

St. John's wins OVAC 1-A crown

Fighting Irish rally past Linsly, 8-4

By RICK DeLUCA
Times Leader Sports Writer

With just two days rest and the thought of a heartbreaking district final loss fresh in his mind, Rocky Swift did not do one thing — quit.

His team down by three runs just one out into the first inning, Swift was called on to put out the fire and give his St. John Central teammates a chance a catch up.

St. John's defending OVAC champs did exactly that rallying from a 3-0 deficit in the first with a six-run outburst in the fifth inning while rising the strong arm of Swift to pull out a thrilling 8-4 win over Linsly in the Class 1-A OVAC championship game at Vaccaro Field in Steubenville Saturday.

With the win, the Fighting Irish handed coach Tom Sliva his third straight OVAC title in four years at the SJC helm. St. John was also the regular season titlist and boosted its record to 22-4 on the season with the win.

Just three days earlier, the Fighting Irish suffered a tough loss to upstart Hiland in the Division III District finals in West Lafayette.

One game remains for the Irish as they take on Buckeye Local on Thursday at Perkins Field in Brookside for the EOBL title.

Coach Gary Sprague's Cadets suffered the tough OVAC title game loss as they closed the season

at 20-6. Linsly was edged out for the regular season title by St. John Central.

"Two days rest, that's pretty gutsy," Sliva said about his mound ace who pitched last on Wednesday. "He was (tired), but he was going to have to fall before he was coming out. I wasn't going to take him out. He is a senior, it's his last OVAC.

"That kid's all heart, Sliva added. "I told him, this is yours. You've played four years for me. I told him that after four years, this is yours. This is yours to win.

Swift didn't start on the mound, but came on with just one out in the first after starter Mark Hartlieb was the victim of three first inning doubles by the Cadets and found himself trailing 3-0.

Once Swift came to the mound, the momentum seemed to switch quickly to the Irish dugout as he ended the Cadets' first inning rally with two quick outs, then struck out two of three batters in the second. He finished with 10 Ks while walking five. Swift was touched for only three hits during his stint.

"Mark has done a good job for us this year for a sophomore," Sliva said. "We didn't know how strong Rocky would be so we tried to go as long as we could with Mark.

"Linsly has a very good hitting team so you can't make any mistakes against them and he made a couple early that they made him pay

for it, the Irish coach added. "But Mark pitched well for us all year and we look for some real big things from him the next two years.

Linsly jumped out to a quick 3-0 lead in the first after lead-off hitter Jon Kurtz opened with a double to left. Jason Clay's sac bunt moved Kurtz to third and a wild pitch brought him home.

DH Dan Buchwach reached on an error and scored as Dan Stephens blasted a shot off the left field fence for another double. Stephens advanced on a wild pitch then scored as Ryan Saari went to right center for a double. Swift came to the mound at that point and stopped the outburst with a K and pop up.

"Once he got them out of that inning, I think they knew he could work with them and that they would have to hold us off, Sliva said. "They've got a good pitcher and we jumped on him when we had to and they just played exceptional.

"Those four seniors really deserve that win. The district finals was a real disappointment. We had three championships to play in and we feel very fortunate to get the win in this one," Sliva said.

In the bottom of the third, St. John's plated a run after Joey Vavra reached on a fielders choice and error, advanced on Josh Shutler's dou-

ble and scored on a wild pitch.

In the fourth, the Irish added another tally on David Shutler's double to right center, Hartlieb's single between first and second and another costly wild pitch.

St. John did the major damage in the fifth. With one out, Eric Taylor singled past third and scored on Swift's double to the base of the fence in left. After a wild pitch and a change of pitchers, Willie Clegg singled by second to score Swift. David Shutler was hit by a pitch, Hartlieb reached on an error and Ben Shutler's fielder's choice plated a run.

The Irish rally continued as Matt Nardo doubled down the first base line for a pair and a 7-3 lead. Vavra's single to right scored Nardo.

Linsly managed to score once more in the sixth after R. J. Zitzelberger was hit by a pitch, advanced on a Buchwach single and scored on an error.

Josh Shutler closed with two singles and a double and Hartlieb had a double and single to lead the Irish. Buchwach and Kurtz had multiple hits for the Cadets.

Saari started on the mound for the Cadets recording three strikeouts and two walks pitching into the fifth.

Line score:
Linsly 300 001 0 - 4 8 2
St. John Central 001 180 x - 8 11 2
Batteries: Saari, Sines (5) and Zitzelberger; Hartlieb, Swift (1) and Clegg.



T-L Photo/PAULA GINTHER
DELIVERING A pitch during Saturday's OVAC 1-A championship game against Linsly is St. John Central ace Rocky Swift. The Irish rallied to pocket their third straight conference crown.

