

Watt Named OVAC Coach of the Year

By DOUG HUFF
Sports Editor

Chuck Watt received a retirement 'gift' Wednesday night from the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference.

The outgoing Steubenville Big Red boys' basketball coach received the OVAC Coach of the Year award before a crowd estimated at 1,000 at the fifth annual Kroger-OVAC 'Banquet of the Champions' at the Wheeling Civic Center.

Watt, who has relinquished his 23-year job as Big Red basketball boss, becomes only the third two-time recipient of the 22nd annual award sponsored by the Wheeling News-Register. Big Red football coach Reno Saccoccia won last year and in 1985. Football coach Lou Nocida won at Magnolia in 1973 and Sistersville in 1979.

Watt, who was the 1971 honoree, coached Big Red last season to a 21-3 won-lost record, his eighth OVAC Class 4A crown and a berth in the Ohio Division II regional tournament finals. His 23-year record was 350-144 including 11 sectional titles and four district crowns. He also coached the Steubenville baseball team to a 10-year record of 194-90 and currently guides the Steubenville Post 33 American Legion baseball squad.

The 1945 Steubenville High and College of Steubenville graduate was followed in the balloting of area news media by Shadyside football coach David (Ty) Fleming and Wheeling Central basketball coach Jim Dailer.

"No one can receive a coaching award entirely on his own," Watt told the gathering. "I accept it on behalf of our team and staff including Ray Saccoccia and Rich Donnelly. It is a recognition of our team this year.

"I have known few coaches who didn't work hard with the kids they had. Being at Steubenville



Mike McNeil/The Intelligencer

Chuck Watt, who recently resigned as head basketball coach at Steubenville High, was awarded his second Ohio Valley Athletic Conference Coach of the Year honor. The award encompasses all sports, and Watt is just the third

(two-time winner. Watt (left) is pictured here with OVAC Executive Secretary Sam Mumley (middle) and Big Red Athletic Director Reno Saccoccia, who doubles as the football coach and is also a two-time Coach of the Year winner.

students. I just hope everyone here gets as much enjoyment out of athletics as I have," Watt said.

The retiring coach wasn't the only honoree Wednesday night.

Receiving scholarship awards totaling the estimated \$10,000

nolia (West Virginia U.); McDonald's: Terri Lynne Castellucci, Brooke (Notre Dame); Pepsi-Cola: Ryan Morgan, Tyler County; Wheeling National Bank: Barbara Leasure (Fairmont State); Baseball Coaches: Kyla

Rose; Daniel M. Burke Wrestling: David Heath, St. Clairsville (Washington & Jefferson); George Kovalick Wrestling: Ed Neely, Weirton Madonna (Washington & Jefferson).

Sidon of Martins Ferry and Cal Giffin Track Service Award to Ed Davis.

Athletes and coaches from 47 OVAC championship teams in 16 sports also received pennants.

Guest speaker was Arizona State University wrestling coach Bobby Douglas, an OVAC product from Bridgeport High School.

Douglas directed his talk to the honored youth and asked them to "pass the torch which makes up the spirit of the Ohio Valley. The athletes are great in the OVAC because of the tradition. I have enjoyed it and now you have enjoyed it. Carry on this experience and pass it on to the future generations. This special, unique breed of person and athlete is what makes the OVAC the greatest conference in America. I was proud to compete in the OVAC but nobody makes it alone. All of you have people who help you along the way. I had George Kovalick as a coach and I never would have made it without him."

The former Olympic wrestler who competed at West Liberty State and Oklahoma State told the gathering that "education is the greatest thing to happen to you. A degree means more than any awards. When I graduated from high school, a teacher gave me the book 'The Power of Positive Thinking' and it started me off on the right foot.

