



BUBBA KAPRAL, right, was presented with the Bill Van Horne Wheeling News Register OVAC Coach of the Year award during Monday's annual OVAC Banquet of Champions held at WesBanco Arena in Wheeling. Pictured with Kapral is OVAC Executive Secretary Tom Rataiczak. Kapral led his St. John Central girls track team to the Division III state championship last year. Kapral had been a finalist for the award two other times and became only the third track coach and first girls' track coach to win the award. *Additional images may be found at cu.timesleaderonline.com*

T-L Photos/SETH STASKEY

Kapral captures OVAC honor

• Long-time St. John coach becomes first girls honoree in track

By **JIM ELLIOTT**
For The Times Leader

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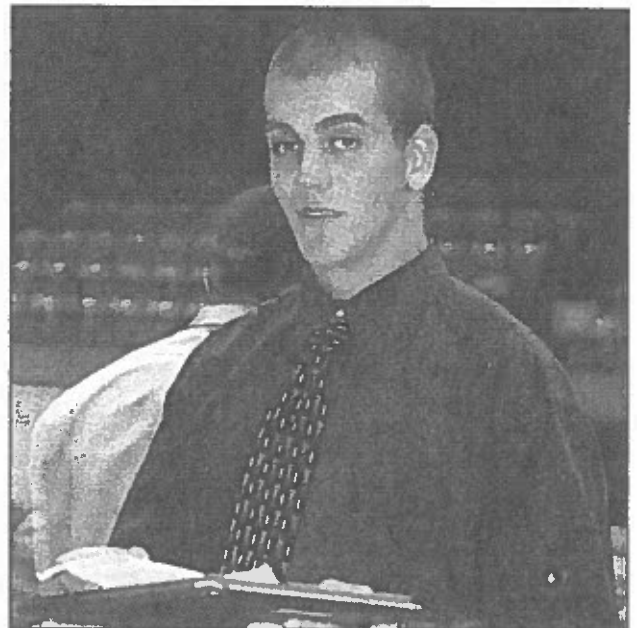
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Kapral had twice previously been a finalist for the award.

"Once you get to the final five, that's an honor in itself. You don't expect to win it. You have Mike Young winning all those state titles, Penn Kurtz, who I thought did a tremendous job this year. Believe me, it was numbing. It's like when you win the state title itself,



BEALLSVILLE'S JIMMY Reisz was a double winner during Monday's annual OVAC Banquet of Champions. Reisz officially received the Bierkorette Award he won during January's, OVAC Wrestling Tournament and he received the Matt Salsberry Wrestling Scholarship.



Photo by Seth Staskey

Bellaire St. John track coach Bubba Kapral, center, is pictured with The Intelligencer/Wheeling News-Register Ohio Sports Editor Shawn Rine, left, and West Virginia Sports Editor Jim Elliott, right, at the OVAC Banquet of Champions on Monday at WesBanco Arena. Kapral was awarded the Wheeling News-Register/Bill Van Horne OVAC Coach of the Year award.

He's the One

St. John's Kapral honored as the top coach in OVAC

By **JIM ELLIOTT**
W.Va. Sports Editor

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That's part of the reason Kapral was a finalist for the award, because he and his St. John girls' team reached the pinnacle of their sport last spring. After back-to-back state runner-up finishes in Ohio's

Division III, Kapral's group won the 2007 state title.

That's a rarity among OVAC track programs, as they joined St. Clairsville's 1979 girls' team as the only Ohio Valley teams to win Ohio's biggest prize.

"The one thing that spoke volumes about our program was that we were state runner-ups, state runner-ups, then winning the state title," Kapral said. "In Ohio, that's tough to do. In Ohio, it's only been done one other time (by an OVAC program) ... it's a nice accomplishment. It's eight girls scoring and assistant coaches doing great things."

Kapral also knows it's tough, for a track coach, to gain notice in a football and basketball-crazed area, and he thanked the OVAC committee for recognizing what his team accomplished.

"Obviously I'm biased," he said. "I ran track in college and high school, and I've coached it for 20 years so I would like to think track is a major sport."

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"We had eight girls score in the (2007) state track meet," Kapral pointed out. "Well five of them are still out there — Natalie Perzanowski, Kelly Perzanowski, Justene Delman, Kylie Kidder, and Alexis Campbell. All of the 'prime timers' from last year are back, so if we stay healthy, you know you're to be in the mix again, and that's all you can hope for. And we like to think we will be."

