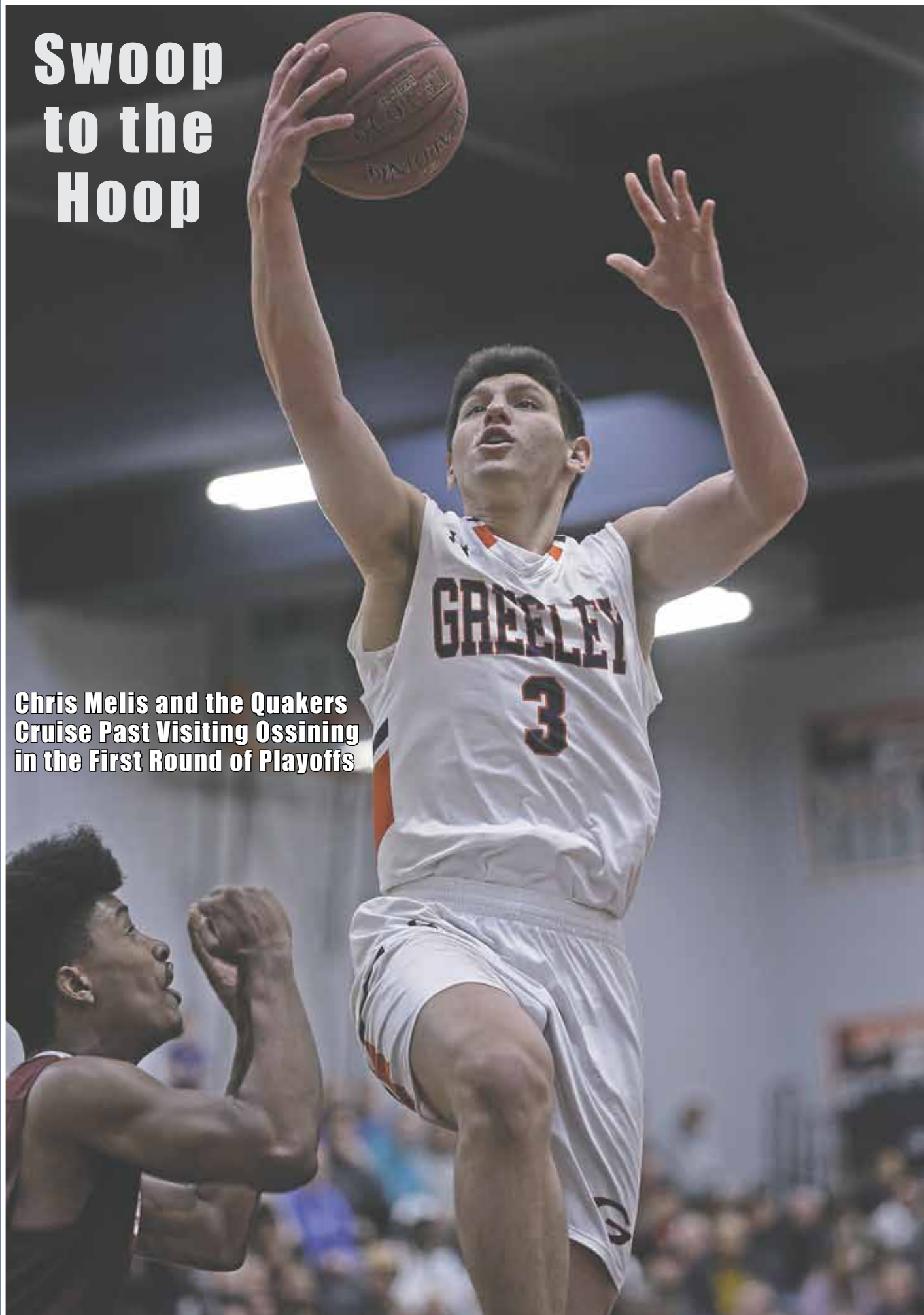


Swoop to the Hoop

**Chris Melis and the Quakers
Cruise Past Visiting Ossining
in the First Round of Playoffs**



Falkenberg Leads Westlake Past the Bulldogs in Opening Round

By Rob DiAntonio

It's been four decades since Westlake's boys' basketball team reached the Section 1 semifinals at the Westchester County Center.

Now, the Wildcats are one step away.

Behind 22 points from junior Carter Falkenberg, fifth-seeded Westlake defeated No. 12 Irvington 53-51 in the Class B opening round last Thursday at home. Falkenberg, a crafty guard, scored 20 of his points in the second half.

