

GREELEY
GLORY



**Christoph Sauerborn and the Quakers
Defeat Perennial Power Mount Vernon
in the Section One Championship Game**

Quakers End a Long Title Drought by Defeating Mt. Vernon

By Andy Jacobs

A 17-point fourth-quarter lead had been reduced to only eight in what seemed like the blink of an eye and suddenly the Horace Greeley Quakers needed someone to step up and stop the Mt. Vernon surge in Sunday afternoon's Section 1, Class AA championship game.

Out of the left corner, just beyond the 3-point arc, senior guard Christoph Sauerborn answered the call. With a flick of his left wrist, he sent another one of his high-arching jump shots swishing through the basket.

Sauerborn's 3-pointer, his fifth of the day, with 3:42 on the clock all but ended the Knights' fourth-quarter comeback bid. Moments later, the Quakers' lead was back up to 15 points and then it was just a matter of time before they would be celebrating a 46-35 victory over the perennial power by hoisting the Gold Ball at midcourt inside the Westchester County Center.

"It meant the world to me, it was surreal," said Sauerborn about the feeling he had as the final seconds ticked off the clock and the Quakers ended their 40-year title drought. "I mean, all the hard work that we put in throughout the year, throughout past years, ever since I was a kid and first picked up a basketball. And it all paid off today."

Sauerborn finished with a game-high 20 points, while sophomore star Nick Townsend added 17 to go along with 13 rebounds and the tourney MVP award, as the Quakers earned a berth in the state tournament's opening round on Tuesday afternoon against Section 9 champ Newburgh Free Academy at SUNY New Paltz.

"It's just an unreal feeling," said Quakers head coach Matt Simone as his giddy players celebrated the school's first basketball title since 1980. "It's everything we've worked



Senior guard Sean Dunleavy holds the Gold Ball after Greeley captured the Class AA championship.

for since Day One, everything that these guys have wanted. They set their goals from Day One and here we are achieving it. So it's surreal and I'm extremely proud of how these guys played today."

The second-seeded Quakers, now riding an 18-game winning streak, kept the fourth-seeded Knights off the scoreboard for nearly the first five minutes. But back-to-back 3-pointers from the left elbow by Troy Hupstead and Nazir Davis gave Mt. Vernon its only lead of the day, 6-5, with a minute remaining in the opening quarter.

Greeley jumped ahead for good, though, when Chris Melis converted a fast-break layup on a pass from his younger brother with seven seconds left in the period. The Knights were still within 11-10 after a



Greeley's Nick Townsend shoots the ball in the Class AA championship game.

Hupstead basket with 1:40 remaining in the half before Sauerborn erupted for six points in 15 seconds with a 3-ball from the left wing and then a conventional 3-point play on a runner from the right baseline.

The first half ended with Townsend, who scored 11 of his points in the opening two quarters, tossing in a shot from right of the lane that increased the Greeley advantage to 19-10.

"Mt. Vernon's a great team, so we knew we'd have to have a big defensive focus," said Townsend. "We executed well. Everyone played great defense and we were able to slow 'em down, for at least three quarters. So it was big."



The Quakers' Christoph Sauerborn fires a jump shot from the right corner in Sunday's title game at the County Center.

"The big goal for us was to hold them to as few points as possible," added Sauerborn, "and I think we did a great job with that."

A couple of minutes into the second half, Sauerborn connected on a 3-pointer from the left corner that started a 6-0 Greeley spurt and opened up a 13-point cushion. Another Sauerborn trey from the left corner, followed soon by his fast-break layup off a long outlet pass from Townsend gave the Quakers a 30-15 lead. Townsend's second buzzer-beating basket, this time on a put-back, allowed Greeley to take a 32-17 lead into the fourth quarter.

Yet another left-corner 3-pointer from the sharp-shooting Sauerborn 45 seconds into the final period provided the Quakers with their largest lead of the afternoon, 35-18. But the Knights, appearing in the sectional final for the 22nd consecutive time, finally rose to their Greeley challenge with an 11-2 run highlighted by a pair of 3-point shots from Irvin Patrick.

