Viking Conquest

Steven Franzese Blanks the Wildcats as Valhalla Earns Local Bragging Rights
Panthers Break Open a Close Game to Defeat Briarcliff

By Monica D’Ippolito

For one half, it was a close back-and-forth boys’ lacrosse battle between two rival schools that have gotten off to impressive starts this season.

But Pleasantville eventually showed why it is among the best teams in the region, battling back to extend its undefeated record with a 12-6 home victory over Briarcliff last Thursday afternoon.

“It’s something special,” Panthers goalie Oscar Marchi said afterwards. “They’re a big rivalry and there’s been a legacy of rivalry games. We’ve been on top for most of them and to keep that legacy going is an honor.”

Pleasantville’s Brian Reda and the Bears’ Stefano Paone traded goals to start the first quarter of play. Then Bryan Arcidiacono and Briarcliff’s Keaton McCann also exchanged scores just 10 seconds apart, keeping the game knotted.

John Plimpton gave the Bears their first lead with an unassisted goal coming straight out of a Briarcliff timeout with just under five minutes to play. Cameron Fash added to the lead with 1:32 left in the first quarter, scoring off a feed from Nick Cebe, giving the Bears a 4-2 advantage at the end of one quarter.

The Panthers struggled gaining possession in the first 12 minutes, only holding the ball on the offensive end three times and finishing on two of those opportunities. But goals by Baylor Rosenbaum and Arcidiacono tied the game at 4-4 with 8:47 left in the second quarter.

A goal by Matt Winiarski with 2:35 left in the half gave the Bears the lead again, but it was short-lived as Jack Finnegan set up Reda from behind the net, tying the game once again with a minute and a half to play.

After a Marchi save with 20 seconds remaining, Panthers coach Chris Kear called a timeout. He drew up a play, which set up Josh Della Puca’s unassisted goal with 1:32 left in the second quarter.

“Well, the first quarter I think we tried to apply some pressure and they handled it better than we thought they would,” Kear said. “So we had to adjust. We changed our defense a little bit and Oscar was the difference, I think, keeping it close early. He made a lot of big saves early and throughout the game. I think our keeper really stood tall there.”

In the second half, the Panthers were too much for Briarcliff. Marchi allowed only one more goal over the final 24 minutes, while Pleasantville scored six consecutive goals in the third and into the fourth quarter. The Bears finally broke up the run with a John Plimpton goal with 3:34 left in the game.

“I think we hurt ourselves a little bit, but give them credit for the way that their kids played and the way that they played four quarters,” Briarcliff coach Robert Anderson said. “Like I said, I think we hurt ourselves, but give them credit for the things that they did and the way that they executed. I think it was more than us, and we learn from it and we move forward.”

Plimpton and Paone led the Bears with two goals each, while Arcidiacono finished with three goals and one assist for the Panthers, with Della Puca adding two goals and two assists.

Pleasantville got production from a few different players, including two goals from junior attackman Hayden McBride and one from freshman Declan McDermott.

“Actually was something we talked about, to get a couple guys into the rotation who hadn’t gotten in much for the past couple games,” Kear said. “Just to get the opportunity to get some depth and get some more experience for some of the other guys. Hayden McBride was one of those guys who stepped up. He had two goals and he’s a guy that we wanted to get more into the rotation. He stepped up and had a couple of big plays, so that was really good.”

After finishing with 11 saves, Marchi turned his attention to some of the things he and the Panthers are chasing over the second half of the season.

“To get that goose egg at the end of the year, to be 16-0 would be huge,” Marchi said after P’ville improved to 10-0. “It has never been done before. It’s the best start in Pleasantville history and just to get one more victory means a lot.”

Despite the latest Panther victory, a question still hasn’t been answered regarding who will fill the role of main face-off man for Pleasantville after losing Mike Hammond earlier in the month. Against Briarcliff, the weakness showed, as the Bears gained possession of 14 of the 22 face-offs.

Kear tried using a couple of different players at center circle, rotating between midfielders McDermott and Nolan McAndrew and long-pole, Jack Drillock.

“Losing Mike Hammond, our main face off guy, has been a little bit of a problem,” Kear said. “We’re still tinkering with it, figuring out who’s going to be the next guy to step up. That kid was really good (Plimpton). He’s a very good face-off kid. So we had to make a lot of adjustments just to get a possession here or there. But I think that was what controlled the tempo of the game. They were able to win all of those face-offs.”
Vikings Beat Westlake as Franzese Pitches His Second Shutout

By Andy Jacobs

With the wind blowing more than 30 miles an hour and the temperature struggling to reach even 40 degrees on Friday afternoon, both the Westlake and Valhalla baseball teams took a similar approach before taking the field.

They tried not to think about the chilly conditions.

