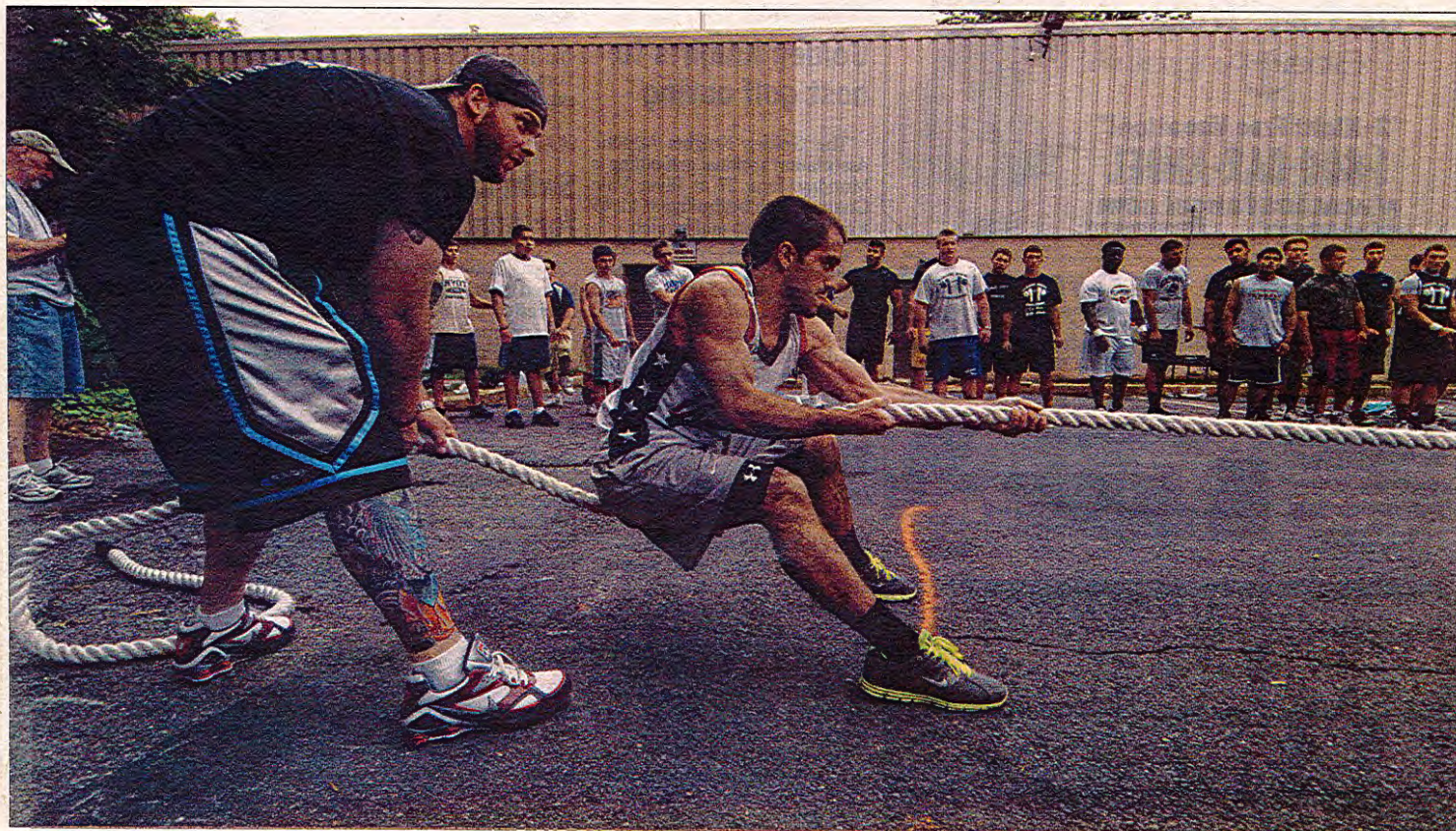


SPORTS



STAFF PHOTO BY COLLEEN WHITE

Joe LoRusso pulls a 4,500-pound truck during the Strongman Competition held at Varsity House in Old Tappan June 11.

Big boys raise bigger bucks

"I wasn't coming back until I heard you could win a sword," Jordan "Migs" Migliore of Closter, said, laughing.

Migliore was talking about the top prize given out at the third annual Strongman Challenge, which took place at Varsity House in Old Tappan June 11 to benefit the Michael LaViola Foundation. In turn the foundation donates funds for Pediatric Sarcoma cancer research. LaViola lost his battle to the disease in Feb. 2008 at age 20.

According to Varsity House General Manager Dan Goodman the prizes are replicas of swords of William Wallace (in "Braveheart"), "Gladiator" and "Conan the Barbarian."

Migliore, who graduated from NV/Demarest, is one of the athletes that has competed in all three contests.

One guy who did not come back, at least as a competitor, was Chris Kenneally, who said he was in training as a financial advisor. Kenneally played football with LaViola at NV/Old Tappan and later at SUNY-Bany.

"I graduated college and it's time to move on in my life," he

said. "I'm here to support the Varsity House family and Mike LaViola and show the La Violas how much we care. I'm not competing so I concentrated on getting people here. I also donated a check."

There were plenty of other former local high school athletes on hand to cheer on the competitors.