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Chris Melis rises for a shot in the lane in Greeley's 46-35 win over Mt. Vernon on Sunday afternoon.



Horace Greeley players celebrate after winning the Section One championship on Sunday by defeating Mt. Vernon at the Westchester County Center.



Horace Greeley head coach Matt Simone directs the Quakers during the second half of Sunday's Class AA championship game.

Quakers End a Long Title Drought by Defeating Mt. Vernon

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With just over four minutes left in the game, the Quakers' lead had been whittled down to 37-29 and it no longer seemed certain they would be the ones receiving the Gold Ball. But Sauerborn, who had endured a difficult weekend shooting the ball back in late December when the Quakers competed at the County Center in the Slam Dunk Tournament, was about to deliver the final dagger for Mt. Vernon.

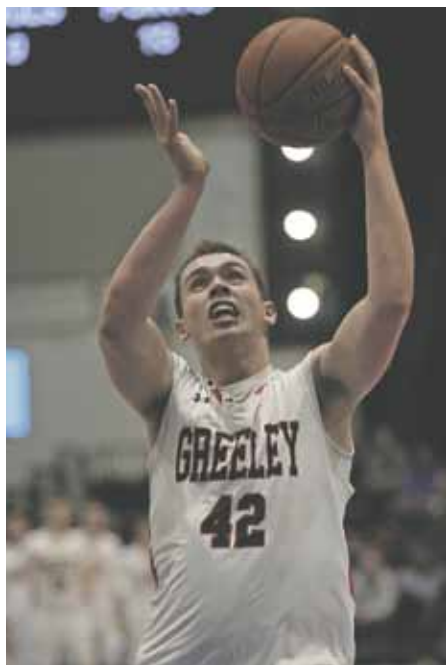
His clutch 3-pointer restored the Quakers' double-digit lead and quelled the Knights' late comeback bid. Townsend followed with a pair of free throws and then Melis added a layup, again assisted by his brother, Connor. Just as quickly as it had disappeared, Greeley's big lead had been restored.

"Man, he really turned it on," said Townsend after watching Sauerborn's second-half shooting display. "We have so much confidence in him. He's a terrific shooter. We knew if we kept getting him the ball, he would start hitting them. He came up big for us."

"All he needs is that one shot," said Simone. "You know, he's a shooter, he's a scorer. After that first shot went in, once he saw that first three, or whatever he had, go through the net, I knew from then on he would have a great game."

The Quakers had advanced to the championship game with a 71-56 victory over New Rochelle on Friday evening. Townsend finished with a game-high 26 points, while Chris Melis added 17 and Sean Dunleavy 12 in a game that had eight lead changes in the first quarter and was tied at 31-apiece at halftime.

Melis and Sauerborn were both limited by serious foul trouble, and Townsend took a



Nick Townsend scores inside during the Quakers' semifinal win over New Rochelle on Friday night.

hard spill under the basket midway through the second quarter with the Quakers trailing by four points. But Greeley made 14 of its 16 foul shots in the fourth quarter to gain revenge on the Huguenots, who had beaten the Townsend- and Melis-less Quakers at the Slam Dunk Tourney.

"A true team win tonight," said Simone after the victory over the Huguenots. "The guys wanted it. When we saw we would be matched up against New Rochelle tonight, the guys were excited. Even though we weren't at full strength when we played



Christoph Sauerborn of Greeley pushes the ball up the court at the Westchester County Center.

them here at the Slam Dunk Tournament, they beat us. So our whole team wanted to avenge that loss."

With their two huge wins at the County Center in the Section 1 playoffs, now the Quakers' quest turns to even bigger things.

"Yeah, we've got a really tough Newburgh team on Tuesday," said Simone. "So we'll take tomorrow to prep for that and hope to keep this run going."