"We can't control the weather, so we don't talk about it," said Wildcats coach Michael Paquette.

"Forget about the cold, we're not gonna mention it," Vikings coach Josh Wolfson told his players.

On a day more suited for penguins and polar bears, it was host Valhalla that prevailed. Junior southpaw Steven Franzese limited the Wildcats to five hits, recording his second shutout in three starts this season, as the Vikings defeated Westlake 5-0, completing a 24-hour sweep of the teams' home-and-home series.

"Would love to have the warmer weather," said Wolfson afterwards. "But if we're gonna win, we'll take any kind of weather."

In improving to 6-1 this year, the Vikings broke a scoreless tie with three runs in the bottom of the fourth inning. Designated hitter Carl Bespolka, who finished the day with a pair of hits and two runs, smacked a two-out double right over the third-base bag. But Mike Poggioreale smacked a two-out wild throw while stepping on the bag to retire Valhalla first baseman Brett Holtz handles a double straight to the center field wall.

Franzese ended the Westlake threat by getting his second strikeout of the inning.

He gave up a leadoff single to Matt Latino in the third, but then Chris Donato lined into a double play on an ill-fated Wildcat hit-and-run play. Finally staked to a three-run lead, Franzese found himself in some trouble in the fifth when both Brendan Duane and Latino reached on infield hits and, with two outs, moved up a base on a double steal. But the inning ended as Donato was retired on a slow bouncer to short.

The Vikings had been set down in order over the first three innings by Westlake's Duane, who got some defensive help in the first when center fielder Matt Rubin lost his footing and he just didn't make the play.

"He's pitched real well for us," said Wolfson. "The first couple of innings of his first two starts were a little shaky. And again, today, but he found it. It was real tough to grip the curveball today, so he was battling that the whole game."

Still, Franzese didn't walk a single batter and only allowed the Wildcats to get a runner into scoring position on two occasions. In the top of the first inning, Mike Poggioreale smacked a two-out double right over the third-base bag. But the run came on a bouncer to shortstop Sergio Osorio for an error.

In the fifth, Duane retired the first two Valhalla batters but then yielded a line single to right by Osorio, who promptly stole second. After a walk to Sam Gannon, who a day later would single in the winning run in the Vikings' improbable seventh-inning comeback over Hastings, Lovecchio stretched the Valhalla lead to 4-0 with an RBI single to center. A single to left by Bespolka brought home the game's final run.

"That's been the case a couple times this year," said Paquette about his team's inability to escape unscathed even when the first two batters are retired. "We're just not closing the innings."

The Wildcats began the seventh with a single to center field by Rubin, but then Franzese got Derek Petfield to hit a sharp grounder to shortstop Sergio Osorio to end the game.

"It's great," said Wolfson about winning against the rival Wildcats. "A team that's five minutes down the road, it's always great to beat them. But, really, what's important is the sixth win of the season. Obviously we're playing well. Just really great to get off to this 6-1 start no matter who we're beating."

"Well, it's always disappointing to lose to Valhalla," said Paquette. "I know the kids are disappointed, but hopefully we learn from this."
Byram Hills slugger Kellen Hatheway belted two homers last Thursday as the Bobcats beat previously undefeated Eastchester.

Emma Lowrey of Greeley maneuvers her way toward the goal vs. Ketcham.

Izzie Gutenplan of Greeley controls the ball in last Tuesday’s road win.

Allison Buseck of Greeley holds the ball in last week’s game at RCK.

Matt Rubin of Westlake makes a sliding catch in Friday’s road game vs. Valhalla.

Greeley’s Julia Arrese controls the ball in last Tuesday’s game vs. RCK.

Greeley’s Megan Graham gets ready to send a shot on goal.

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Izzie Gutenplan of Greeley controls the ball in last Tuesday’s road win.
Briarcliff’s Jordana Cohen tries to run past a pair of Hendrick Hudson players in the second half of Friday’s game.

Westlake’s Brianna Mancuso belts a long fly to center field during Saturday’s tourney game vs. Fox Lane.

Nicole Nero of Briarcliff gets hit as she moves toward the cage on Friday evening vs. visiting Hendrick Hudson.

Above: Horace Greeley’s J. Ibara bats in the final inning of the Quakers’ 6-0 loss to Ketcham this past weekend.

Left: Kate Manganello of Briarcliff sends a shot at the goal during the Bears’ loss to the Sailors on Friday.

Below: Westlake third baseman Kaitlyn Sementa puts a late tag on Fox Lane’s Vanessa Notaro in Saturday’s Wildcat softball invitational tournament game.

Above: Jordan Block of Greeley delivers a pitch during Saturday afternoon’s game against the Ketcham Indians.

