s Emma Rose gets set to pass the ball at the top of the key in the Quakers’ home win on Friday evening.



The Quakers’ Julia Herzner dribbles toward the right baseline in the 49-44 victory over visiting Nanuet.

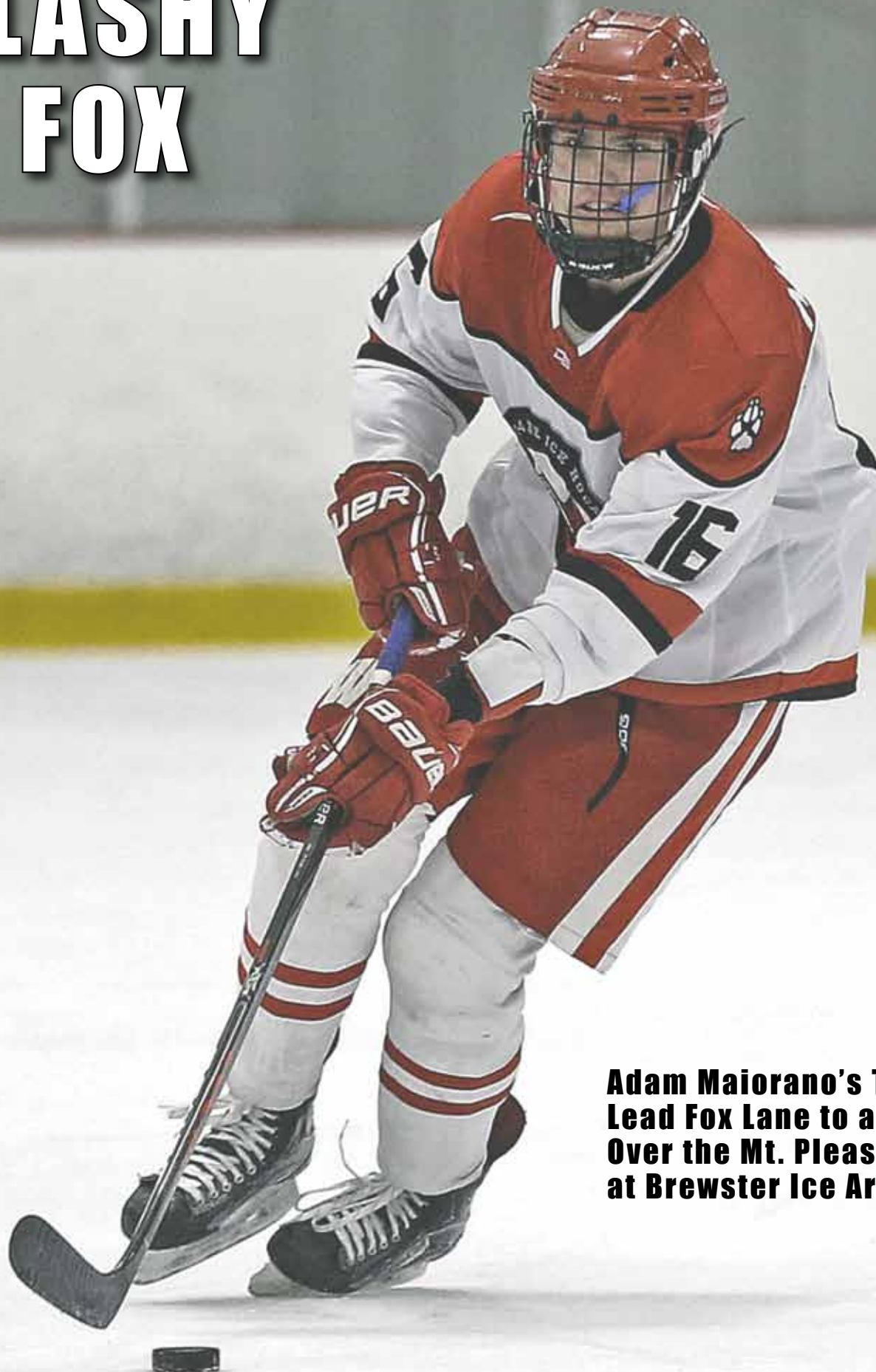


The Quakers’ Helen Matthews sets her sights on the basket as she drives through the lane vs. visiting Nanuet.

SPORTS SCENE

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS

## FLASHY FOX



**Adam Maiorano's Two Goals  
Lead Fox Lane to a 4-1 Victory  
Over the Mt. Pleasant IceCats  
at Brewster Ice Arena Sunday**