Running back/linebacker Tom Caporale, who is now an assistant football coach at Springfield College; quarterback/safety Vinny Esposito, who played football in Italy last year; and lineman James Thompson, who coaches football and baseball at NV/Demarest were all teammates of Goodman when the Norsemen made it to the Group 3 football finals in 2005.

GENEROUS VENDORS

"The amount of support we have received before and during the event has been unbelievable," said Goodman. "We have more sponsors, vendors and food than ever before. I couldn't ask for more. I have checks in my pocket and people are handing me cash. It's pretty crazy."

Baviello's Italian Deli and

ON MY MIND

J.C. BAUMULLER



Catering has donated food to all three of the Strongman Challenges. Deli owner Carol Baviello first met Mike LaViola Sr. when she owned Cresskill Bagels.

"He (Mike Sr.) asked me if I would help out," said Baviello. "It's a good cause so that's why I did it. The kids are doing a great thing. They are all customers of mine so we are helping each other. I was the only sponsor the first two years and the food was all for the kids. It was not to sell. Now we can sell food because of the other vendors."

The other food vendors Baviello is referring to include Rudy's Pizza of Closter, Mario's Pizza of Norwood, Butterworth Bagels of Old Tappan and ShopRite of Northvale. Thanks to all this extra food a \$5 charge for "All You Can Eat" earned more money for the foundation.

"ShopRite donated a pallet of food," said Goodman. "We have enough food to feed Old Tappan."

There were also many more contestants in this year's challenge. Goodman estimated that it was "double the number" from last year.

"We have a couple of contestants from Massachusetts," he said. "There are a lot of random guys."

"How many gyms do this?" said Jim LoRusso, a former varsity baseball catcher at NVOT. "Guys from other gyms are coming here."

'BADDEST GUY WE HAVE'

LoRusso was there to help record the results of the competitors, but his younger brother Joe was competing in the high school division for the second time.

"I missed the first year," Joe LoRusso said, "because I only weighed 120 pounds."

Joe LoRusso, who has "bulked up" to 140, took up ultimate fighting three years ago and he said it was something he was good at so he stayed with it. He added that training for the strongman events helps him with the ultimate fighting and ultimate

SEE BUCKS, PAGE 70

Strongman champs COLLEGE/PROFESSIONAL

1. Jordan Migliore, NV/Demarest
2. Kyle Elliott, Cresskill
3. Yamir Ortiz, Pascack Valley

VARSITY

1. Andrew Trumbetti, NV/Demarest
2. Joe Davis, Belleville
3. Skylar Dennerlein, NV/Demarest

JUNIOR VARSITY

1. Rocky Giovino, NV/Demarest
2. Zach Alsharif, NV/Old Tappan
3. Anthony Belfort, NV/Demarest

BUCKS

FROM PAGE 69

fighting training makes him a strong competitor cardio-wise in the strongman events.

"Pound for pound he is the baddest guy we have," said Joe Riggio, who is Varsity House head of strength and conditioning. "He trains four times a week and never misses a workout. He is one of our hardest workers."

One of the devices Joe LoRusso uses during training is an "elevation mask," which simulates high elevation, giving the wearer less oxygen.

"It's like a gas mask with different nozzles," Joe LoRusso explained. "That thing is crazy."

During the competition Joe LoRusso used his increased size and strength to pull the 4,500-pound truck up the length of the course.

One competitor that was making his debut was Brian Henderson of Cresskill. The 2010 graduate starred in football and baseball for the Cougars. He is going to play football at The College of New Jersey in the fall and is using Varsity House to help him pre-

pare for the season.

"I've been training here since December," he said. "Dan [Goodman] was telling us about this. It's a pretty crazy competition for a really good cause. Everything goes to charity which is great. We're all excited to compete against each other."

BIGGEST WINNER IS CHARITY

Thanks to the competitors and the generous sponsors and vendors this year's event raised \$10,000. Last year's event earned \$6,500.

And when the final results were tabulated, NV/Old Tappan freshman Andrew Trumbetti, who was forced to compete in the varsity level, won anyway.

"He's 6'3 and weighs 230 pounds," said Riggio. "That's why he competed at the higher level."

NV/Old Tappan freshman Rocky Giovinazzo won at the junior varsity level.

At the College/Professional level Migliore said he felt he lost something that he always had counted on in the first two strongman challenges - his superior size.

"I only got Kyle [Elliott of Cresskill] by one pound," he said.

"And Amit [Rai of Cresskill] is 10 pounds heavier than I am. My weight advantage is gone."

"Migs" lost 14 pounds, down to 281, although he said he did not lose any strength. He must be right because when the results were tabulated Migliore was declared the winner of the College/Pro level.

"It came down to Kyle and I, two Division 1 linemen, in the Truck Pull," Migliore said. "I was in first place at the time so he had to go first. He pulled it in 19.5 and I thought, 'I don't know if I can pull this off.' I yanked it as hard as I could and won by less than half a second. It was ridiculously close."

With the victory Migliore won the Conan the Barbarian sword.

"Obviously this was not the only reason I came back," joked Migliore. "But it was a serious incentive. It was nice to win it. Anyone would have been happy with the William Wallace or Gladiator sword. But this was the best of the three."

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