

BOSTON MOVES ON

The Celtics take down the Wizards in Game 7
and move on to the Eastern Conference
Finals against the Cavaliers/18

The Intelligencer SPORTS

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TV/ENTERTAINMENT17

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Magruder Named OVAC Coach of the Year



Photo by Josh Strope

Former The Intelligencer and Wheeling News-Register sports editor Doug Huff, left, presents Wheeling Central softball coach Rick Magruder with the OVAC Bill Van Horne Coach of the Year award.

Softball coach led Knights to 33-0 record and state title

By **JOSH STROPE**
Sports Editor

WHEELING — Wheeling Central softball coach Rick Magruder has had plenty of success in his lengthy career coaching the Maroon Knights.

Even he was amazed at what his team accomplished last season. OVAC title. Sectional title. Regional title. State title. A perfect 33-0 record.

It was a season for the ages and Monday at the OVAC Banquet of Champions, Magruder was named the OVAC Bill Van Horne Coach of the Year.

"It is a great honor just to be nominated," Magruder said. "We go out and do what we love doing. We have fun at it. As long as it stays like that, we will keep at it."

Other finalists were St. Clairsville boys' track coach Tony Ciroli, Wheeling Park swimming and softball coach Pat Durkin, Shadyside wrestling coach Sean Grinch and Steubenville baseball coach Fred Heatherington.

The 33-0 mark is an OVAC record for softball and one that Magruder doesn't take lightly.

The Maroon Knights had few seniors and two sophomore pitchers, but they were talented. As the games went by and the victories piled up, Magruder and his coaching staff started to realize they had something special.

"We tell the kids to go out and play hard every day, take one game at a time," Magruder said.

"I know that is old, but that is the way you do it. We had two great young pitchers (Riley Bennington and Marissa Garlitz) and Allie Cook who was our catcher and the other seniors who were there.

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MAGRUDER

(Continued from Page 13)

"They were good leaders. Everything just fell into place. You have to have a lot of luck. Hit the ball and play good defense.

"When we were about 20-0, we started thinking this is pretty cool.

"As it got later in the season, you thought this might bust sometime. Our toughest game was the second game down state and we were losing 2-0. But we got a couple breaks and ended up winning and that was how our season went."

Magruder said the girls never talked about the feat during the season, worrying about the game that was in front of them. When it was

all said and done, Wheeling Central defeated Man, 7-2, to claim the school's first state softball championship since 2007.

"Nobody really mentioned, but I am sure they knew it," Magruder said. "I am sure in the back of their heads they thought about it and maybe talked with each other. But they always went out and played.

"It was an amazing season. Something like that doesn't happen very often. We were just fortunate and very lucky.

"(Despite the bullseye this year), they take it in stride. They just go out and play and try to enjoy the ride."

Continued from page C1

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St. Clairsville won the Buckeye 8 and OVAC Class 4A titles along the way, too.

PAT DURKIN, Wheeling Park Girls' Swimming and Softball - This Patriots mentor led his teams to a brilliant season in two sports.

This past winter, Durkin, who was in his ninth season at the helm, watched his Patriots do something that had never been done in Park's illustrious athletic history when the girls' swim team captured the Class AAA state championship, fighting off Fairmont Senior, 144-142.

At the state meet, the Patriots claimed two state championships and placed five on the big school all-tournament team. Prior to arriving at the state meet, the Patriots won the OVAC Class 5A title and also the Region I title.

In the spring of 2016, the Patriots softball team advanced to the AAA state tournament in Vienna. After dropping an early game there, Park won three consecutive elimination games to reach the state final against Hurricane where it fell, 11-3, to finish as state runnerup.

Park was the sectional and regional champion and also qualified for the OVAC Tournament. All told, Park finished with a 20-13 record.

SEAN GRINCH, Shadyside Wrestling - This Tigers coach, who has been at the helm for four seasons, is a finalist for the second straight season after directing his team to an almost identical campaign this past winter.

Shadyside claimed its second consecutive Division III team tournament regional title and took part in the OHSAA State Team Tournament in late February. It also claimed its second straight OVAC Class 1A/2A dual team title along the way, edging Madonna on a late pin, 36-33.

In the individual tournament portion of the season, Shadyside was the OVAC

Class 1A/2A champion, accumulating 124.5 points with four placers.

In the postseason, Shadyside was the Barnesville sectional champion, finished fourth in the Coshocton district and 11th at the state tournament with 39.5 points.

FRED HEATHERINGTON, Steubenville Baseball - This veteran Big Red skipper was named the conference's top coach after the 1994 campaign and finds himself as a finalist again after yet another brilliant campaign in 2016.

