

# Section 1 Basketball Tournaments To Return To County Center

BY RICH THOMASELLI

WHITE PLAINS – After two years of playing the Section 1 boys' and girls' basketball championships at Pace University – a decision that drew bitter and acrimonious feelings and debate to many in the high school basketball community – the tournaments are returning to the Westchester County Center.

Section 1 made the announcement last week that it has reached an agreement with county officials to restore the boys' and girls' tournaments to the storied venue.

Pace's Goldstein Center hosted the boys' and girls' finals in 2018 and '19, drawing outrage from athletic directors, basketball coaches, athletes, officials and many members of the media.

That group helped keep the County Center in the picture by having most schools agree to play semifinal games at the facility in each of the last two seasons, sacrificing home games.

"From 1933 until 2018, the historic County Center played host to these pivotal games where high school hoops legends raised trophies and made memories that will last a lifetime,"

Westchester County Executive George Latimer said in a statement. "When I was a boy on the South Side of Mount Vernon, we looked forward to seeing our hometown Knights play for the Gold Ball each season – and now I am elated to say that these Westchester moments will return to their rightful home."

# 850 Pounds and Counting!

BY ERIC GROSS

Mike Palen continues to amaze.

The 78-year-old Mahopac resident, who has been weightlifting since the age of 14, serves as an inspiration to young and old alike with his lifting ability that has surpassed 850 pounds.

Palen recalled lifting his first weight constructed from an old piece of concrete, which was fabricated into a barbell. "I fell in love with the sport that allowed me to remain in good physical condition for my entire life," he said, adding "weights have allowed me to play sports at an older age than folks my age would never consider, such as volleyball, racquetball and baseball."

Palen's original specialty was a military press of 265 pounds and a clean and jerk of 315 pounds accompanied by a snatch of 235 pounds with a body weight of 165 pounds.

While Mike's dream of entering the Olympics never materialized due to military service, marriage and raising a family, he has kept active with weight lifting currently working out at the New York Sports Club in Baldwin Place three times each week.

He credits his membership in "Silver Sneakers" which he described as a "great way of providing free membership at health clubs nationwide. Hopefully, this program will allow many seniors like me to maintain their health while supporting longevity and reducing health care costs."

Mike's routine begins each workout with half squats containing 315 pounds with reps of four working his way up to 450 pounds off the rack unassisted. He admitted refraining from full squats in order to "save my knees."

Once he has warmed up, Palen begins a heavy lift routine by adding 45 pound plates two at a time until he reaches the weight he can handle on that particular day which usually ranges between 675 pounds to 800 pounds. He has recently lifted 855 pounds in his heavy routine and noted that he begins with the "lift to better utilize my fresh strength."

The remainder of his two-hour routine consists of a bench press, curls, triceps, calves and military presses.

Palen refrains from partaking in the dead-lift common in the Strong Man competition where giants of men lift as much as 1,070 pounds of weight. Mike said he participated in the dead-lift years ago but no longer because "this is the worst thing for your back."

People often ask Mike



"why do you do this?" His response: "Because I can."

Palen realizes that such weights may be within reach for younger men but "I like to show them that a guy who is 78 years old, stands five feet eight inches tall and weighs 185 pounds can inspire others my age to join Silver Sneakers at an older age and stay fit. Besides, keeping in physical shape helps the mind and body from getting old."

Jose Ramirez, manager of the gym and New York Sports Club's assistant manager Chris Herteleney, both described Mike as encouraging to others. "The guy really motivates those in the club to try even harder. Mike is truly amazing," said Herteleney.

When not in the weight room, Mike, a retired business executive, works on the family's vacation home in Amenia built by hand which he admitted "enjoying tremendously."

Palen grew up in Westchester and attended Annunciation Grade School, Stepinac High School, Westchester Community College and Manhattan College.

He and his bride of 54 years, Sandra, have been blessed with three children and three grandchildren.

Mike's hope is that others continue to be inspired by his dedication and determination to keep fit: "Exercise keeps you young and helps you to do everyday chores easier. Many people my age can't even turn their heads without pain. A few minutes of stretching each day keeps the pain away while lifting weights allows you to stay in shape at any age."

Palen's message: "Stay young!"



PHOTOS BY ERIC GROSS

Mike Palen, weightlifter, in a calm moment, above. Center and top, lifting at the New York Sports Club

# Mascetta Shines At States



PHOTO PROVIDED

Joe Mascetta, far left, had a standout performance at the Track and Field Championships over the weekend.