OVAC baseball semifinals set

By RICK DeLUCA
Times Leader Sports Writer

Three of the four defending OVAC baseball champions will return to the diamonds on Saturday looking for a repeat.

Thirteen others will be looking to start a streak.

At four locations on Saturday, the OVAC baseball playoffs will kick off with a pair of semi-final games at each site. The winners on Saturday will advance into next Saturday's OVAC championship games at Vaccaro Field in Steubenville.

By noon Saturday, eight teams will be taking the field to open semi-final action.

Bridgeport's Perkins Field in Brookside will host a pair, as will Magnolia High's diamond in New Martinsville, Brooke High in Wellsburg and Toronto High's Red Knight Field.

The top four finishers in the final OVAC regular season standings earned berths in Saturday's semis.

At Brookside, Class 3-A combatants St. Clairsville, the third seed, and Bellaire, the second seed, will play at noon. At 2 p.m. at Perkins, a Class 1-A contest will pit third-seeded Shadyside against second-seeded Linsly.

At Toronto, two defending champs and top seeds will look to advance. At noon, Class 4-A fourth-seeded Buckeye Local will take on a powerful Steubenville Big Red nine that comes in as a No. 1 seed with the valley's best record. At 2 p.m., possibly the valley's second-best, Toronto, takes on fourth seed Barnesville in a 2-A contest.

At Magnolia, fourth-seeded Frontier takes the field against defending Class 1-A champion and top-seeded St. John Central at noon. In the 2 p.m. fray, Class 3-A top-seed Magnolia battles fourth-seeded Harrison Central.

At Brooke, the noon game features Class 2-A third-seed Wheeling Central against second-seeded Steubenville Central. The 2 p.m. battle pits Class 4-A No. 3 seed Edison, against No. 2 seed John Marshall.

Meadowbrook, who failed to qualify for the playoffs this season, was the defending Class 3-A champion coming into the 2000 season. The Colts finished seventh in 3-A

this season.

This year's tournament features some of all-time winningest coaches in Ohio Valley baseball history and some of the best up and coming stars in the coach's box.

Magnolia's Dave Cisar comes into the playoffs as the winningest active coach with an amazing 556-254 career mark in 25 years at the helm.

St. Clairsville's Richard "Lefty" Hall joined the 500-win club this season as his Red Devils helped to boost his record to 501-305 in 33 years.

John Marshall's Bob Montgomery was another Ohio Valley coach who moved into the 500-win club this season. The Monarch coach opened the season at 497-228 and added 11 wins through the May 6 cut-off.

Linsly's Gary Sprague is closing in on the 400-win mark after his Cadets added 17 more wins to his 370-201 record that he started the season with.

Barnesville's Brad Wilson eclipsed the 300-win mark early in the season. He opened the season with a 296-196 career record.

Steubenville's Fred Heatherington, in only his 12th year, continues to get closer to the 250-win mark. He opened the season at 211-82 and his Big Red squad reeled off 25 more this season.

Edison's Bill Beattie started the season at 168-104 in 12 seasons,

Toronto's Matt Morrison opened with a 127-52 in just six seasons and his club had added over 25 more this year. Terry Edwards, well into the list of most wins among active coaches, is in his 15th season of a highly-successful career.

