

SPORTS



Upperclassmen benchwarmers need to leave bench cold

w Sarah Espinosa
Sports Editor

Over the course of the past few decades, sports have become big businesses. Escalating salaries in professional sports have turned college athletics into semi-professional minor leagues that have almost nothing to do with education and everything to do with preparing players for the pro ranks and providing revenues for the colleges—at least on the Division I/Bowl Championship Series level.

Gone are the days when a college player would bide his time, working his/her way up the depth chart to start as a junior or senior. Talented freshmen and sophomores regularly replace upperclassmen with no hope of playing professionally; players are even asked to give back their scholarships when they no longer fit the program's plans.

Unfortunately, this philosophy has filtered its way down to the high school level. Games have started to be televised, and college scouts are going to high school games to scout freshmen.

As a result, many high school coaches have begun bringing up underclassmen to showcase them and their programs, pushing seniors who have given their commitment for four years to the end of the bench. This is even the case at West, which is not exactly a breeding ground of pro athletes (Rashard Mendenhall aside). Almost every team has at least one underclassman as a starter. I believe that this is wrong.

Unfortunately, this philosophy has filtered its way down to the high school level

Upperclassmen who make a four-year commitment and who work hard during the off season should not see their anticipated starting position handed to underclassmen, especially those who did not work during the off season or were on a different sports team. Where is the sense of loyalty from the coach?

Don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with a deserving freshman or sophomore *making* a varsity team as an underclassman and even receiving playing time. However, they should not start ahead of those who have given their heart and soul to the team for four years.

High school sports have almost come to resemble the National Football League: the older the players get, the less playing time they will receive, unless they are phenomenal talents.

Furthermore, bringing up talented underclassmen hurts the freshman, sophomore and junior varsity (JV) teams, making

Furthermore, bringing up talented underclassmen hurts the freshman, sophomore and junior varsity teams, making the remaining players feel like nothing

the remaining players feel as if they mean nothing. This has happened to teams on which I have played, and I resented it. It suggests that our development as players is unimportant as long as the varsity wins—if and when that actually occurs.

I was under the (apparently mistaken) impression that high school sports should be about teaching, developing skills and promoting teamwork, with wins and losses as a bonus. However, elevating underclassmen does neither.

The demoted upperclassmen and abandoned freshmen, sophomore and JV players become victims of low expectations or less-than-enthusiastic coaching, while the intrusion of underclassmen causes intrasquad resentment and divisions and can drive a wedge between players and coaches.

Considering that Niles West has not spawned a LeBron James, has produced only two professional athletes this decade (Mendenhall and minor league pitcher George Kontos) and has sent only a couple dozen players to Division I, the drawbacks of promoting underclassmen seem to outweigh the advantages.

High school coaches need to resist the urge to buy into the national obsession of professional sports and return to educating and developing student-athletes.

Wolves triple '07-'08 gridiron victory total

w Daniel Blazek
Staff Writer

Despite ending the season with a not-unexpected 52-0 loss to number one state-ranked Maine South, the gridiron Wolves took solace from the knowledge that the 2008-09 football team tripled last year's win production, finishing the season with an overall 3-6 record, 2-3 in the Central Suburban League South.

The Wolves came into Friday, Oct. 17's game with high hopes to finish strong in the last home game of the season. They delivered the message that they will not go down without a fight as they defeated the Waukegan Bulldogs 41-12 on senior night.

The game started off with the Wolves' defense putting up a brick wall, which quickly led to a Wolves' touchdown by senior running back Leonard Panion, the first of his three touchdown runs for the evening. After that, the game went smoothly for the Wolves, continually shutting Waukegan down with a defense that barely let them over midfield on numerous occasions.

With the exception of an early touchdown by Waukegan, the first half went in the Wolves' favor, producing trips to the red zone while the defense remained strong, chaining multiple sacks and tackles that prevented the ball from getting even close to a chance at scoring. The second quarter was their most productive, adding 21 of their final 41 points during that time with an offensive front that scored three touchdowns, including an unexpected halfback option play which had Panion passing to senior wide receiver Chris Wright who scored with only three seconds remaining on the halftime clock.