Right: Fox Lane’s Alexis Bazos delivers a pitch in the Foxes’ victory over host Westlake on Saturday afternoon.
Focus on PACE

MEN’S LACROSSE

Action from Saturday’s playoff-clinching win over Bentley included, clockwise from top left: Tyler Meigel holding the ball near midfield; Anthony Gadaleta trying to run past defender Connor Rafety; goalie Michael Bonitatibus trying to make a save; Matt Cossidente heading for the cage; Wyatt Barfoot taking the ball up the field; and Ryan O’Hagan firing a shot on goal.

SOFTBALL

Action from Sunday’s doubleheader sweep included, clockwise from top left: Shortstop Jeane Drury chasing a pop fly; Joyce LaBonte circling the bases after homering; Caitlyn McCann delivering a pitch; Amand Limon slamming a pitch to deep left; Ashey Lew making a tag at second; Hana Wright trotting home after hitting her record-breaking 23rd career homer; and center fielder Shelby Yung trying to make a diving catch.
A Big Lead Shrinks, but the Bobcats Still Defeat Westlake

By Monica D'Ippolito

Judging by the 6-0 halftime score, Saturday afternoon’s lacrosse game between Byram Hills and Westlake seemed all but over.

But the visiting Wildcats bounced back in the third quarter to close within a goal of the lead before the Bobcats were finally able to put the game away in the final 12 minutes and emerge with an 11-6 win.

“We just got into a lull, tightened up a lot,” Bobcats coach James Ardizone said. “The rest of the game we played really loose. It was a very, very, emotional third quarter and it affected us, and that’s one of those things that we really got to look at and get better at. So we’ve really got to take away from this game that we really can’t have a letdown like that, have a soft moment for that long.”

Byram Hills dominated the first half of play, starting with Jaime Cantu beginning the game by picking up a ground ball in front of the Westlake net and placing it past goalie Brendan Birkelbach.

About three minutes later, the Bobcats capitalized on a Wildcat turnover, getting a goal from Matt Grotta, assisted by Connor Tavio. With just under a minute to play in the quarter, Byram Hills, with a man-up advantage, stretched its lead to 3-0 after one quarter as Reid Jacobs fed Payton Levine for another goal.

Jacobs added another, with Levine soon contributing two more in the second period, which gave Byram Hills a convincing 6-0 lead at halftime.

Westlake’s first-half play was undermined by losing seven consecutive face-offs. By the time the Wildcats finally won one, Byram Hills had built a 5-0 cushion. The Wildcats also lacked quality shots in the first half, only testing Byram goalie Wes Cutler twice over the first 24 minutes.

“A little bit at halftime,” Westlake coach Steve Pesick said of talking about their first-half shot selection. “We wanted them to shoot a little more. I didn’t think we took enough shots in the first half. I told them if they had a step on their defender to let it fly.”

In the second half, the Wildcats seemed to show much more life. Starting the third quarter with a goal from Anthony Sardo, Westlake began picking up momentum and went on a 4-0 run to end the third quarter, cutting the Byram lead to 6-4.

Two minutes into the fourth quarter, Sardo found the back of the net once more, taking advantage of a man-advantage to put in the Wildcats’ fifth consecutive goal and cut the Bobcats’ lead to 6-5.

“Just a little more effort, a little more heart from our defense and a little more patience from our offense,” Pesick said of his halftime speech, which sparked his team for the following 12 minutes. “We switched from our zone to man-to-man and the boys showed a little life, and it paid off in the third quarter, but fell a little short in the fourth.”

Unfortunately for Westlake, that was the closest it got as the Bobcats responded with four consecutive goals, scored by Levine, Devon Cummings and Jacobs to put the game out of reach.

“We’re very good in all-in defense and we need to recognize that,” Ardizone said. “We need to make sure to get in the hole and play to our strengths.”

Joseph Ferri added the Wildcats’ final goal with 3:34 left in the game, while Bobcat long-pole Matt Berger capped off a great defensive outing with a goal with just over two minutes remaining in the game to conclude the day’s scoring.

Levine led the Bobcats with five goals, while Cutler finished up with nine saves. For Westlake, Sardo wound up with three goals, while Birkelbach, who kept the Wildcats alive early, made eight of his 11 saves in the first half.

“Brendan has been great all season, so far,” Pesick said. “Very good reaction, good hand speed. You know with the zone, we were confident in him saving those outside shots. Like I said, he’s been good all season for us, so hopefully he keeps it up.”

Westlake’s Robert DiNota runs past Byram Hills’ Devon Cummings near midfield in the fourth quarter of Saturday’s game.

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Focus on PACE

Playoff Bound

Matt Cossidente’s four goals lift the Pace men’s lacrosse team past Bentley 8-6 and into the NE-10 playoffs for the first time since 2010.

The Wright Stuff

Senior catcher Hana Wright breaks the Setters’ all-time home run record on the final day of the regular season.