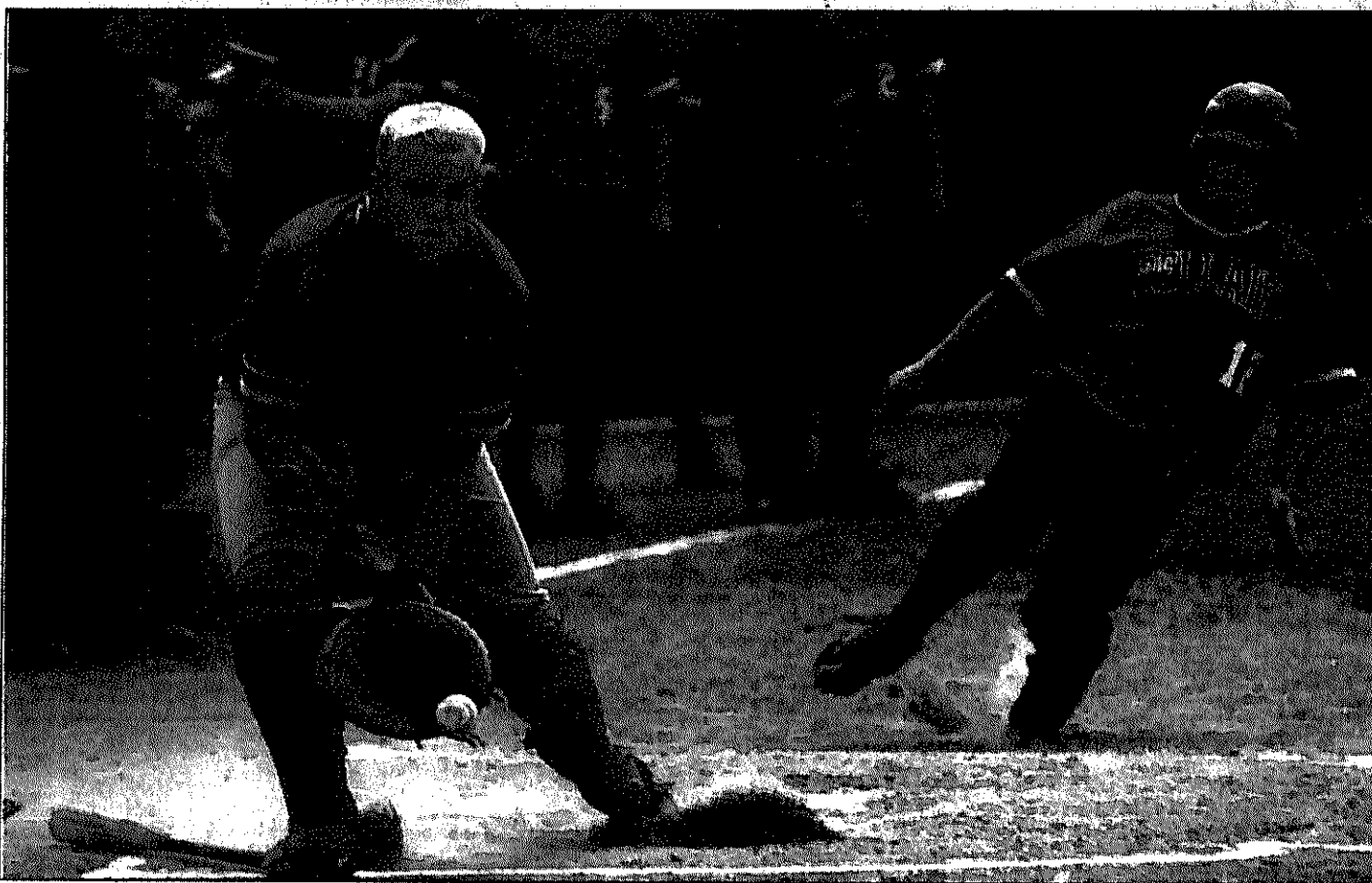
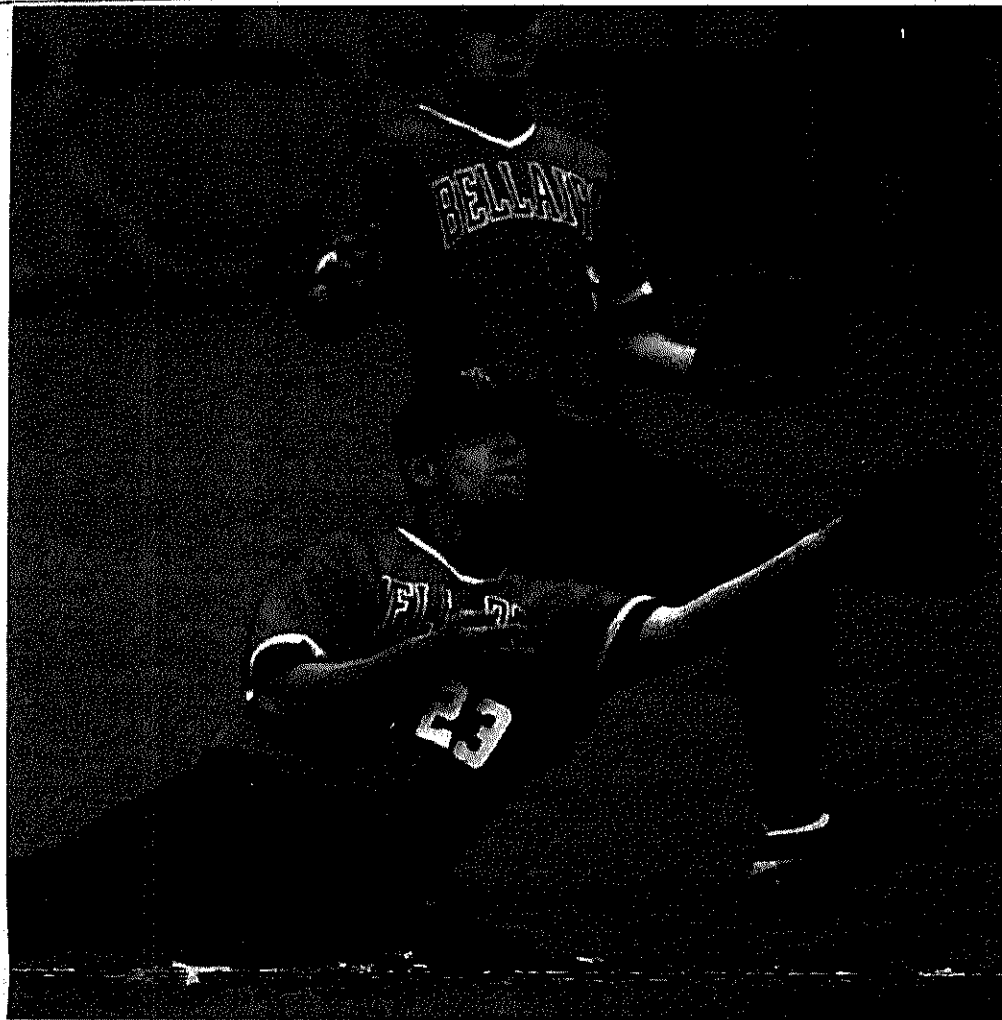
The tournament also won't be without its top-notch players with the Class 1-A field including players like Dan Buchwach, Ryan Saari, Dan Stephens and R. J. Zitzelberger of Linsly, Rocky Swift, Mike Coss, Eric Taylor and Josh Shutler of St. John Central and Trent Ging, Cory Clark, Bob Emery and Derek Meek of Shadyside.