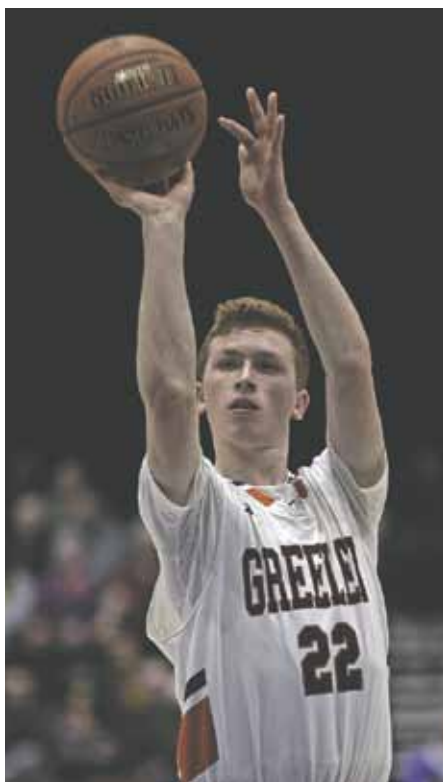
"State title," added Sauerborn. "We want the state title. We're not done yet."



Greeley senior Chris Melis takes the ball to the basket in Friday's 71-56 semifinal victory over New Rochelle.



Sean Dunleavy sails to the basket in Horace Greeley's semifinal playoff win over the New Rochelle Huguenots on Friday night.



Greeley senior Will Laforteza shoots the ball from the foul line at the County Center.



The Quakers' Connor Melis sends up a runner near the foul line in the playoff win over New Rochelle.

Wildcats' Comeback Bid Falls Short in Semifinals

By Rob DiAntonio

It was the first time any of Westlake's players stepped on the Westchester County Center floor. For most, in their first time competing at the fabled arena in White Plains, there are some jitters. But for a battle-tested and experienced Wildcat team, the venue and moment didn't overwhelm them.

Fifth-seeded Westlake rallied from a 14-point deficit with less than three minutes to play, but was unable to complete the comeback in a 57-52 defeat to top-seeded Hastings in the Section 1 Class B semifinals last Wednesday afternoon.

"It was a tough outcome, but I think we showed that we can play with the big boys," Westlake coach Chad Charney said. "This program's on the rise."

The Wildcats had two opportunities to tie the game in the final 10 seconds. Trailing 54-52, Hamad Azhar was fouled with 7.5 seconds to go, but couldn't convert the free throws. Hastings made one of two on the other end to stretch its lead to three points. On the ensuing inbounds pass, the Wildcats turned the ball over. The Yellow Jackets then made two free throws to seal the victory.

Hastings, which went on to defeat Valhalla in the championship game on Saturday night, held a 37-32 lead heading into the fourth quarter.

Westlake junior star Carter Falkenberg drove to his left, hung in the air and converted to start the fourth quarter. He later made two free throws to cut the deficit to 39-36 with 5:41 to go.

"We've been down seven or eight to begin the fourth quarter (in past games) and these guys don't view that as a big deficit, they just come back," Charney said. "They didn't quit. That team (Hastings), they can win a state title. We obviously got them on the ropes there at the end, but it was an unfortunate turn of events. When (Hastings' Josh) Thigpen fouled out, if we got to overtime it would be very interesting, especially with all the momentum we were carrying in."

Hastings answered with a bucket to stretch the lead back to five points. The Yellow Jackets then forced a turnover and converted a three-point play, on what Charney thought was a continuation, which is a rule that doesn't apply in high school basketball. That sequence gave the Yellow Jackets a 44-36 lead with just over five minutes to play.



ROB DIANTONIO PHOTOS

Westlake coach Chad Charney points the way in the second half of the Wildcats' semifinal contest at the Westchester County Center.