Coming out of the halftime break, the Wolves remained confident, giving the Bulldogs little breathing room by shutting them out for the entire third quarter while producing yet another touchdown of their own. The final quarter also produced good



Quarterback Nick Gremley runs from Waukegan defense. Photo by Rexly Penaflores

results for the Wolves, who scored their final touchdown of the night while giving up only six points (which came late in the quarter) to the Bulldogs to give them only 12 points total for the entire night.

Panion, coming off a solid game in a 39-27 win over Evanston the previous week, rushed for 142 yards in 19 carries for three touchdowns, plus the aforementioned touchdown pass to end the first half. Senior quarterback Nick Gremley completed 7-12 passes for 123 yards and two touchdowns to Wright in the second quarter and junior wide receiver Kimo Bajamunde in the fourth.

Gremley was a major factor in the two-game winning streak, completing 12-21 passes for 228 yards and five touchdowns in the Evanston victory.

No one can forget the defense either, giving the Waukegan offense a run for their money with a whopping 10 sacks along with four players recording double-digit tackles. Sophomore defensive back Santiago Ochoa also added a 40-yard interception early in the game. Junior linebacker Dimitri Tripkos also helped the cause with several key sacks early, while senior

defensive backs Joel Cohen and Kevin Galicia lead the team in tackles with 14 and 15, respectively.

"The team has really come together better and we are believing in ourselves a lot more," junior offensive lineman Shawn Afryl said. "It feels great that we produced back-to-back wins, and it gives us a lot of momentum."

Although this season has been more productive for the Wolves, head coach Curtis Tate and his players were somewhat disappointed with their 3-6 record.

"It is a little frustrating for me because I know that all the guys do what they do well, and they put in a lot of hard work," Tate said. "We made some mistakes over the year, but we have quality players that have the potential to be a great team. [The Waukegan] game was definitely our best of the year, and really reflects what we can do."

Varsity boys' soccer team falls short in regional game

w Christine Mahoney
Copy Editor

The boys' varsity soccer team ended their season with an overall record of 11-7-3. Head coach Scott Ackman expressed satisfaction with the Wolves' success this season.

"This has been the hardest [season] played in [Niles] West history," Ackman said. "The Wolves' success can be greatly credited to the help of team captains, [senior] Santos [Reyes] and [junior] Mahi [Mameledzija], who spent the summer helping the team work together to form strong bonds. [The team chemistry] helped out on the field."

The captains led the Wolves to victory against Schaumburg High School (SHS), according to Ackman.

According to the *ESPN Rise*, senior Josh Beard from SHS is an elite soccer player who has been recognized for his exceptional

talent on the field. Ackman admits that the victory against SHS came as a surprise to not only the team, but spectators as well.

The Wolves' victories led them to play against Niles North in the regional game this past Saturday. The Wolves were defeated by North with a final score of 2-0.

"[Although we lost], we dominated the game and [North just] got a lucky shot," Mameledzija said.

Overall, the Wolves were happy with their successful record. "We could not get any closer, I mean most of us have been playing together for [at least three years]," Santos said. "We had a great season."

Junior Joe Kosir concurs. "This year, the fans were amazing and [really] supported us. At the regional game, the [English Language Learners] brought their drums and played them throughout the game. Our playoff run was disappointing but it showed what soccer means to us; you can dominate 80 percent of a game and still lose. Our team had a lot of fun together and this season was unforgettable," Kosir said.

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WestWord

Zasso and Davros lead boys' cross country team to sectionals

w Daniel Blazek
Staff Writer

The Niles West boys' cross country team came into the season with high expectations at the heels of last year's regional qualification. The Wolves have lived up to those expectations, closing the season with stellar performances in the past month; including at the Pat Savage invitational, Glenbrook South (GBS) dual meet and the Central Suburban League (CSL) South conference meet. Senior Alex Zasso and junior George Davros have exceeded expectations to lead the team to victory.