The 2-A field will feature players like Mitch Lemasters, Scott Stutler, Bill Kuhn and Randy Littlecot of Toronto, Mike Fisher, Jake Lewis and Clay Wilson of Barnesville, Jason Morelli, Ryan Rankin and Luke Witkowski of Steubenville Central

and J. T. Richardson, Todd Flading and Jared Zavolta of Wheeling Central.

Competition in 3-A will feature players like Steve Iams, Rich Brookover, Josh King and Rich Peferman of Magnolia, Chris Ofat Frankie Hibbitts, Derek Frizzi and Matt Frizzi of Bellaire, Ben Baiocco, Chris Baugh and D. J. Hynes of St. Clairsville and Matt Phillips, Joe Buxton and B. J. Kuhn of Harrison Central.

In the 4-A field are standouts like Matt Vein, Chris Schloss, Mike Joyce and Ralph Burke of Steubenville, George Laase, Larry Boroski, Billy Marchbank and Nathan Prati of Buckeye Local, Jarod Rine and Matt Matkovich of John Marshall and Matt Bailey, Matt Garman and Matt Halligan of Edison.



TOP LEFT: Bellaire's Justin Homer makes a sliding catch of a St. Clairsville fly ball during Saturday's OVAC Class AAA baseball semi-finals at Bridgeport's Perkins Field.

ABOVE: St. John's junior Jacque Baker leads off of third base during action of Saturday's OVAC Class A softball championship game in Moundsville.

LEFT: Bellaire's Frankie Hibbita slides home safely with the first Bellaire run ahead of the tag from St. Clairsville catcher Corey Shrieve.

T-L Photos/ MIKE McNELL and PAULA GINTHER



By Rich Gibson
T-L Associate Sports Editor

It was a Saturday to forget for the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference.

A worst-case scenario developed at two of the four sites where baseball semifinals were being conducted.

As a result, supporters of both St. Clairsville and Harrison Central High

Schools were up in arms. And for good reason, it certainly appears.

AT NEW MARTINSVILLE, where we were stationed for a scheduled doubleheader at the Magnolia High diamond, an early morning downpour made playing conditions treacherous at best.

The 12 noon class 1-A tilt between Frontier and St. John's had to be postponed until later in the day.

As conditions improved, the ground crew worked diligently to ready the field for a 2:00 start between Magnolia and Harrison Central.

The 3-A game got underway at 2:15, but was halted shortly before 3:00 under gray skies and a steady drizzle.

As umpires and coaches gathered at home plate about 30 minutes later, the rain had practically come to an end.

Following several minutes of discussion, the field was deemed unplayable and the game suspended, to be resumed (today) at the point of interruption, the bottom of the third inning.

Both Blue Eagles' veteran coach Dave Cisar and Huskies' mentor Mike Saffell questioned the sudden decision to permanently halt play.

Not 20 minutes after the ruling, skies were clearing and the sun shining.

Furthermore, the ground crew returned to work as a few remaining Huskies' fans looked on in disbelief.

Some 90 minutes later, St. John's and Frontier were vying in a 1-A encounter which was played without incident.

No one suggested decision-making is easy, but umpires in the 3-A contest clearly botched the call, infuriating Harrison Central followers, many of whom traveled two hours to the site.

Considering Monday is involved in state sectional play beginning Tuesday, every effort should have been made to continue Saturday's game. In that regard, both schools and their fans were unnecessarily and unfortunately inconvenienced.

NOT THE case at Brooke High where Bruins' coach Rob Robinson encountered similar weather-related predicaments.