"I don't want to go home, I want to get to the County Center," said Falkenberg, whose Wildcats last made it to the fabled arena in White Plains in 1978. "We haven't been there in a really long time here. I'm determined to go on a run."

Westlake coach Chad Charney said they expected Irvington to have their 6-foot-5 forward, James Rhodes, cover Falkenberg. Rhodes didn't guard him in their regular-season meeting, a 51-50 Westlake win on Jan. 16. It took the junior star a half to adjust, but in the second half he wouldn't be denied.

"He's all-section for a reason and I think he's an all-state player as a junior," Charney said. "With the big guy Rhodes on him, that's a match-up he hasn't seen all year. He's long, fast and athletic, and going to play college basketball somewhere. It took him a while to get adjusted. Getting [Rhodes] in foul trouble was big. He picked up three fouls and then he kind of had to give Carter a step. When Carter gets going, he's like a silent assassin, which is what the guys tell me all the time. He just plays hard and gets it done."

The Wildcats went up 16-10 early in the second quarter, but they only scored three points in that quarter and trailed 24-16 at the



Westlake junior guard Evan O'Brien shoots a 3-pointer from the right corner vs. visiting Irvington.

break.

But the Wildcats came out of halftime strong with Falkenberg scoring on the fast break, followed by a put-back by big man Greg Cafaro to trim the deficit to four points. Cafaro then took consecutive charges to swing the momentum even further.

"He has over 50 charges on the season, which is ridiculous," Charney said. "He's the big guy in the middle and a football player and he likes contact. It's a big momentum swing when you take those charges."

Brendan Di Liberti soon scored on a feed from senior Mike Mancuso. The Wildcats then forced a 10-second violation with their press, which gave the Bulldogs fits in the quarter. Westlake capitalized when Di Liberti found a cutting Mancuso to make it a two-point game.

"Playing as a team was really important for us," Falkenberg said. "When we pressed them, they got really flustered. We were in the same position last time we played them, down a few points at half. We knew if we upped the intensity a little bit that we could pull out a win."

Falkenberg drove to the hoop and finished and then made two free throws to give the Wildcats a 28-26 lead with 2:21 left in the third quarter.

The Bulldogs, however, fired back with a 7-0 run to take a 33-28 lead with under a minute left in the third. Senior Matt Martin made two free throws and Carter finished at the rim with 13 seconds left to send Westlake into the fourth quarter trailing 33-



Westlake's Carter Falkenberg found some creative ways to score 20 of his 22 points in the second half, leading the Wildcats to a 53-51 first-round playoff win over Irvington.

32.

The teams traded the lead five times in just over a two-minute span to start the fourth quarter. Martin finished on an up-and-under to give the Wildcats a 38-37 lead. Falkenberg then notched a steal and fired a bounce pass ahead to Mancuso, whose basket gave the Wildcats a three-point lead.

"We just wanted to attack them," Charney said. "We didn't think they could play us man-to-man outside, so we spread it all out in the second half."

Cafaro grabbed a loose ball and hit Mancuso for a bucket to make it 42-37 with 4:40 left.



Westlake's Matt Martin gets set to put up an off-balance shot as he's surrounded by a pair of Irvington defenders in last Thursday's Class B playoff game.



Falkenberg fired a left-wing 3-pointer, which hit nothing but net to stretch the lead to eight points just 30 seconds later.

Irvington didn't go away easily as the Bulldogs' 6-0 run cut the Wildcats' lead to just two points with 2:44 remaining. But Westlake made its free throws down the stretch. Falkenberg made his next four and Martin made two to extend the lead to 51-43 with 1:15 left.

Irvington hit a 3-point shot from the wing with 31 seconds left to get the deficit down to 52-49. The Bulldogs then made a steal but took an ill-advised shot which was grabbed by Di Liberti. He was fouled and made one of two from the line with 14.6 on the clock to close out the win.

Martin tallied 12 points, while Mancuso added nine points. Joe Ragusa chipped in with five points.

The Wildcats were scheduled to host No. 13 Pleasantville, a local rival they had defeated twice during the regular season, in the quarterfinals on Feb. 24.



Westlake players had plenty to celebrate after defeating the Irvington Bulldogs in the opening round of the Class B playoffs last Thursday.



The Wildcats' Joe Ragusa fires a contested 3-point shot from the wing.

ROB DIANTONIO PHOTOS

Bobcats Defeat Peekskill to Advance in the Class A Playoffs

By Andy Jacobs

The Byram Hills boys' basketball team took a big step on Friday toward another trip to the Westchester County Center, defeating visiting Peekskill 69-58 in the opening round of the Section 1, Class A playoffs.