This season, the Wolves' most prominent meet was the Pat Savage invitational. Zasso finished fourth with a time of 15:50 and Davros right behind him in sixth with 16:00. The rest of the team produced quality times as well.

In order to finish with a strong season and qualify for another regional appearance, the Wolves expected to do well at the CSL invitational conference meet. Zasso and Davros met expectations by finishing fifth and sixth.

"[It is] no doubt that [the boys] ran well," head coach Vachee Loughran said. "The whole season was real productive and we are hoping to get [both of them] down to state after regionals.

[This] would be the first time Niles West has ever had two guys [compete at] state."

According to Loughran, the CSL meet was expected to be a challenge. Both runners finished with quick times of 15:46 and 15:49, respectively.

Zasso and Davros hope to continue working hard to eventually compete at state.

"We have worked real hard and put in a lot of time for training," Zasso said. "As far as preparation goes, we run year round, putting in about 600 or 700 miles over the summer alone. It is a shame that Bobby Fahey did not place as high though, because he practices harder than any of us. Overall though, [practice] has really paid off, and we hope to place well in state."

Davros concurs. "The season has definitely gone well so far," Davros added. "We have not had a guy down state in over 20 years before several years ago, and now we have at least one going every year, so if you ask me, that is pretty impressive."

The team is well on its way to state after placing fourth at the regional meet last Saturday. Zasso placed ninth and Davros placed tenth. Additional team members include Bobby Fahey who placed 27th, Matt Miller at 28th, Daniel Friedman at 30th,



Zasso runs to the finish.
Photo by Daniel Blazek

Jimmy Rosati at 42nd and Andres Osorio at 43rd. The next meet will be sectionals, held at home on the cross country course tomorrow.

Sub-.500 swim/dive season salvaged by several broken records

w Adriana Zalloni
Staff Writer

Heading into the season finale, the girls' swim and dive team had compiled a season record of 2-4 (0-4 CSL south).

On Oct. 18, the varsity dive team, consisting of senior captain Jasmine Ramahi, junior Amy Heller and sophomore Emily Fung, took first place at the Titan Relays at Glenbrook South.

However, victories such as this were few and far between in Oct., with the team losing to Glenbrook South on senior night Oct. 24, Maine South on Oct. 17, Evanston on Oct. 10, New

Girls' cross country team makes sectionals

w Naomi Prale
Around Town Editor

The girls' varsity cross country team will compete in the IHSA sectional meet hosted by Niles West tomorrow.

Last Saturday, the girls qualified for sectionals at the IHSA regional meet over at Harms Woods. Junior Carmin Beck finished seventh with a time of 20:00. Following Beck came junior Becky Traisman, 17th with a time of 20:25; senior Matea Selak, 21st with a time of 20:43; junior Allie Coursey, 26th, with a time of 21:18; sophomore Lindsey Karp, 29th; with a time of 21:21; senior Jessie Rodriguez, 31st with a time of 21:41 and senior/captain Molly Gstalter, 32nd, with a time of 21:55.

Beck also qualified as an all-conference athlete finisher at the Niles West Central Suburban Leagues South conference meet, placing seventh, with a time of 19:15, setting a new course record.

"I'm proud that we qualified," Gstalter said. "We worked hard in the terrible conditions. Our times were about a minute slower than we would like them to be, and some girls were unhappy with their times, but qualifying gave us the confidence boost that we will need in the meet this Saturday. This is our last chance to do whatever we can, and run with our hearts. To us, getting fourth in sectionals is a big deal."

Fellow teammate Traisman agreed that the poor conditions in the meet were a factor in times, but was glad that the girls worked together. "[Those were] not ideal conditions. The course was slow, soft, and wet. but I think that we worked hard together. It is good when you work together as at team, and this was one of our better races because we did that. That is what cross country is all about."