"We were able to get the (2-A) game (between Wheeling Central and Steubenville Central) completed before a fairly heavy downpour set in," Robinson recalls.

"Under no circumstances, though, was the field playable for the (scheduled) Edison-John Marshall game at 2.

"The umpires approached and related they were willing to wait as long as possible. Both coaches agreed to the same," Robinson added.

"I even had one of (my) kids check the weather forecast and we determined conditions were improving. It took a couple hours to get the field ready. Once we did, the game was played in its entirety."

WHICH LEAVES St. Clairsville fans grumbling concerning the decision to declare Saturday's 3-A semifinal an official game after play had to be stopped at Bridgeport in the top of the seventh inning.

Trailing 5-3 after six frames, St. C. mounted a late rally, pulling within a run. The Devils had two runners on base with no out when umpires had little choice but to stop play.

Considering the rule states such a scenario results in no suspension of play, the outcome reverted to the last completed inning, relegating the Red Devils to a 5-3 setback.

When feasible, however, we wonder should weather ever determine the outcome of a championship-related activity? The OVAC committee may consider addressing the matter at its next session.

Many in attendance at Perkins Field pointed to general lack of leadership and judgement by officials in attendance.

With conditions dramatically improving throughout the day, was it out of the question to make every attempt to resume play at some point?

Umpires in Philadelphia waited through a three-hour delay Saturday night before resuming the Phillies-Braves' regular season affair.

Incidentally, the other postponed 1-A semifinal scheduled Saturday at Bridgeport involving Linsly and Shadyside was slated to be contested this afternoon (5:00).

Bellaire trips St. C. in OVAC semifinals

By BUBBA KAPRAL
Times Leader Sports Editor

Timing is everything. Saturday's OVAC baseball semifinal game at Brookside is a perfect example.

For St. Clairsville, the rains couldn't have arrived at a more inopportune time. Bellaire, on the other hand, used Mother's Nature arrival to cement its berth in the OVAC 3-A championship game this coming Saturday.

The Big Reds were officially awarded a 5-3 sixth-inning triumph. The game, however, was halted in the top of the seventh with Bellaire clinging to a 5-4 lead and Red Devils occupying first and second base. Moreover, no outs had been recorded.

Enter the rain. Play never resumed, forcing the game to revert back to the score after six innings.

The win improved Bellaire to 13-7. Prior to playing for the OVAC title, the Reds' of Tube Davis will begin district action Tuesday at Steubenville.

"You hate to have the game end that way but you can't control the weather," Davis said. "I'm know St. C. isn't happy but we also would have liked to play it out."

The loss ended St. Clairsville's campaign at 14-12.

Saturday's second OVAC contest -- Linsly and Shadyside -- was postponed and rescheduled for Monday at 5 p.m. at Perkins Field.

"That is a tough way to lose. We had a nice rally going," Hall offered. "But we also dug ourselves into a hole."

Hall was right on both counts. Bellaire made the most of just three hits on the day. However, four Red Devil errors played a major role in St. C.'s downfall.

Bellaire put three runs on the

board in the first inning, courtesy of just two hits.

Senior standout Frankie Hibbitts opened the Reds' first inning by being hit by a pitch. Two Red Devils errors combined with a Matt Frizzi triple and a Derek Frizzi single translated into three Bellaire runs.

The Red Devils countered with two runs in the second.

The Reds' Derek Myers and Devils' Rick Leach then took matters into their own arms. The respective pitchers -- both of whom performed superbly -- traded zeroes until St. C. broke through in the sixth for a run, knotting matters at 3-all.

Corey Shrieve opened the frame with a single for the Devils. Todd Garlinger came on to run for the Red Devils' catcher. After a Leach sacrifice, Derrick Wood delivered a run-scoring single.

The lead was short-lived, however.

Bellaire responded in the bottom of the sixth with two runs -- on NO hits. With two outs, three straight walks loaded the bases before a throwing error allowed two runs to touch the plate.

St. C. made matters quite interesting in the seventh. Brent Williams opened the frame with a home run. Adam Quirk and Ben Baiocco were recipients of walks.

The Devils would rally no more as the rains ended the affair.

Williams paced St. C. -- which was limited to five hits -- with a homer and single.

In addition to the Frizzi first-inning hits, Bellaire received a single from Chris Ofat.

"We didn't play real well today, neither team did," Davis added. "But we did what we needed to do."

Line score:
St. Clairsville 020 001 3 5 4
Bellaire 300 002 5 3 1
BATTERIES: Leach, Baugh (6), Leach (6) and Shrieve; Myers and Thoburn.

St. John's pounds Frontier in OVAC

St. John Central crushed Frontier by a 13-2 count in an OVAC 1-A semifinal tilt Saturday at the Magnolia High diamond in New Martinsville.