Kapral, the managing editor of The Times Leader and

a former sports writer and sports editor at the newspaper, has a unique perspective on Van Horne, the longtime Wheeling News-Register Sports Editor for whom the award is named.

"When I started, Bill Van Horne and Cal Pokas were the two idols," Kapral said. "Track and Field was big to Bill Van Horne. He was passionate about track. It was like football and basketball. I had a great relationship with him, both working-wise along with coaching. He was a heavyweight."

During a 20-year career, Kapral's teams have won 11 OVAC track championships, including the past seven in a row on the girls' side — an OVAC record. He has been named the Eastern District Coach of the Year in each of the past five years, and he has coached 13 state gold medalists and seven Division-I athletes.

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OVAC Coach of the Year Finalists Named

Kurtz, Kapral, Jebbia, Young and McLean in running for Wheeling News-Register/Bill Van Horne honor

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FINALISTS

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OVAC Coach of the Year finalists set

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OVAC Banquet of Champions Monday

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Along with the recognizing of the champions, some 35 scholarships, totaling more than \$27,000 in financial rewards will be presented at this time.

The list of scholarships include: Kroger (2); Pepsi-Cola (2), Bodkin Wilson & Kozicki Co. Soccer, Douglas Pilney Memorial Golf, OVAC Softball, Ohio Valley Football Officials, Samuel A. Mumley, WesBanco (2), OVAC Boosters (8), Scholastic Sports Marketing, Clare Kapral Track, Henry Laszsz Basketball (2), Richard Potts Basketball (2), Stephen E. Hanning Memorial, DeLuca Realy Volleyball, OVAC Cheerleader (2), Wrestling (5), OVAC Baseball and OVAC Basketball Coaches Clinic.

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OF THE JEFFERSONIAN

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Led by individual state champion and Tennessee recruit Ryan Beabout, Wheeling Park had four all-state runners in Kyle Gramlich (5th at state meet); Courtney Yaeger (4th), and Logan Wojcik (9th) between the two teams.

On the boys' side, Jebbia will welcome back five of seven

Coach of the Year award

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Bubba Kapral



Penn Kurtz



Michael Jebbia



Brett McLean



Mike Young

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- 1989, '90, and '91;
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s in 1989, '90, and
e was named the Big
Sports Coach of the
2005 and '06; his teams
ate championships in
'06, and '07, including
back perfect seasons;
was the runner-up for
's OVAC Coach of the
ard.

Brett McLean (St. Clairsville football coach). McLean, a Brooke High and Mount Union graduate, learned the game from some of the best in Paul "Bud" Billiard and Larry Kehres, respectively.

It's clear from his work early in his career, he was paying attention. McLean has led St. Clairsville to back-to-back Ohio Division IV playoff appearances, including its first perfect regular season since 1986, in 2007.

For his efforts, he was named The Intelligencer, Times Leader, Eastern District, and Big Season Sports Coach of Year. McLean was an assistant coach on the South squad of the Ohio North South Classic, which defeated the North 55-6, the largest margin of victory in game history. He was also the head coach of the 2007 Rudy Mumley OVAC All-Star Classic, which his Ohio team won 7-6. St. Clairsville closed the season as Division IV, Region 15 runner-ups; Buckeye 8 Champions; and an Ohio AP ranking of sixth in Division IV.

In six seasons at St. Clairsville, He's compiled a record of 40-24.

Bubba Kapral (St. John Central girls' track). Kapral is in his 20th season in charge of the St. John Central track and field programs, and at the moment, none have been better than last season. That's when Kapral's talented charges, who had been knocking at the door for three seasons, blew it open and won the Ohio Division III state championship.

The Irish were state runner-ups in 2005 and '06.

Kapral's teams have won 11 OVAC track championships, including the past seven in a row on the girls' side.

He has been named the Eastern District Coach of the Year in each of the past five years, and he has coached 13 state gold medalists and seven Division-I athletes.

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On the boys' side, Jebbia will welcome back five of seven athletes, losing Beabout and Brandon Janesczko.

Wheeling Park has had all five boys make the all-OVAC team the last two seasons, with Yaeger making the grade on the girls' side each of the last three years.