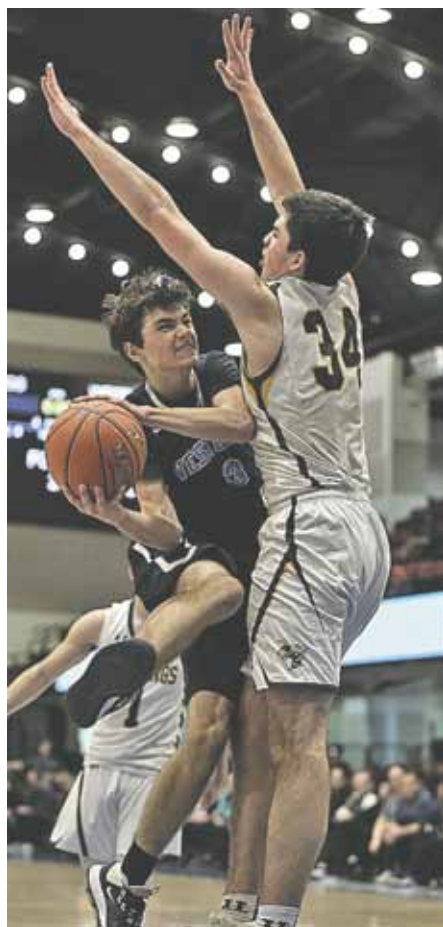
Westlake's Hamad Azhar shoots a free throw late in the fourth quarter against Hastings.

"I thought Carter fouled him at the three-point line," Charney said. "He took another dribble and you don't get a continuation in high school basketball. That should have been on the floor. I don't know if we were in the bonus yet, I don't think we were. But that and-one was big and he made the free throws to go up eight instead of a five-point game. Maybe it's sideline out of bounds or whatever. It was just a tough call."

Another three-point play had the Yellow Jackets up 49-37 with 3:45 remaining. They added a basket to get the lead to 14, but senior Matt Martin answered with a three from the right wing with 2:22 on the clock. A Falkenberg drive and finish was followed by a Martin three-point play on a fast break to make it 51-45 with just over



The Wildcats' Joe Ragusa nails a three in the third quarter as his teammates celebrate.



The Wildcats' Carter Falkenberg gets off an off-balance shot in the paint in last Wednesday's semifinal.

a minute left.

Hastings, which missed 13 foul shots overall, missed two free throws but then made a pair to get the lead back to eight points. Martin then hit another three, this time from the left wing, cutting the deficit to 53-48 with 32 seconds left. Falkenberg knocked down two free throws to make it a three-point game with 24 ticks to go. Hastings then went one of two at the



Westlake's Matt Martin shoots over Hastings' Liam Hopwood in the Class B semifinals at the County Center.

line, but Azhar answered with two free throws to get the Wildcats within 54-52 with 9.6 seconds left. The Yellow Jackets missed both on the other end and Azhar was immediately fouled. But both his free throws rolled off the rim, and Westlake was unable to complete the comeback.

Falkenberg finished with a game-high 26 points and grabbed six rebounds. Martin tallied 11 points.

"Carter's an all-section player and there were only eight all-section players in Conference 3," Charney said. "It's a big accomplishment for him. They were double- and triple-teaming him and he was still scoring. We knew going in that somebody else has to score and we have to make our free throws. We have to hit a couple threes to kind of make them sweat a little bit. Some of the seniors were able to really just step up big time. Joe Ragusa's playing with one arm. He separated his shoulder the other day and he played almost the whole game just willing it. It was just a special group of seniors that really played hard."

It was a season to remember for Westlake, which reached 16 wins for the first time since 1991 and made it to the County Center for the first time since 1978.

"We'll look back and obviously be really pleased with it," Charney said of their accomplishments. "But this one's always going to be a tough one to swallow. It's a special season, but people kept saying to us, 'You're here, be happy you're playing in the County Center.' But we were trying to win. We're not going to be content with just making it. Obviously, we want to win. We have a good group coming back and Carter is a junior that's coming back. The kids are ready to put in some time."

Valhalla's Title Bid is Dashed by Top-Seeded Hastings

By Andy Jacobs

Sebastian Pacheco crouched in the corner of the court, near the Valhalla Vikings' bench, with his head bowed in disappointment and tears in his eyes. Just moments earlier, he had slipped to the floor, and lost possession of the ball, during a mad dash up the right sideline in a desperate attempt to get close enough for a game-tying shot.