Last year, Beck ran at the conference meet, placing 15th, one away from the all-conference slot. All-conference athletes take 1st-14th place.

"This Saturday, I am hoping we all work together as a team and we all bring our times down," Beck said. "We are a strong team this year. We kept improving during the whole season."

Trier on Oct. 3 and Evanston on Oct. 10.

The season was salvaged somewhat by a number of broken records. Sophomore Alexis Yusim broke the 500 yd. freestyle sophomore record seconds, and sophomore Emily Fung broke the record for the sophomore diving points scored.

Sophomores Jaci Moy, Holly Norberg, Lauren Wilkin and Yusim broke the school freshman/sophomore record for the 200 yd. medley relay and came within one second of breaking the 200 yd. freestyle relay.

Yusim expressed excitement of her success.

"I am really happy I [broke] the record. It is something I have been working towards all season and [my hard work finally] paid off," Yusim said.

Despite the team's difficulties, head coach Jason Macejack views the losses as gains.

"The girls swam well against New Trier and Evanston. We did

not win, but the girls performed very well. It was one of those situations [in which] competing against the best in state helped bring out the best in us," Macejack said.

Yusim agreed.

"We have a really tough conference but all together I think we had a really good season," Yusim said.

Ramahi concurs and expressed confidence that the girls will go far in the conference and sectionals.

"We are at the point in our season where we need to start planning for conference and sectionals, because this is when it counts. We have a lot of depth to our team, and we can really do some damage to our opponents," Ramahi said.

Overall, Macejack, along with the rest of the team,

believed the season went well.

"We saw a lot of improvement, and that is the most important thing for us," Ramahi said.



Holly Norberg races to finish first in her heat.
Photo by Rexly Penaflores

My story

"AT OAKTON, THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE BECOMES WHAT YOU WANT TO MAKE OF IT."

JENNIFER YAZMIN CARRILLO

For Jennifer Carrillo, Oakton Community College is the "reel" deal. A promising filmmaker, Carrillo came to Oakton to complete her first two years and save money before transferring to a four-year college. But Carrillo is making the most of her Oakton experience by going beyond the basic general education courses. She has taken independent study classes tailored to her needs, pursued her interests of film and psychology, and participated in various clubs and organizations. When Carrillo transfers, she will leave with more than just extra credit hours and extra money—she also will take away a fulfilling college experience.

To be continued...



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SPORTS

Legends of the fall



With every new sports season, new talent emerges. The athletes work hard to leave a mark on the school. They exceed the expectations of their coaches and shine throughout the season. This year, two outstanding individuals shined brighter than the rest: football player Leonard Panion and volleyball player Nicole Rusek. In recognition of their hard work, West Word names Panion and Rusek the Legends of the Fall.



Panion leads team on and off the field

w/ Adriana Zalloni
Staff Writer

Niles West Wolves' football team has benefited immensely from the arrival of Leonard Panion last year, according fellow Wolves. Senior running back Panion transferred from Evanston Township High School last year and has been playing on varsity at West since then.

According to his coaches and teammates, he quickly became a valuable part of the team. This season, Panion racked up a total of 16 touchdowns (15 rushing, one receiving), 1504 rushing yards and 104 receiving yards. It is no wonder he ranks ninth in the state for the most rushing yards per game.

Panion's teammates believed he is one of the hardest runners they have ever seen.

"He plays the game the way it should be played," junior offensive/defensive lineman Shawn Afryl said.

Senior wide receiver/defensive back/captain Kevin Galicia believes Panion has really helped the team.

"Although [Panion] has only been with us for two years, he's really been integrated into the team. He adds another dimension to our offense," Galicia said.

"[If] Leonard rushes 432 yards"—as he did vs. Niles North,

breaking a school record set by Pittsburgh Steelers running back Rashard Mendenhall—"it feels like he is running 50. He just plays to play. Leonard does what he needs to do when he gets the ball. He plays to win," head coach Curtis Tate said.

