Game Changer

Alex Olsen Sparks Fox Lane to Another Lopsided Victory Over Rival Horace Greeley
Panthers Dominate on the Boards to Defeat Croton-Harmon

By Monica D'Ippolito

The Pleasantville girls’ basketball team had trouble finding its shooting touch Friday afternoon against aggressive Croton-Harmon, but the Panthers’ work on the glass gave them the advantage needed to earn the home victory.

“I thought we did an outstanding job on the boards and it really pretty much made the difference in the game for us,” Pleasantville coach Myndi Hill said, shortly after her team’s 47-32 win. “If we wouldn’t have had those opportunities, I think Croton-Harmon would have come out of here with a victory. We’ve got to give them a lot of credit; they did a nice job tonight.”

The Panthers shot a meager 26 percent from the field, but managed to come down with 41 rebounds in the contest, including 19 on the offensive boards. “We do a lot of shooting (in practice) and they also have to make time to come in here and work on their game shots individually to get their confidence back,” Hill said about her team’s recent shooting woes. “Because, if it’s about confidence, the only way you can get your confidence back is if you come in here and individually work on that. You earn success, you earn the right to be confident, it doesn’t just happen.”

The Tigers had already lost their previous game with the Panthers earlier in the season, but came out and played an aggressive trapping defense, which caused Pleasantville to play frantically at times. “I thought we were a little timid, thought that put us back on our heels a little bit,” Hill said. “First time we played them, we handled the press. The first time, we looked to score off the press. This time, we didn’t look to score off of it. We turned the ball over quite a few times, even outside of the press.”

With the pressure affecting Pleasantville, Croton was able to gain a 14-13 advantage after the first quarter, but the Panthers picked it up over the following eight minutes, only allowing five points in the second quarter. The Panthers entered the second half with a 23-18 lead and promptly stretched their advantage to double figures by starting the third quarter with a 6-0 run. The Tigers’ Blaise Jacobson broke up the spurt midway through the quarter with a jumper that cut the Croton deficit to 29-20, but Pleasantville retained a 10-point lead heading into the final quarter.

Croton’s Kate Dymes found teammate Taylor Penberthy for a 3-pointer to open up the fourth, but Pleasantville’s AnnMarie DiCarlo responded with a trey on the ensuing possession and then hit another 3-pointer with just under a minute remaining, all but sealing the win.

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“Croton is a great team,” DiCarlo said. “(Coach Hill) just told us to be more aggressive. They were being more aggressive than we were and we need to come together as a team and communicate. That was our big problem, so we tried to talk more and tried to be more aggressive, and I think that helped.”

DiCarlo led all scorers with 22 points, while teammate Josie Amerson recorded a double-double, finishing with 15 points and 19 rebounds. “I definitely think in every drill I do, just making sure I’m boxing out, even if we’re doing something not so serious, just making sure I’m boxing out, always looking for somebody behind me, pushing back, working on getting that jump off the ground,” Amerson said, explaining her success under the boards. “I feel like just hard work is what makes you win. Hard work is what leads to victory.”

Hill credited Amerson’s work on the glass and the other contributions she has provided in her first year on the team. “Josie Amerson has been a presence all year in the paint for us,” Hill said of the senior. “Her offensive rebounds, if we missed a shot, she cleans up the boards and puts it back in. We’ve gone three games in a row (where) we haven’t shot the ball well, so her presence in the paint has been even more important when we don’t shoot the ball well.”

With the sectional playoffs just around the corner, the Panthers are now 10-3. But according to Amerson, Hill is not about to let any of her players rest on their laurels. “Just told us to get into the gym, work on our free time, and I think everyone knows that we need to put in the extra work,” Amerson said. “There are some tough teams coming out of this league — Briarcliff, Valhalla, Westlake — in the time we’re not in practice, we need to put in more effort.”