"I have found seven steps to success and anybody can use them: (1) the ability to dream because they do come true; (2) a plan of knowing where you want to go and how to get there; (3) discipline which is the glue that holds everything together; (4) desire—it has to be caught; it can't be taught; (5) association: stay close to successful people and it will rub off; (6) faith—believe you can do it; there is no greater

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Past 'Coach of Year' Selections

- 1969 — **FRANK BAXTER**, Bridgeport, whose basketball team was runner-up in the Ohio Class A tournament and finished with a 25-2 record.
- 1970 — **HENRY "HERK" LAZASZ**, Warren Consolidated. His basketball team won 22 straight before bowing in regional play.
- 1971 — **CHARLES "CHUCK" WATT**, Steubenville. His basketball team won 21 of 22 before a two-point overtime loss to ultimate state triple-A champion Walnut Ridge in regional competition.
- 1972 — **TOM KORAB**, Steubenville Catholic Central. His 1971 football team posted the first perfect record in the history of the school and was the press services' choice as Ohio double-A champion.
- 1973 — **LOU NOCIDA**, Magnolia. His 1972 football team was state double-A champion and his '73 basketball team were runners-up in the state tournament.
- 1974 — **BILL HINEGARDNER**, John Marshall, and **JAY CIRCOSTA**, Woodsfield. Hinegardner's wrestling team won third successive West Virginia championship. Circosta produced first perfect record in Woodsfield history as Redskins won OVAC Class A and Pioneer Valley League Crowns.
- 1975 — **RICH WILINSKI**, Toronto. His 1974 football team had a perfect season, the school's first since 1948.
- 1976 — **SAM ANDY**, Wheeling High. In the school's last year of existence, his basketball team left the state something to remember it by — a triple-A West Virginia championship, captured at Charleston.
- 1977 — **TOM VICHICH**, Shadyside. His 1976 track team was the first from the Ohio Valley area to win an Ohio state championship.
- 1978 — **TERRY LEGGETT**, Buckeye Trail. In the first year of this Guernsey County consolidation, his basketball team won 21 straight before bowing by one point to Indian Valley South.
- 1979 — **LOU NOCIDA**, Sistersville. He became the first two-time winner of the "News-Register" OVAC Coach of the Year" honor. His '78 football team accomplished a dramatic turnaround from the '77 season that produced just one victory and claimed 11 in a row before bowing in the state playoff finals. His Tiger teams subsequently won five W.Va. state Class A championships and were in the finals seven straight years.
- 1980 — **JIM THOMAS**, Wheeling Central. His '79 football team (12-1) captured an OVAC title and the W. Va. state double-A crown.
- 1981 — **JOHN STANKO**, Bishop Donahue. His basketball team won the W.Va. single-A championship.
- 1982 — **MELVIN COLEMAN**, Wintersville. His basketball team won 23 in a row before bowing in the regional and was OVAC 4-A champion.
- 1983 — **GEORGE "SKIP" PROSSER**, Wheeling Central. After winning a state title in 1982, he took his basketball team to the state tourney finals again.
- 1984 — **MARK HUFFMAN**, Skyvue. With only one senior in the lineup, his cagers went 23-4 and reached the Ohio state Class A tournament semi-finals.
- 1985 — **RENO SACCOCCIA**, Steubenville. His 1984 football team was undefeated in 13 starts and won the Ohio Division II championship.
- 1986 — **PAUL "BUD" BILLIARD**, Brooke. His 1985 team won the first West Virginia Class AAA football championship in the school's history and capped its campaign by avenging a season-opening loss to Parkersburg.
- 1987 — **GEORGE STRAGER**, St. Clairsville. The valley's all-time winningest football coach, he piloted Red Devils to a 9-1 record in regular season and two playoff victories before a one-point loss to Chargin Falls Kenston.
- 1988 — **DAVE LaMOTTE**, Bridgeport. Coached Bridgeport to Ohio Division III wrestling championship, first state mat title for the Blue since 1959.
- 1989 — **RENO SACCOCCIA**, Steubenville. His football team won 13 straight before losing to Akron Buchtel in the Ohio Division II finals for the second straight year. Big Red won OVAC four-A title and made playoffs for eighth straight year. Saccoccia is only second coach ever to win N-R award twice.