The other scheduled game - a 3-A semifinal contest between Magnolia and Harrison Central - was suspended in the bottom of the third inning with Harrison Central leading by 3-0.

Umpires deemed the field unplayable following a 25-minute rain delay.

Approximately 90 minutes later, the Irish and Cougars battled on the same diamond.

The HC-Magnolia game is slated to resume Monday afternoon at 5:00.

ST. JOHN CENTRAL advanced to the Class A championship game with a rout of Frontier in five innings.

The win advances St. John's to next Saturday's championship game against the winner of Monday night's game between Shadyside

and Linsly, which was rained out at Bridgeport's Perkins Field.

The Irish, now 20-3, will begin district play on Monday night at Ridgewood against Zanesville Rosecrans with the first pitch set for 5 p.m.

Josh Shutler was the big stick for the Green as he launched a home run and a single with four RBI. Mark Hartleib drove in three runs with a double and a single.

Rocky Swift plated a pair of teammates with a single and a double.

Willie Clegg added a run-scoring for the Irish.

Swift also gained the mound victory for the Irish.

He and J.D. McCracken combined to allow just four Frontier hits.

Rick Kroll led Frontier with two singles and a RBI.

OVAC CLASS A SEMIFINAL
Frontier 010 01 - 2 4 5
St. John's 273 1x - 13 8 2
BATTERIES: Goodwin, Reed (3) and Shapely, Swift, McCracken and Clegg.

Buckeye Local stuns Big Red

By RICK DeLUCA
Times Leader Sports Writer

If there are no more upsets in Ohio Valley baseball, Buckeye Local's win over once-beaten Steubenville will do just fine.

Despite closing the season as one of the hottest teams in the area, the Panthers were still decided underdogs against Big Red coming into Saturday's OVAC semi-final at Toronto's Knight Baseball Complex.

Big Red left the the Knight Complex talking to themselves.

Getting some clutch hitting and good pitching down the stretch, fourth-seeded Buckeye Local upset top-seeded and Ohio No. 2 ranked Steubenville, 9-4, on Saturday to advance into next week's OVAC 4-A title game at Vacarro Field.

Coach Joe Smarella's Panthers fell behind the Big Red in the third before erupting for three in the fifth and went on to notch their 16th win in 26 outings.

Buckeye returns to action on Wednesday when they take on Dover in the Division II District opener.

Coach Fred Heatherington's Big Red lost for only the second time this year and fell to 25-2 on the season. Steubenville will next play in the district tourney. Buckeye and Big Red could meet again in the re-

gionals.

"Today, things just going our way," Smarella said after the big win. "All year long, we've been saying that we were getting a lot of bad breaks, but things started going our way finally and we're playing good baseball on offense and defense."

"The kids are playing real well as a team and I stress that everyday and they believe in themselves and that they can go out and beat anybody," he added.

"I wasn't sure what I was going to do today with the game coming up Wednesday, but Larry's (Boroski) pitched good for us the last two outings and if we could keep it close, we would come in with somebody else," the Panther coach said. "And he did. He pitched an excellent game. He spotted his pitches real well and he kept them off balance and our defense came through and made the plays they had to make."

"Ralph (Burke) is a good pitcher and I know the (Steubenville) coaches and I know they have a lot of confidence in him and that's why they stuck with him," Smarella said.

"We just came out on top and that's the way it went today," he added.

Buckeye got a break in the bottom of the fourth with Big Red at the plate and made the regular season OVAC champions pay for it when

the Panthers came to bat.

With the bases loaded and just one out, Big Red's Rob Crowe hit a grounder to short. Panther George Laase fielded the grounder and was set to throw home when the Steubenville runner from second ran into Laase. That runner was called and Big Red eventually stranded three runners in the inning without scoring a run. Steubenville led by 4-3 at that point.

In the top of the fifth, Big Red paid dearly. Laase opened with a walk, then scored when Chad Figurski's single to right resulted a throwing error that sent Laase home. Jared Schultz come on to pinch-hit for the designated hitter and promptly drilled a Burke pitch over the left centerfield wall. The two-run shot put Buckeye ahead by 6-4.

"For the first time all year, it (pinch-hitting Schultz) made me look like a genius," Smarella joking said about the homer. "Jared's really been hitting good in practice and it was just a gut feeling, so I went with it and it worked out good for the team."

Buckeye scored twice in the second after Figurski singled to right, advanced on a walk and again on a balk, then scored on Dustin Kliner's single to center. Two Big Red errors allowed Kliner to score one batter

later.

The Panthers tallied one in the third after Boroski singled, stole second and tallied on Laase's single.

Buckeye iced the win with three in the seventh, taking advantage of four walks, two errors and a Kliner single up the middle to plate three more runs.

Big Red scored once in the second on Chris Schloss' long solo homer to left center.