Jon Trongone finished with a game-high 28 points, while Nic Picca came off the bench to add 15 points and 10 rebounds, nearly all of them on the offensive boards, as the second-seeded Bobcats advanced to this Wednesday's quarterfinals against seventh-seeded Pearl River.

Byram Hills, 17-3 in the regular season and winner of its final 10 games, never trailed all evening and opened up a 16-point lead at halftime. But much to the chagrin of head coach Ted Repa, the 17th-seeded Red Devils managed to stay close enough in the second half that the fourth quarter brought a bit more drama than anticipated.

"I was a little disappointed," said Repa. "Most games this year, we've put teams away when we've had leads like we had. So credit to Peekskill, but I think there's room for improvement and we definitely need to improve."

Trongone scored 14 of his points in the opening quarter when the Bobcats were building a 22-10 cushion over the Red Devils. A jump shot by Matteo Sinon just over a minute into the game put the Bobcats on the scoreboard first and Peekskill, a .500 team during the regular season, never caught up.

Late in the quarter, Trongone exploded for 12 points in a dazzling two-minute-and-40-second stretch that left Peekskill trailing by double digits. Though he only added two points in the second quarter, it hardly mattered as Mike Parrotta, who wound up with 12 points and 12 rebounds, and Picca provided the Bobcats with offense.

With just over two minutes left in the half, Picca came flying in from the baseline to grab an offensive rebound and score on a put-back while getting fouled. He added the free throw and the Bobcats' lead grew



Jon Trongone of Byram Hills shoots the ball in a crowd during the first half of Friday's playoff game. He scored a game-high 28 points.

to 31-17. A pair of free throws by Picca with 32 seconds remaining gave Byram a 35-19 halftime cushion.

"I mean, he's a relentless burst off the bench," said Repa about Picca, a senior guard who tormented the Red Devils all game with his constant pursuit of the ball. "You know, we literally do not go down when we go to the bench. In a lot of ways, like you saw tonight, we go up. Nine offensive rebounds is just insane. He does it with anticipation and toughness. I love him."

When the Red Devils began the second half with five quick points, it was Picca who answered with a 3-pointer from the



Byram Hills guard Matteo Sinon scores an easy basket in the fourth quarter of Friday's playoff opener.



The Bobcats' Nic Picca tosses up a shot in the lane in the 69-58 playoff victory over visiting Peekskill.

right elbow and then a layup that restored the 16-point Byram Hills lead. Another Picca layup late in the third quarter gave the Bobcats a 46-31 margin before Antonio Taylor, who led Peekskill with 26 points, drove the lane for a bucket with seven seconds to go that started a 9-2 run.

Suddenly, with over five and a half minutes still on the clock, the Bobcats' once-16-point-lead had been trimmed in half. The Red Devils were even closer, at 54-47, when Taylor drained a jumper from the top of the key with 4:13 remaining. But moments later, the Bobcats' Benji Hammond came through with perhaps the biggest basket of the game, a 3-pointer from the left corner, giving Byram a double-digit lead once again.

"Yeah, that kind of gave us the distance we needed," Repa said. "We had a lot of



Sam Goldman rises over Peekskill's Jayson Tinsley for a layup in Friday's Class A playoff win by host Byram Hills.



Byram Hills forward Mike Parrotta fires a 3-point shot from the left corner against the Peekskill Red Devils.

open looks all day and we weren't really hitting too many of them. So we needed that one."

Peekskill was still within 61-53 with two minutes left before Parrotta scored inside after grabbing an alley-oop pass. He was fouled on the play and added the free throw. The final daggers came when Trongone connected on a 3-point shot from the right corner and then made a steal at midcourt and fed Sinon for an easy layup that built the lead back up to 16 points with a minute to go.

Now the Bobcats are just a win away from making the trip to the County Center that eluded last year's more talented team.

"100 percent," said Repa without hesitation when asked if last season's disappointment is fueling the Bobcats now. "Last year's team, we had three guys playing in college. I'm not sure we have that this year. But we have kids that really are hungry. When you're hungry, you're willing to do the extra. That's our only way to compete. We've got one more to get to the County Center and I think that would be a wonderful achievement."



Byram Hills coach Ted Repa calls out a play in the Bobcats' Class A playoff win over Peekskill.