Panion cites his passion for the game. "I just love football. I have been playing since I was seven years old," Panion said. "Football is the reason I come to school!"

Panion is an inspiration to his fellow teammates, and to other football players around.

"Leonard dedicates himself to football," junior quarterback Tyler Rosell said. "He is a great leader on the field, and he is a great role model, not only to us, but to the little kids who want to play football one day."

Panion is aware that much of his success is due to his teammates.

"I have the best line. The team has been so supportive of me. They really take care of me," Panion said/

Panion also has a goofy side.

"The nice thing about Leonard is ever since he transferred, I knew he had the ability to be an elite running back. At the same time, Leonard is the kid untying your shoe playing a practical joke. Every time you see him, he has a huge smile on his face," varsity assistant coach Rich Costante said.

Panion's teammates could not agree more.

"Leonard is truly a fun, talented guy," junior OL/DL Angelo Tripkos said. "He makes us laugh all the time."

Panion's enthusiasm rubs off on all the players.

"He is part of the reason I love coming to practice every day," Tripkos said.

Senior fullback James Alvarado concurs.

"Leonard always has a positive attitude toward the game, no matter the score. He keeps us going throughout practice," Alvarado said.

Panion's fun-loving nature delights teammates.

"Leonard is such a goofy kid. He makes everything so much more fun. He is also a hard worker, so not only is he fun, but he makes us work hard," senior linebacker/captain Adam Michael said.

Senior LB Pat Hayes echoes Michael's sentiments. "Leonard is an all around fun guy. He really lightens the mood in practice," Hayes said.

As for next year, Panion hopes to play football in college. He is unsure of where he will be going to school, but his coaches and his teammates expect great things from him.

"Leonard has a lot of heart. I know he is going to do great in whatever he chooses to do," senior WR/DB Joel Cohen said.

Hard work pays off for female fall athlete

w/ Adriana Zalloni
Staff Writer

Regardless of the outcome of this week's regional tournament, senior Nicole Rusek will end her Niles West varsity volleyball career with a bang. Rusek is a major reason behind the team's winning record.

A varsity outside hitter since her sophomore year, Rusek was elected captain of the team this year, a testament to her teammates' appreciation of her skills.

Rusek has a total of 263 kills, 262 digs, 28 aces, 29 blocks and a pass rating of 2.4 out of 3.

Rusek's success is the culmination of years of hard work. She has been playing volleyball since she was in seventh grade and loves the game. "I love [volleyball] because because it does not allow you to dwell on your mistakes," Rusek said. "You always have to keep your head up and move forward in order to stay in the game."

Although she is a stellar individual, the team's aspect of the game appeals to Rusek as well. "I also love the fact that [volleyball] is a team sport and in order to succeed, everyone has to give their best, and every other teammate supports one another to accomplish that."

Rusek definitely has the support of her teammates.

"Nicole is a great team player and she always gives her full

effort. She knows what to do to pick us up when we are down. She brings a ton of energy to each game," junior back row mate Kelly Kleppin said.

Senior back row player Elise Lee concurs. "She never gives up. She never lets us give up, either. Her enthusiasm shines through no matter the score of the game," Lee said.

The feeling is mutual. "It was a great season. I am going to miss everything about [playing with this team]" Rusek said.

Rusek said that her proudest moment came when she was named captain this year and all-conference last year.

"Being voted captain made me realize that my other teammates

really look up to me, and it only makes me want to work harder," Rusek added.

Rusek plans to continue working on her game in college, on either an interscholastic or club team.

Head coach Stacy Metoyer expressed appreciation for Rusek's contributions.

"Nicole is a very talented volleyball player who has worked very hard to achieve her success. She has worked hard in the off season as well as the regular season to achieve her goals. She is a role-model to the school and the volleyball program," Metoyer said.

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