In the third, Steubenville took the lead as Crowe singled and Matt Vein followed with a two-run homer. A single by Schloss, a fielder's choice and a single to center by J. J. Bainbridge added a third tally.

Boroski, Kliner and Figurski ended with three singles each to lead Buckeye, while Bainbridge led Big Red with three singles.

Boroski started on the mound for the winners pitching four and two-thirds innings, walking one batter and striking out none. Kliner came on in the fifth and picked up the save with four strikeouts and four walks. Kliner did not allow a hit.

Burke went the distance on the mound for Big Red, recording nine strikeouts and five walks.

Line score:
Buckeye Local 021 030 3 -- 9 11 2
Steubenville 013 000 0 -- 4 12 5
Batteries: Boroski, Kliner (5) and Prati; Burke and Crowe.

Red Knights no-hit Barnesville

By RICK DeLUCA
Times Leader Sports Writer

There's a reason why Toronto's powerful Red Knights were one of the state's top-ranked teams. They hit, they pitch, they field like a top-ranked team.

And you'll get no argument from Barnesville coach Brad Wilson and his Shamrock nine.

Toronto ripped Barnesville pitching for 11 hits, did not make an error and all while two pitchers were combining on a no-hitter as the Red Knights topped the Shamrocks, 9-0, in the OVAC Class 2-A semi-finals at the Knight Baseball Complex Saturday afternoon.

With the win, coach Matt Morrison's Red Knights improved to 25-2 on the season. Their only losses coming to Steubenville Central and Beaver Local.

Morrison's crew will be back in action on Tuesday taking on Hiland in the Division III District tourney at Ridgewood High in West Lafayette. Game time in 5 p.m.

If the Knights win, they will return for the District final on Wednesday.

Ohio state champions two years ago, Toronto's win on Saturday moved the Knights into next Saturday's OVAC 2-A final at Vacarro Field in Steubenville.

Coach Brad Wilson's Shamrocks closed out an up and down season with the loss.

Barnesville opened the season with three straight losses, then reeled off eight straight win before a late season tailspin saw the Rocks close out a 10-11.

Toronto received a great pitching effort from both starter Scott Stutler and reliever Matt Ludewig as the pair combined on a no-hitter. Stutler recorded six strikeouts and walked two while Ludewig whiffed six more and issued three free passes. Combined, the duo allowed only seven balls into play.

"We played very well today, good base running, good hitting," Morrison said after the win. "Great pitching, outstanding pitching."

"We've been pitching the ball real well all year," the Knight coach added. "And we're real happy the way we've come along offensive this last week or so."

"Those two (Stutler and Ludewig) do a nice job together," he said. "We planned to throw Scott four innings and Matt three innings no matter what happened because we wanted to make sure they could both go on Tuesday if we need them. That was our plan all along, but it was tough taking Scott out of there when he had a no-hitter going."

"Scott understands this is a team thing and he knows we have to keep the arms fresh, Morrison said. "They all know what our main objective is and that's the state tournament."

"Even our outs were hit hard. We're starting to hit the ball the way we are capable of and hopefully we'll have a good week next week as well," he added.

Toronto scored three times in the first getting a single from Randy Littlecot; a run-scoring double by Doug Luesko, a walk to Stutler and

a two-run double by catcher Bill Kuhn.

In the second, the winners added three more as Don Price got his first of two triples and scored on Bill Williams double. Shawn Cain doubled to left to plate Williams and later scored on a stolen base and error on the catcher.

The Knights tacked on a run in the fourth. Cain singled, stole second and scored on an error.

In the fifth, Toronto put up two more runs as Stutler opened with a walk, stole second and scored on Mike Romey's double to right. Price's single up the middle plated Romey.

Luesko closed with a single and double, while Price had two triples and a single to lead the Knights.

Line score:
Barnesville 000 000 0 -- 0 0 3
Toronto 330 120 x -- 9 11 0
Batteries: Gallagher, Flood (2), Fisher (5) and Lucas; Stutler, Ludewig (4) and Kuhn.

Harrison Central shades Bellaire, 4-3

•Huskies earn OVAC 3-A championship

By RICH GIBSON
T-L Associate Sports Editor

Saturday's OVAC 3-A championship game between Bellaire and Harrison Central figured to be a closely contested, down to the wire affair.

That it was. Mike Saffell's Huskies used two of the sport's most storied intangibles -- pitching and defense -- to earn the big trophy.

Southpaw Trent Luyster capped a superb junior season, recording eight strikeouts and walking but one to key a tense 4-3 Huskies' triumph.

The dramatic conquest at Steubenville's Vaccaro Field enabled Saffell's squad to finish 14-10 and capture the first conference banner in the new consolidation's history.

"They beat us twice during the regular season. It feels real good to get this one," the 26-year old Saffell noted.