MIDDLETOWN – Joe Mascetta of Carmel High School shined over the weekend at the New York State Public High School Athletic Association track and field championships.

The ultimate meet of the year was held at Faller Field in nearby Middletown.

Mascetta had a strong showing in the pentathlon, placing ninth overall in Division I (large schools) with a total of 3,096 points. That total was good enough for fifth among public schools, as private and parochial schools are allowed to compete simultaneously at states.

Mascetta's top-10 placement was second-best among Section 1 athletes. John Poplowski of Walt Whitman won the overall event with 3,477 points.

Mascetta's big event was the high jump, where he tied for third.

–Rich Thomaselli

# McNerney To Play Basketball At Salve Regina



PHOTO PROVIDED

Shane McNerney, a standout for the Carmel Rams on the basketball court, will continue to play in college.

CARMEL – Carmel High School boys' basketball star Shane McNerney will continue his hoops career while in college.

McNerney will attend and play at Salve Regina University, a Division III school located in Newport, Rhode Island.

Carmel hosted a commitment ceremony for McNerney. Division III schools do not offer scholarships so there is no actual signing of a National Letter of Intent.

However, schools are able to offer academic, merit-based and need-based scholarships, including to athletes.

The Seahawks were 9-16 last year; the program has not had a winning season since going 17-11 in 2013-14.

–Rich Thomaselli

# Get Kids Vaccinated For Summer Camp

While a number of counties in New York State are requiring that all children be vaccinated against measles in the wake of this year's epidemic, Putnam County health officials are not mandating such action but are strongly suggesting that vaccinations occur.

Commissioner of Health Dr. Michael Nesheiwat reminded the public Monday: "The best protection against measles remains broad vaccination coverage. While some of our neighboring counties are fighting measles outbreaks, here in Putnam County we currently do not have any cases. Still, we are on alert and working diligently with community partners to prevent any cases."

Dr. Nesheiwat noted that at the county's annual camp operators' seminar in April, "communicable disease nursing staff presented training about preventing this contagious disease to the operators. We also just recently disseminated to them explicit measles prevention guidelines from the New York State Department of Health. It is important to emphasize and urge all residents and visitors, who will be working in, or attending summer camps, to help prevent the spread of measles by checking their own immunity, and if necessary getting vaccinated."

Unlike Putnam's neighbors in Rockland, Westchester and Orange counties where measles is running rampant, there is no measles outbreak anywhere in Putnam.

–Eric Gross

# High Achievers

On Saturday, May 11, on the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) campus quadrangle, 1,019 bachelor's degrees were awarded during the university's 151st commencement ceremony.

Megan Hendrie of Brewster, was awarded a bachelor of science degree in biomedical engineering with high distinction.

Laurel Higham of Patterson, was awarded a bachelor of science degree in robotics engineering with high distinction.

Karl Rosenfeld of Brewster, was awarded a bachelor of arts degree in interactive media and game development.

# Free HIV Testing Available In Putnam

More than one million people are living with HIV in the United States with one in seven unaware that they have contracted the disease.

The Putnam County Health Department wants to do its part in reducing the number and has scheduled free rapid HIV testing and counseling sessions on June 27 at the department's headquarters at 1 Geneva Road off Routes 312 and I-84 in Southeast.

Health Commissioner Dr. Michael Nesheiwat explained that "early diagnosis allows for prompt treatment which makes a huge difference in the patient's outcome and

can help limit the spread of the virus."

The Centers for Disease Control reported recently that in 2017, 24 percent of all new HIV diagnoses were among the youth – aged 13 to 24. However, the CDC advised that those over the age of 50 have many of the same HIV risk factors as younger people but are less aware of the risk.

Dr. Nesheiwat reported regionally the "burden of HIV is heaviest in NYC while 22 percent of New Yorkers with diagnosed HIV reside outside of the five boroughs."

Dr. Nesheiwat said in the

early stages of an HIV infection the "person often feels fine. The only way to know if you are infected is to get tested. Results will be ready in only 20 minutes. Even if you test positive for HIV, numerous medications now exist to treat the virus and early diagnosis has transformed patient outcomes allowing for long and productive lives."

No appointments are necessary for the testing. Dr. Nesheiwat stressed that "privacy and confidentiality will be ensured."

–Eric Gross