Big Red advanced to their sixth state tournament in school history and fifth under Heatherington's watch before falling to eventual state champion Defiance in the Division II state semifinals at Huntington Park in Columbus. Big Red finished the season with a 25-3 record and were ranked second in the final coaches association state poll.

Heatherington, who has more than 550 career wins, has been in charge of the Big Red program for 28 seasons. During the course of the 2016 campaign, Steubenville won its 22nd OVAC title, 33rd sectional and 23rd district championship.

RICK MAGRUDER, Wheeling Central Softball - This veteran softball coach turned in a season that will long be remembered in Ohio Valley annals during the spring of 2016.

Magruder guided his Maroon Knights to a 33-0 season, which was capped with a West Virginia Class A state championship.

The Maroon Knights - also the OVAC Class 2A, sectional and regional champions - produced that memorable campaign despite having a relatively young cast. They had four seniors on that club and relied on two underclass pitchers in Riley Bennington and Marissa Garlitz.

In the state final, the Knights had no issues, rolling past Man, 7-2. During the course of the season, Wheeling Central took on a schedule of all comers, mixing in numerous games against West Virginia Class AAA schools and bigger Ohio schools, too.

Monday at WesBanco Arena, members of those teams, their coaches and academic honorees from throughout the Ohio Valley will be formally recognized at the annual OVAC Banquet of Champions, which begins at 6:30 p.m. Along with the presentation of the championship



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pennants, overall class champions and scholarships, the top coach will also be recognized with the presentation of the Bill Van Horne/News-Register OVAC Coach of the Year Award, which encompasses

the spring of 2016 along with the fall and winter sports of this school year. The finalists for the award, which has been presented since 1969, are Tony Cirroll (St. Clairsville boys' track), Pat Durkin

(Wheeling Park girls' swimming and softball), Sean Grinch (Shadyside wrestling), Fred Heatherington (Steubenville, baseball) and Rick Magruder (Wheeling Central softball).

Cirroll guided his Red Devils to a Division II state championship, which was the first in a male sport in St. C. athletic history. It was also the first male state title in boys' track and field in Belmont County since Shadyside accomplished

the feat in 1976. The Devils finished the state meet with 33 points, which was two points better than Lexington. The Red Devils scored in four events during the course of the 17-event meet, but won two individual state championships thanks to Malachi Mellera (high hurdles) and Jordan Vincent (long jump). They also finished highly in the intermediate hurdles and 400 relay. En route to the state

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OVAC Announces Five Coach of Year Finalists

Sunday News-Register
MAY 14, 2017

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The Times Leader

SPORTS

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Sunday,
May 14, 2017

OVAC Coach of the Year finalists named

• Award to be presented Monday
at Banquet of Champions

By **SETH STASKEY**
Times Leader Sports Editor

WHEELING – All of the nearly 70 Ohio Valley Athletic Conference championships for the 2016-17 school year have been decided.

Monday evening, at WesBanco Arena in Wheeling, members of those teams, their coaches and academic honorees from throughout the Ohio Valley will be formally recognized at the annual OVAC Banquet of Champions, which begins at 6:30 p.m.



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See, **COACH**, Page B2

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Here's a capsule look at the finalists in alphabetical order:

TONY CIROLI, St. Clairsville Boys Track – This highly successful two-sport, four-team coach reached the top of the mountain last June in Columbus.

Cirolì guided his Red Devils to a Division II state championship, which was the first in a male sport in St. C. athletic history. It was also the first male state title in boys' track and field in Belmont County since Shadyside accomplished the feat in 1976.

The Devils finished the state meet with 33 points, which was two points better than Lexington. The Red Devils scored in four events during the course of the 17-event meet, but won two individual state championships thanks to Malachi Mellema (high hurdles) and Jordan Vincent (long jump).

En route to the state meet, the Red Devils were district champions and scored 50 points in the regional, which tied for the regional championship with Lancaster Fairfield Union.

St. Clairsville won the Buckeye 8 and OVAC Class 4A titles along the way, too.

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OVAC's Coach of the Year to be announced at OVAC Banquet of Champions on Monday

By **SETH STASKEY**
For The Jeffersonian

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WHEELING Central softball coach Rick Magruder (right) poses with OVAC Executive Secretary Tom Ratalczak after being named OVAC Coach of the Year at Monday's Banquet of Champions at WesBanco Arena. Magruder led the Maroon Knights to a 33-0 record and a Class A state championship in 2016.

Photo/JOSH STROPE

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