DiCarlo was optimistic about her team’s potential, but echoed the same message as Hill and Amerson. “Working outside of practice, definitely (our) individual game we need to work on and teamwork too,” she said. “Talking, communicating, being positive. I’m really optimistic about our team. We have a lot of really great chemistry on and off the court, which I think definitely helps, and I think we can go far as long as we stay positive and keep working hard.”
Olsen Propels Fox Lane to Another Rout of the Quakers

By Andy Jacobs

Just went it seemed the Fox Lane boys' basketball team might be in for quite a battle with Horace Greeley on Friday night, junior forward Alex Olsen decided it was time to step up.

Providing a packed house with an impressive glimpse of his future promise, Olsen scored 12 of his game-high 19 points during a dazzling 15-0 Fox run in the second quarter that all but finished the Quakers. Almost in the blink of an eye, the host Foxes turned a four-point deficit into a nine-point halftime lead on their way to a 65-40 rout of their neighborhood rival.

"Olsen is what won the game," said disappointed Quakers coach Dave Fernandes afterwards, "because early in the game we were staying with them. And then he hit three or four shots with a guy right in front of him."

Just before Olsen's big eruption, Greeley had broken a 9-9 tie after one quarter by getting back-to-back layups from Cameron Ciero and Brandon Spiegel. But the Quakers, seeking to avenge the lopsided home loss to Fox Lane three weeks earlier that ended their seven-game winning streak to start the season, were about to be overwhelmed by an offensive onslaught from a young player who had already made quite an impression on Fernandes.

"I like Olsen," he said, drawing out his words for emphasis. "I think he's a great player."

With the Foxes facing their largest deficit of the evening, Olsen proceeded to score the game's next 10 points, starting with a pair of jump shots. His coast-to-coast jaunt that ended with a finger roll in the lane reminiscent of Dr. J gave Fox Lane the lead for good with 3:18 left in the half. An Olsen layup and then his two free throws 27 seconds later extended the Foxes' lead to 19-13. After a 3-pointer by teammate Sean New, Olsen capped the 15-0 blitz with a jumper from the right elbow to give Fox Lane its first double-digit lead of the game. The Quakers' Connor Schinderman closed the half with a layup, but the third quarter began with a 12-2 Fox spurt that turned the contest into a rout.

Olsen was limited to just two points in the first quarter, but his huge contribution in the second period came as no surprise to his coach, Mike Tomassi.

"He's awesome," said the Foxes' first-year coach. "He's our catalyst. He's what makes us go. Tonight, he brought us to a different level. You know, we came out flat and his plays electrify us. Tonight, he brought us to a different level. You know, when we're playing like-sardines Fox Lane student section, we played terrible, played terrible," said Fernandes, whose reeling Quakers were just 10 for 27 from the foul line and fell to 9-4 in the first half, had nine of the points and wound up with the loss. The Fox faithful waited until there was just 2:25 left on the clock to start chanting, "warm your bus up," but they could have used that line anytime in the second half.

"We played terrible, played terrible," said Fernandes, whose reeling Quakers were just 10 for 27 from the foul line and fell to 9-4 with the loss. "Fox Lane's a good team and you can't come here with your 'C' game. It's that simple."

The third quarter, when the Foxes were blowing the game wide open and their fans were at full volume, was particularly painful for Fernandes to watch.

The Foxes' Tomassi, meanwhile, had plenty to smile about and was able to relish his 10-4 team's fourth consecutive victory.

Horace Greeley's Jason Neff, chased by Fox Lane's Matt Redhead, gets set to shoot the ball from midcourt as time expires in the first half.

"You saw it," he said. "Every shot we put up, we missed. I mean, it's not like we didn't take shots. We just didn't make anything. There was a stretch where we must've taken 10 to 11 shots and didn't get one…. I think there's some things we learned about our team, but we can't stay down. You know, I've got a great group of kids and they've got to come back from it."

The Foxes' Tomassi, meanwhile, had plenty to smile about and was able to relish his 10-4 team's fourth consecutive victory.