With the ball knocked away just out of reach as the final buzzer sounded, Pacheco never got the chance to shoot, preserving a two-point lead for top-seeded Hastings. Liam Hopwood's layup with four seconds remaining provided the winning margin as the Yellow Jackets prevailed 56-54 in a dramatic Section 1, Class B championship game Saturday night at the Westchester County Center.

"They're a great team," said Valhalla head coach Richard Clinchy about victorious Hastings afterwards. "They've been the best team in B all year and we would've been very proud if we could've beaten them. It's a cliché, but it comes down to one play. Well, they made the play and this one, here, we just didn't get."

It was Pacheco, the Vikings' outstanding senior point guard, who had provided six straight clutch points in a 50-second burst as second-seeded Valhalla somehow rallied from a 54-48 deficit after a basket by Alex Grossman with just 1:24 remaining in the game. Pacheco's old-fashioned 3-point play with 18 seconds left tied the score before the Yellow Jackets' Chris Rotiroti drove into the lane and dished to Hopwood for the decisive basket.

The Vikings were left with just 3.4



Senior forward Marco Mazza shoots the ball from the right baseline in last Wednesday's 65-54 semifinal victory over Dobbs Ferry.

seconds to navigate the length of the court and got the ball to Pacheco, who had already erupted for 12 of his team-high 18 points in the fourth quarter. He caught the ball in the backcourt and began to accelerate up the right sideline. But as he crossed the midcourt line, he tumbled head first to the floor. As he was about to regain possession of the ball, Hastings freshman Robert Kennedy slapped it away and the buzzer went off, sealing the Vikings' unfortunate fate.

"Yeah, I thought there was contact," said Clinchy about the last play of the Valhalla season. "He went down because of it. But you know I'm biased. He's my player."

For Clinchy and the Vikings, the final moments were eerily similar to last year's 58-57 loss to Blind Brook in the semifinals, also at the County Center. A one-point Valhalla lead disappeared that day with a pair of Trojan free throws with 4.3 seconds remaining.

"I'm not saying it was a bad call, it's just ironic that last year it was the same play on the other side," said Clinchy. "Well, we've never forgotten it."

For a while, it hardly seemed likely the Vikings' hopes for a Gold Ball would come down to the last couple of possessions. They stormed out of the gate, scoring the game's first 11 points. Pacheco put them on the board first, spinning his way toward the lane and tossing up a shot that rattled in 40 seconds after the opening tip.

Marco Mazza followed with a 3-point shot from the left corner, then Drew Drayton-Bey provided a basket in the lane on a feed from Marlin Wise, prompting an early timeout from Hastings. But the Vikings' run continued, with Pacheco making two free throws and then a pullup jumper 18



Valhalla senior guard Sebastian Pacheco sets up the Viking offense in the second half of Saturday night's Class B title game.

seconds later that gave Valhalla a double-digit lead with 4:20 left in the first quarter.

But then the Yellow Jackets showed why they were able to beat then-unbeaten Valhalla on the road during the regular season, answering with their own 9-0 burst. The first quarter ended with an old-fashion 3-point play by Mazza and the Vikings held a 15-10 advantage.

A minute into the second quarter, Pacheco was whistled for his second foul. Hastings began with an 8-0 spurt, taking the lead for the first time two minutes into the period on a 3-ball from Josh Thigpen, the game's high scorer with 20 points and tourney MVP. The Vikings fell behind by four points before reserve players Sean Kelly and Mahari Davis Jr. provided late 3-pointers. A fast-break layup by another reserve, James McAndrew, with 45 seconds left gave Valhalla a 28-27 halftime edge.

"I thought the second quarter was crucial," Clinchy said. "I had all sorts of guys with foul trouble. We played a defense we don't ever play. That held them at bay."

According to Clinchy, having to battle Hastings with Pacheco sitting on the bench for most of the second quarter was quite a challenge.

"It's huge when your best player is in trouble like that," he said. "He's such a valuable player in so many ways, but mostly defensively. So when he gets those fouls early, that really hurt."