Byram Hills' Benji Hammond starts a drive to the basket in the Bobcats' home playoff game vs. Peekskill.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



Briarcliff center Jordan Smith eyes the basket as Westlake’s Julie Lyden defends in Thursday’s playoff opener won by the host Bears.



Briarcliff freshman Cat Carrafiello protects the ball after grabbing a rebound as Westlake’s Nicole Karaqi tries to prevent her from moving up the court in last week’s Class B playoff game.



Westlake’s ToniAnn Mastracchio dribbles the ball up the court in the fourth quarter of the Wildcats’ season-finale at Briarcliff.



Westlake freshman forward Allasandra Castellone tries to keep possession of the ball as she falls to the floor while being pressured by Briarcliff’s Kaitlyn Ryan.



Briarcliff senior Julia Barbalato lines up a 3-pointer in the second half of the Bears’ 51-43 playoff win over visiting Westlake.



Caroline Barbalato of Briarcliff tries to dribble past Westlake’s ToniAnn Mastracchio in a matchup of freshmen during Thursday’s Class B playoff opener.



Reilly Byrne of Pleasantville drives down the lane in the Panthers’ 65-38 Class B playoff win over the visiting North Salem Tigers.



Pleasantville guard Tina Matica pushes the ball across midcourt in the Panther’s playoff win over North Salem last Thursday afternoon.



Nicole Karaqi of Westlake surveys the court as she handles the ball near midcourt in last Thursday’s playoff game.



Pleasantville’s Mary Grace O’Neill takes the ball to the basket in Thursday’s playoff win over North Salem.



Pleasantville sophomore Abby McAllister gets set to fire a 3-point shot from the top of the key in last Thursday’s opening-round playoff win.



Nick Townsend pushes the ball up the court in Saturday's playoff opener. He only played the first half as Greeley breezed to a victory.



The Quakers' Sean Dunleavy drives to the basket in the first half of Saturday afternoon's Class AA playoff win over visiting Ossining.



Greeley senior forward Will Laforteza gets Ossining's Jalen Blalock to leave his feet along the left baseline during the first half of Saturday's opening-round playoff game.



Greeley senior Chris Melis dunks the ball in the second half of the Quakers' playoff win over Ossining.

focus on

BASKETBALL

Sectional Playoffs

Round One



Matt Crowe puts up a shot in the second half of Greeley's playoff victory over Ossining.



The Quakers' Connor Melis sails through the lane for a basket in the 80-64 playoff win over the visiting Ossining Pride.



Horace Greeley head coach Matt Simone directs his team in the opening round of the Class AA sectional playoffs.



Greeley guard Christoph Sauerborn sends a 3-point shot from the top of the key toward the basket in the Quakers' 80-64 playoff rout of Ossining.

Corelli's Scoring Outburst Lifts the Bobcats Past John Jay

By Andy Jacobs

With already-proven shooting skill and now-emerging ability off the dribble, it seemed just a matter of time before Byram Hills sophomore guard Beth Corelli would put all her talent on display out on the basketball floor.

The time finally arrived on Friday night, when the Bobcats hosted the John Jay Indians in the opening round of the Section 1, Class A playoffs. Drilling one line-drive jumper after another, Corelli erupted for 17 first-half points and finished with a team-high 25 as fifth-seeded Byram Hills ousted the 12th-seeded Indians 65-60.

"Yeah, Beth came alive tonight and we needed that," said Bobcats head coach Tara Ryan after watching the scoring outburst from Corelli. "She literally carried us for the first couple of quarters. We've been waiting for a breakout game. This was a great offensive performance from her tonight."

Corelli made seven shots from the field in the opening half, including a pair of 3-pointers, but the Bobcats still found themselves trailing 34-32 at intermission. When she went scoreless in the third



Byram Hills sophomore Beth Corelli pushes the ball up the floor in the first half of Friday night's playoff win over visiting John Jay of Cross River.

quarter, Byram Hills got a big lift from backcourt mate Jen Mui, who provided 10 of her 15 points in the period, helping the Bobcats grab a 46-43 edge.

John Jay held its final lead of the evening when a bucket by star senior Kendall Miller put the Indians in front by a point with just 3:22 left on the clock. But the Bobcats closed the contest on an 8-2 run and will be the ones moving on to play at Harrison in the quarterfinals on Wednesday.

"We didn't walk into this game lightly at all," said Ryan, aware that John Jay was now back at full health and had ended the regular season on a four-game winning streak. "We knew we had a 50-50 shot. We earned the five seed, so we were happy that we had the home game against them."