"I'm very happy with the way the boys played tonight," he said. "When we play together, good things happen. I think we're coming together at the right time. So I'm very pleased with what we're doing now."
Focus on BASKETBALL
Briarcliff vs. Westlake
Wednesday, Jan. 21

Westlake’s Kathleen Cullen and Briarcliff’s Kelly Monaghan fight for rebound position in last Wednesday’s game, won by the host Wildcats.

Lauren Holzer of Westlake drives on Bailey Winiarski of Briarcliff.

Westlake guard Faith Lovett dribbles the ball along the right sideline in the second half of last Wednesday’s win over the Bears.

Above: Jack Reish of Briarcliff works his way into the paint in the second half of the Bears’ victory over the Westlake Wildcats.

Left: Briarcliff guard Malik White rises for a shot in the lane vs. the visiting Westlake Wildcats.

Alquan Phillip of Briarcliff shoots the ball from the left corner in the Bears’ victory over the Wildcats last week.

Briarcliff center Sean Crowley tries to score in the lane against Westlake’s Louis Marinelli and Joseph Ferri in last Wednesday evening’s game.

Natalie Alfieri of Westlake gets set to shoot the ball after driving to the basket vs. visiting Briarcliff.

Westlake guard Jesse Boyce brings the ball up the floor in the second half vs. host Briarcliff.
Henry Cuniffe of Pleasantville was a winner with an early pin at 170 pounds.

Pleasantville’s Matt DeSousa has the upper hand on the way to pinning Ardsley’s Joe Guilano in the second period of the match at 285 pounds.

The Panthers’ James Bathon is in control and on the way to victory at 106 pounds in last week’s home match vs. Ardsley.

Pleasantville’s Omeed Ansari grapples with Melvin Ward-Johns in the match at 220 pounds.

Brandon Castro looks for a takedown en route to pinning Andrew Oks of Ardsley late in the first period of their match at 152 pounds.

Pleasantville’s Dan Gottlieb is on his way to pinning Ardsley’s Nicholas Granata at 138 pounds.

Carlos DeJesus of Pleasantville won with a pin midway through the second period of his match at 113 pounds, helping the Panthers to a 66-21 victory over Ardsley.

Chris Picart of Pleasantville concentrates on trying to bring down Ardsley opponent David Saravia in their match at 182 pounds.

Focus on Wrestling
Pleasantville vs. Ardsley
Thursday, Jan. 22
Bobcats Pull Away in the Final Quarter to Defeat Westlake

By Monica D'Ippolito

When Westlake coach Steven Gage walked into the Byram Hills gym Friday night, he couldn’t help noticing a lot of familiar faces, including Bobcats coach Ted Repa, with whom he worked for 12 years.

“I love Ted, and he’s one of the best, if not the best, coach in the section,” said Gage after his Wildcats fell 51-35 to Repa’s Bobcats. “He and the rest of the coaches have not only my respect, but my love. It felt good to be back, not only to see them and coach here, but to see all the people that I’ve worked so hard with all those years.”

Through three quarters, it was a tight contest, with the lead changing hands several times and the score tied on four separate occasions. But the Bobcats only allowed one basket in the fourth quarter and pulled away to improve their record to 13-2 this season.

“We executed down the stretch, guys started making shots,” Repa said. “We were ice cold the entire game. I mean, they were daring us to shoot. I don’t know what our 3-point percentage was, but it was nowhere near what our capabilities are.”

With 3:40 remaining before halftime and his team trailing by 11 points, Gage called a timeout. The Wildcats then went on a 6-0 run to end the second quarter and slice the Byram lead to 21-17.

Westlake’s Jesse Boyce tied the game at 23-all a couple of minutes into the third quarter and later evened the score again by earning a trip to the foul line with just under 10 seconds remaining in the quarter. After he connected on both free throws, the teams were tied at 33-apiece heading to the final period.

But the fourth quarter was dominated by Byram Hills, which was led by senior center Andrew Groll, who scored eight points and collected five rebounds in the period.