The lead changed hands three times



Valhalla's Rahsean Melvin battles for rebound position with Liam Hopwood of Hastings during Saturday night's Class B championship game at the Westchester County Center.



The Vikings' Marlin Wise shoots the ball in traffic during Wednesday afternoon's semifinal win over Dobbs Ferry at the County Center.

in the first two and a half minutes of the second half. Kennedy's 3-point shot broke a 30-30 deadlock and gave the Yellow Jackets a lead they never relinquished again. The Vikings, trailing 38-33 midway through the third quarter, responded with a fast-break layup by Wise and then Francesco Falco, while sprawled on the floor, found Mazza for a layup that cut the deficit to one point.

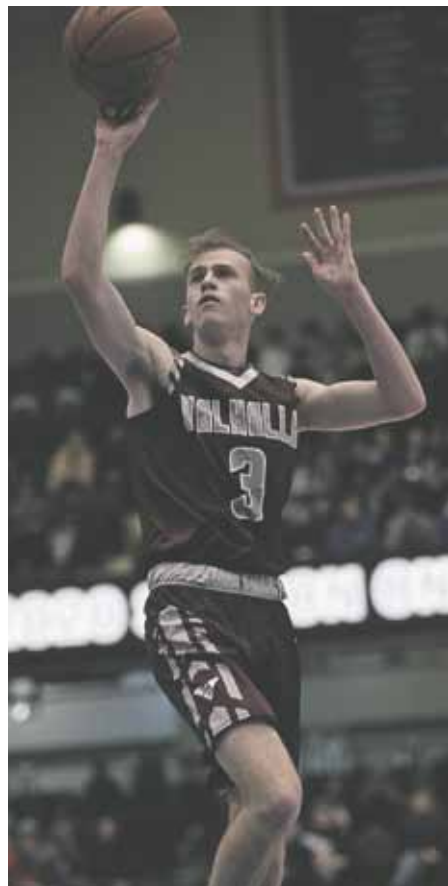
Valhalla, behind 42-39 to start the fourth quarter, closed to within 46-45 on a Kelly layup with 4:05 remaining. An 8-3 run by Hastings, capped by the Grossman layup with 1:24 on the clock, left the Vikings' title hopes seriously in peril before the late heroics from Pacheco nearly changed the outcome.

"I'll probably cry first," said Clinchy about what he would soon be telling his team in the locker room. They had capped a spectacular 19-win season by defeating Dobbs Ferry 65-54 in Wednesday afternoon's semifinal game behind 23 points from Wise and 22 from Pacheco.

"I'll tell 'em how much I'm gonna miss 'em," said Clinchy. "Talk to the juniors about next year. Mostly tell 'em just about the last two years and what they've done. 51 wins over the last three years. County Center three times, state ranking the entire year. There's a lot of things they've done that haven't been done here in years."



Valhalla's James McAndrew gets ready to throw an inbounds pass in Saturday's title game.



The Vikings' Sean Kelly tosses up a runner in the Class B title game vs. top-seeded Hastings.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS

Another Briarcliff Season Ends With a Loss to the Bulldogs

By Andy Jacobs

A season that began with high hopes and then a long winning streak ended in major disappointment for the Briarcliff girls' basketball team.

Forced to compete with best player Alana Lombardi sidelined by injury, the Bears turned out to be no match for the five-time defending sectional champion Irvington Bulldogs, who breezed to a 53-30 rout in last Tuesday night's Section 1, Class B semifinal playoff game at the Westchester County Center. A nearly 11-and-a-half-minute scoring drought in the first half all but sealed the Bears' fate.

"We got beat by a better team today and we really didn't help ourselves on the offensive end," said Bears head coach Don Hamlin shortly after Irvington had ended Briarcliff's season for a fourth straight year, this time one round short of the championship game.

The Bears grabbed their only lead of the evening just over 90 seconds after the opening tip when senior guard Kaitlyn Ryan provided an old-fashioned 3-point play that left Irvington trailing 4-1. But Ryan's basket wound up being the only one the Bears made in the first half.