The Bobcats, 15-5 in the regular season, jumped out to a 5-2 lead less than two minutes after the opening jump following a 3-pointer from Corelli and a basket by Stefana Latella. But the Indians, sparked by Miller, the lanky senior who finished with 28 points, then went on a 10-2 run and never trailed again until a bucket by Corelli gave the Bobcats a 30-29 lead with just under a minute left in the half.

A buzzer-beating layup by Kelly Nolan put John Jay ahead by two points at halftime, then a Miller basket 40 seconds into the second half left Byram behind 36-32. Mui, with just three points at the half, then went on a personal 8-0 run that included an old-fashioned 3-point play and a trey from the right elbow. With two and a half minutes left in the quarter, the versatile Miller connected on an 18-foot jumper that gave John Jay a 43-41 edge.

"She was definitely unique in the sense that she's



Byram Hills sophomore Beth Corelli lines up a free throw in Friday night's playoff game. She finished with a team-high 25 points.

just so athletic," said Ryan about the many matchup problems posed by Miller all night. "When she catches the ball, it's more like she has guard skills but happens to be 6-2. She's a very, very good player."

Still, in the final 90 seconds of the third quarter, the Bobcats got a conventional 3-point play from eighth-grader Grace Corelli and a put-back basket by Mui and began the final period with a 46-43 advantage. Latella, who scored six of her 10 points in the fourth quarter, had consecutive layups that gave Byram a 50-47 lead with 6:30 to go.

But a 6-0 John Jay run left the Bobcats trailing 56-53 with just 4:34 remaining in the game. That's when Beth Corelli, scoreless until then in the second half, once again made a big impact on the contest. She drilled a 17-footer from the right baseline, then followed it up by going one on one before draining a pullup jumper from the top of the key.

Miller's final basket of the night gave John Jay the lead again, 58-57, before Corelli answered once more,



Olivia Barry of Byram Hills battles for rebound position with Shannon Nolan of the John Jay Indians in the first half of Friday's opening-round playoff game.



The Bobcats' Olivia Picca launches a 3-pointer out of the left corner in the fourth quarter of Friday's playoff win.

connecting on another baseline jumper 15 seconds later that gave the Bobcats the lead for good. With 2:40 to go, Latella scored on a key put-back and Byram iced the game with a pair of free throws by Corelli with 1:37 left and Mui just over a minute later.

The Indians' last gasp came with 10 seconds remaining as Mui blocked a 3-point try by Nolan in the right corner. Byram finished the game with its largest lead all evening.

"I think that's what it's gonna be like in the rest of the games," said Ryan, whose Bobcats are now just one victory away from a berth at the Westchester County Center. "There's nothing that's gonna be easy and it's really just which team executes better that day. Today that was us, and we're very fortunate to be moving on to play a league rival who we've gone 1-1 with. So we're excited to play Harrison."



Sophia Villani of Byram Hills leads a fast break with John Jay's Shannon Nolan (left) and Sarah Pieratti in pursuit during Friday night's Class A opening-round playoff game.



Byram Hills guard Jen Mui drives past John Jay's Sarah Pieratti in the second half of the 65-60 playoff win by the host Bobcats.



Byram Hills senior forward Stefana Latella is challenged by John Jay's Kendall Miller as she tries to score inside during the Class A playoff game.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS

Shorthanded Fox Lane Hockey Team Ousted From the Playoffs

By Andy Jacobs

Against all odds on Saturday night, the Fox Lane hockey team tried to earn a playoff victory and keep its season alive.

But playing on the road without their head coach on hand and only nine skaters available proved to be too many obstacles for the Foxes. A goal by Ethan Pakola of the Rivertown Legends with 30 seconds remaining in regulation time broke a 4-4 deadlock and lifted the hosts to a 6-4 victory over Fox Lane in the opening round of the Section 1, Division 1 playoffs at the Westchester Skating Academy.

Pakola's game-deciding goal was followed by an empty-netter from Anthony Cappello just 15 seconds later, assuring that the fifth-seeded Legends would be moving on to the quarterfinals while the 12th-seeded Foxes would have their postseason hopes come to an end.

"Big pressure situation, but it was a lot of fun," said Fox Lane assistant coach Tom McGinn after taking the reins for the most important game of the season in the absence of Dan Mulvey. "I had a good time being there behind the bench calling the shots. With the short bench, we didn't have as many options for what I was gonna be able to do anyway."