“A guy by the name of Groll,” said Gage of the difference-maker in the fourth quarter. “I mean, he’s an All-Section player, he’s a hell of a big kid. Our big kid fouled out and he just punished us.”

Westlake’s starting center, Louis Marinelli, fouled out with just under six minutes remaining in the game, giving Groll more room to operate in the paint.

On a night when the Byram Hills seniors were honored before the tipoff, Groll capped off the evening with a perfect six from the foul line. “It’s nice just to have a nice win.”

Neither team shot particularly well, as the Wildcats shot 32 percent from the field, while the Bobcats finished just under 40 percent; however Byram Hills connected on seven 3-point attempts to just two treys for the Wildcats.

“We did not play well at all,” Repa said after the win. “We usually make those open looks and we weren’t making anything. I thought Andrew Groll really stepped up in the fourth quarter. He really started to dominate inside and obviously we started hitting some 3s down the stretch that gave us some breathing room.”

Along with Groll, Skylar Sinon led the Bobcats offensively. The freshman guard finished with 10 points, three assists and three big steals in the final minutes. Seniors Ross Weinfeld and Mike Sardo finished with five points each. Weinfeld added four assists and Sardo had two.

“We came out a little soft,” Groll said. “We came out with a big lead and they came back in, tied going into the fourth quarter. It was a tough game throughout, but we started hitting shots. Defensively, we got up into them with some ball screens, put the ball out of their shooters (hands) and got a lot of steals. Skylar had a bunch of steals in the end and definitely helped us win.”

Westlake was led by Daniel Grieco, who scored 11 points and grabbed three rebounds. Harrison Adams finished with nine points and eight rebounds, while Boyce added nine points as well.

“We didn’t make our shots, but really everything in life comes down to your heart and these kids showed that they’ve got it,” Gage said. “I’m really proud of my kids, though. For a school like us, bringing our program up to where we want it to be, to fight and be tied with six minutes left, I feel great about it.

As pleased as Gage was that the Wildcats provided Byram with a surprising scare for a while, he hopes it won’t be long before his team always gets plenty of respect.

“Now it’s Westlake’s turn,” he said. “Now we set up our program, and I look forward to the day when everyone walks into our building and feels like we’re the team to be dealt with.”
Carl Ranieri III of the Mt. Pleasant Thundercats swims to a second-place finish in the 200 freestyle at last Thursday’s meet vs. Rye/Blind Brook/Rye Neck.

The Thundercats’ Brian Glat swims his way to a first-place finish in the 200 individual medley at last week’s Senior Day meet at Pace University.

Brian Glat, a freshman at Byram Hills, is on his way to an easy win in the 100 backstroke vs. the combo team of Rye/Blind Brook/Rye Neck.

The Thundercats’ Brian Glat swims his way to a first-place finish in the 200 individual medley at last week’s Senior Day meet at Pace University.

Pleasantville High School’s Brian McGrinder competes in the 500 freestyle at last Thursday’s Mt. Pleasant Thundercats swim meet.

Above: Horace Greeley’s Sam Mishkind battles for control of the puck in last Thursday’s 4-2 Quaker win over Mahopac.

Right: Horace Greeley goaltender Nicholas Bright makes a save in last week’s 4-3 win over the Mahopac Indians.

Calder Fontaine of Greeley gets ready to pass the puck up the ice during Thursday’s win over Mahopac at Brewster Ice Arena.

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

It was a special evening for Byram Hills senior guard Lucy Bancone on Friday. She reached the 1000-point plateau with a 15-foot jump shot from just right of the foul line in the third quarter of the Bobcats’ home game against the Harrison Huskies. Bancone, whose scoring arsenal includes 3-point shooting and fearless drives to the basket against much bigger opponents, was mobbed by her teammates seconds after her milestone shot dropped through the net.
BOARD BATTLE

Briarcliff’s Kelly Monaghan vs. Westlake’s Kaitlyn Schmid