They missed their next 21 shots from the field, finishing a dismal 1-for-22 over the opening two quarters. When the third quarter began, Briarcliff then missed its first three shots before Dylan Zednik finally ended the streak with a put-back. By then, though, Irvington had built a 21-point cushion.

"We just kept misfiring," said Hamlin. "I thought we were a little too frenetic offensively. I was just trying to get 'em to breathe a little bit. Wasn't very successful in doing that. I mean, they really tried and they were pumped up to play. It was a big deal. We just didn't play very well on that end."

The top-seeded Bears threw the ball away on their first two possessions of the night and piled up nine turnovers in the opening quarter. Following the 3-point play from



Briarcliff freshman Caroline Barbalato drives past Irvington's Abby Conklin in the first half of the Section 1, Class B semifinal game at the Westchester County Center.

Ryan, fourth-seeded Irvington proceeded to score the game's next 22 points and opened up a commanding 23-4 advantage with 3:22 left in the half.

Briarcliff's lengthy scoring drought finally ended when Zednik made a pair of free throws with 2:57 remaining in the second quarter. Freshman Cat Carrafiello, who led the Bears with a mere seven points, added two more foul shots with 36.4 to go, but Briarcliff trailed 25-8 at intermission even with Irvington star center Grace Thybulle spending most of the half on the bench after picking up two quick fouls.

"I just told them to come out and compete," said Hamlin about the halftime message to his overwhelmed and embarrassed team. "They came out and competed. It's hard when you don't really have a go-to scorer, and it kind of showed up here today how much Alana helps us through rough patches."

Just nine seconds into the third quarter, the Bear Julia Dalessandro picked up her third foul as Irvington's Aine Cleary was scoring a bucket inside. Two free throws from Abby Conklin, who finished with a game-high 15 points, then gave Irvington a 29-8 lead. With Thybulle now back on the court and providing four baskets, the Bulldogs stretched their lead to 23 points before Ryan ended the third quarter with a pair of foul shots.



Briarcliff's Ashley Fortunate pushes the ball past midcourt in the fourth quarter of last Tuesday night's semifinal playoff game.



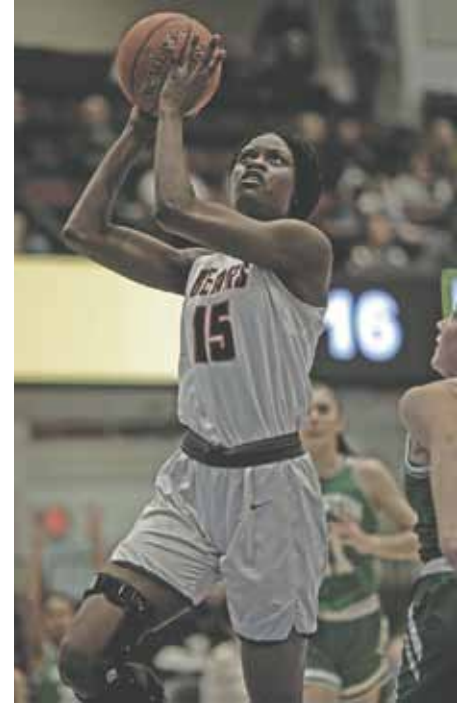
The Bears' Cat Carrafiello gets set to shoot the ball in the second half of last week's game at the County Center vs. Irvington.

After scoring just 16 points over the game's first three quarters, the Bears added 14 more in the final quarter. Junior center Jordan Smith, scoreless heading to the final period, chipped in with two baskets in the first couple of minutes. A runner from the left baseline by Carrafiello with 4:15 to go capped a 6-0 Briarcliff spurt and cut the Irvington lead to 44-25.

But Thybulle then went on a personal 6-0 burst and Nikki May followed with a 3-pointer, giving the Bulldogs, who wound up getting dethroned by Putnam Valley four days later, their largest lead of the game, 28 points. In the final minute, the Bears got



Briarcliff's Julia Barbalato lines up a shot at the free-throw line against Irvington.