Lacking enough skaters to run even two lines, McGinn and the Foxes faced a tall order against a Rivertown team comprised of players from five different schools and that had already defeated them twice during the regular season. But just over five minutes after the opening faceoff, standout senior Adam Maiorano got Fox Lane on the scoreboard first when he picked up the puck at center ice, moved to his left and sent a lefty wrist shot past Legend goalie Elle Schanzer.

The early Fox Lane lead lasted for just over a minute. Rivertown tied the score with 8:27 remaining in the opening period as Jacob Miller tallied on a power play with a straight-away slap shot from the point. Nearly three minutes later, Cappello put the Legends ahead with the first of his two goals.

The Foxes, who finished the 2019-20 season with a 10-11 record, managed to tie the score at 2-2 when sophomore Michael



Fox Lane's Adam Maiorano manages to maintain possession of the puck even while spilling onto the ice in the third period of Saturday night's playoff game against the Rivertown Legends.

Gallary skated up the left wing and blasted a shot past Schanzer with 2:33 left in the first period. But 39 seconds later, Rivertown's Daniel Reimer put a lefty slap shot past the Foxes' Max Rauch that gave the Legends a one-goal edge heading to the second period.

Rivertown maintained its advantage until Fox Lane freshman Mikey Toole, assisted by Aaron Easton, converted in front with 2:49 to go in the second period. Just 65 seconds later, Maiorano provided his second goal of the evening, and the last of his Fox Lane career, when he skated in from the right wing, left a defender behind and then beat Schanzer.

But the Foxes' second lead of the game lasted even less time than the first because Rivertown's Braydon Kot collected a rebound right of the cage and buried the puck for a shorthanded goal that sent the teams to the locker room tied at 4-4 with 15 minutes remaining.

The last time the teams had met, a month ago, Rivertown needed overtime



The Foxes Michael Gallary battles for possession of the puck with Rivertown's Anthony Cappello during the first round of Section 1's Division 1 hockey playoffs.

before prevailing 7-6. For a good portion of Saturday's third period, it seemed the teams were destined for another sudden-death finish.

"It went back and forth for a few goals," said McGinn about that regular-season encounter, though he could just as well have been talking about what he had just witnessed in the playoffs. "It ended up being a bounce off a player in overtime and they took the game from us. This was regulation, but at the same time you were playing that third period as if you were in overtime waiting for that next goal to win the game. And that's what happened."

In the third period, Toole was thwarted on a breakaway nearly two minutes in, and then Maiorano was stopped in front on another good scoring opportunity with 11:05 left in the game. The Foxes, with most of their players on fumes by now, stayed even as the game entered the final moments of regulation time.



With his team's goalie pulled in the final minute Saturday night for an extra skater, Fox Lane senior Stephen Mains gets set to pass the puck up the ice.

"It was really difficult," said McGinn. "Toward the end of the game, we were holding onto that timeout as long as we possibly could. 4-4 game, didn't necessarily want to use it. But we were getting real tired. We were running out of steam. We needed a little bit of a breather."

Unfortunately for the Foxes, just when it seemed inevitable the game would be decided in overtime, Rivertown's Miller sent a cross-ice pass from behind the cage to the waiting Pakola, whose shot from right of the goal somehow eluded the diving Maiorano and whipped past the screened Rauch, who got his glove up a second too late.

With only 30 seconds left on the clock, the Foxes, who wound up getting outshot by a 32-16 margin, had no choice but to pull their goalie. Cappello's empty netter 15 seconds later sealed the outcome and ended a Fox Lane season highlighted by a pair of three-game winning streaks.

"Even though the outcome, no matter what I say, is gonna sting, I'm proud of this group," said McGinn, repeating the words he had just told his dejected team. "They worked really hard and they did a nice job this season. In the 15 years that I've been teaching here, this has been my favorite year being in the school district and it really has to do with what's going on here with this group of kids in this locker room."



Fox Lane assistant coach Tom McGinn watches his depleted team battle in Saturday night's playoff game at Westchester Skating Academy.



Fox Lane freshman Mikey Toole races up the right wing with the puck in the third period of Saturday's playoff game at the Westchester Skating Academy.



It was the end of the road for Henry Wallace and his Fox Lane teammates with their 6-4 playoff loss to the Rivertown Legends.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



BRANDON JACOBS

The junior guard, currently leading the NE10 with eight assists a game, drives past AIC's Zekiah Owens during Saturday's game won by the visiting Yellow Jackets.

PAGE ONE-TWO PUNCH



PEYTON WEJNERT

The Setters' senior forward shoots the ball under pressure from Jordan Vidal of the AIC Yellow Jackets in Saturday's game.