Briarcliff junior center Jordan Smith tries to score inside during last Tuesday's Class B semifinal game.

a 3-point basket from the right elbow by Caroline Barbalato and a fast-break layup from Ashley Fortunate.

In truth, the Bears, despite an 18-0 start to their season, ceased being a title contender the instant Lombardi severely twisted her right ankle in a home win over Croton back in early February. Without her, they dropped their final two games of the regular season, then struggled to defeat Westlake in the opening round of sectionals.

"Yeah, I'm sure it was devastating," said Hamlin, asked how tough it was for his star player to conclude her standout career sitting helplessly on the bench. "She tried. She went to therapy, she did everything she could, but it just didn't respond well. It was one of the worst sprained ankles I've ever seen. After that happened, and I looked at her ankle, I really didn't think she would be back."



Injured Briarcliff star Alana Lombardi watches last week's Class B semifinal from the Bears' bench.



The Bears' Kaitlyn Ryan dribbles the ball near the top of the key at the County Center.

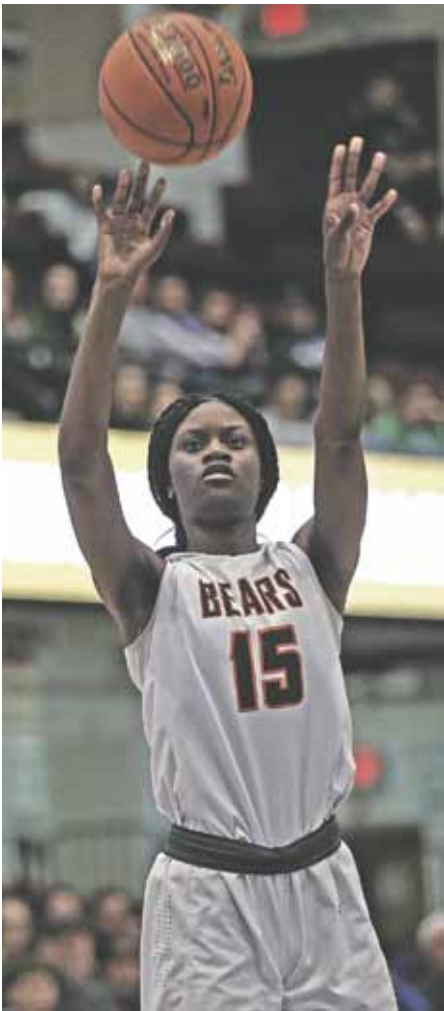
ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



For the first time in three years, the Westchester County Center hosted all of Section One’s semifinal and championship playoff games.



Horace Greeley’s Will Laforтеzza and New Rochelle’s David Chesimar eye a potential rebound in Friday night’s Class AA semifinal game at the County Center.



Jordan Smith of Briarcliff shoots the ball in last Tuesday night’s semifinal vs. Irvington.



Valhalla head coach Richard Clinchy chats with Marco Mazza in Saturday night’s Class B championship game at the County Center.



Briarcliff’s Cat Carrafiello concentrates at the foul line vs. the Irvington Bulldogs.



Valhalla’s Sebastian Pacheco maintains possession of the ball even after being knocked to the floor in the Vikings’ quest to win the Class B championship.

COUNTY CENTER SCRAPBOOK



Westlake guard Carter Falkenberg tosses up a shot in the Wildcats’ Class B semifinal game vs. top-seeded Hastings last Wednesday.



Matt Martin of Westlake fires a shot from midcourt just before the buzzer during last Wednesday’s Class B semifinal playoff game as Chris Rotiroti of Hastings tries to avoid fouling him.



The Horace Greeley student section cheers on the Quakers from the baseline during Sunday afternoon’s Class AA championship game against Mt. Vernon.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS

Suspense at the County Center

Valhalla's Marlin Wise
Battles Liam Hopwood
of Top-Seeded Hastings
in the Class B Title Game