Luyster, the lone Lakeland transplant to wear a HC uniform, had little margin for error on an overcast day, facing equally outstanding Big Reds' mound ace Chris Ofat.

"Trent's pitched like that two seasons now," Saffell advised. "He's a fearless competitor. Trent wants the ball in clutch situations."

After putting the wraps on a 7-2 season, and already with 179 career Ks, Luyster insists there's room for improvement.

"I need to work on my change-up. Hopefully, I'll do that over the summer," he said. Luyster will be pitching for Maynard Legion this season.

Ofat, meanwhile, all but matched his mound opponent. Bellaire's gritty righthander spaced eight hits while compiling seven Ks and two walks.

Involved in a 1-1 lockup entering the top of the sixth, both teams mounted impressive rallies.

The Huskies struck first in unlikely fashion.

Centerfielder Michael Bertz led off by lining an Ofat offering over the fence in left field. It was the sophomore's first and only round-tripper of the season.

Luyster then laced a single up the middle and swiped second base before classmate Willie Luther lined a triple to deep right for a 3-1 lighting.

A costly error charged to Ofat allowed shortstop Joe Buxton to reach as Luther raced home with what would prove the game-winner. Ofat promptly picked off Buxton, then worked out of further trouble.

Bellaire answered immediately. Designated hitter Derek Frizzi drilled a double.

After catcher Rocky Thoburn reached on an infield hit, second baseman Justin Homer singled for a 4-2 reading.

Luyster recorded the inning's second out, but hot-hitting Frankie Hibbitts hammered a single to left.

Thoburn rode home with Bellaire's third tally. A momentary bobble by leftfielder Steve Albaugh sent Homer scurrying to third.

Albaugh, however, recovered nicely and fired a strike to senior Matt Phillips who applied a dandy swipe tag to gun down the Reds' runner and end the inning.

"Hard to believe, but we worked hard on outfield relay throws yesterday in practice," Saffell stated. "It really paid off there."

Ofat worked out of a bases loaded jam in the top of the seventh, but Luyster was equal to the task.

After falling behind Ofat 3-0 to lead off the frame, Luyster battled

back to induce a fly ball.

After racking up his eighth strikeout, Luyster saw cleanup man Derek Myers hit a tailing drive to right which Luyster tracked down with a sliding grab to end the game.

"Bellaire's very talented. They're tough up and down the order," Saffell praised.

"Everything just fell into place for us today. I'm especially happy for our seniors," he added, referring to Phillips, Buxton and catcher B.J. Kuhn.

Hibbitts hit two singles and scored the game's first run.

Matt Frizzi clubbed a single and double as Bellaire outthit the Huskies, 9-8. Homer and Thoburn each singled twice.

Bertz and Kuhn belted two hits apiece for Harrison. Kuhn's RBI hit in the third plated Albaugh for the early 1-1 tie.

Both teams stranded seven baserunners.

The 3-A title contest was played in a swift one hour, 25 minutes.

Under Charles "Tube" Davis, the Big Reds fashioned a good 15-10 record.

Line score:
Harrison Central 001 003 0 4 8 0
Bellaire 100 002 0 3 9 3
BATTERIES: Luyster and Kuhn. Ofat and Thoburn.

Buckeye Local falls in OVAC title game

By RICK DeLUCA
Times Leader Sports Writer

It was one of the Ohio Valley's hottest pitchers versus one of the valley's hottest teams.

With hopes of notching its first-ever OVAC Class 4-A baseball title, Buckeye Local ran into buzzsaw named Matt Halligan.

Edison's fireballing righthander was superb, striking out 15 Panthers over six innings, in leading the Wildcats to a 7-0 victory Saturday night at Vaccaro Field in Steubenville.

With the win Edison coach Bill Beattie's club closes out the season with a fine 18-8 record. The Wildcats had been eliminated in the Ohio sectional finals one week.

Under the direction of first-year coach Joe Smarella, Buckeye Local saw its record drop to 18-11. The Panthers will play St. John Central on Thursday at 5 p.m. at Perkins Field in the BOBL Championship game.

The Panthers then will make their regional debut Friday afternoon at 2 p.m. when they oppose Washington Court House at Lancaster. Steubenville will South point in the 5 p.m. game with the winners coming back to play Saturday.

Halligan shut down one of the valley's hottest teams, limiting the Panthers to just three hits over six innings. He struck out the side in the second, fifth and sixth innings.

Edison got on the board first in

the second inning as Caleb Meyer and Tom Snyder received back-to-back walks. Doug Wickham hit a fielder's choice ground ball but the throw was wide and Meyer scored.

With one out in the fourth inning, Meyer got thing started for Edison with a single. Snyder followed with a single to right and both runners moved up on errors. Wickham followed with a sac fly to left to score Meyer to make it 2-0.

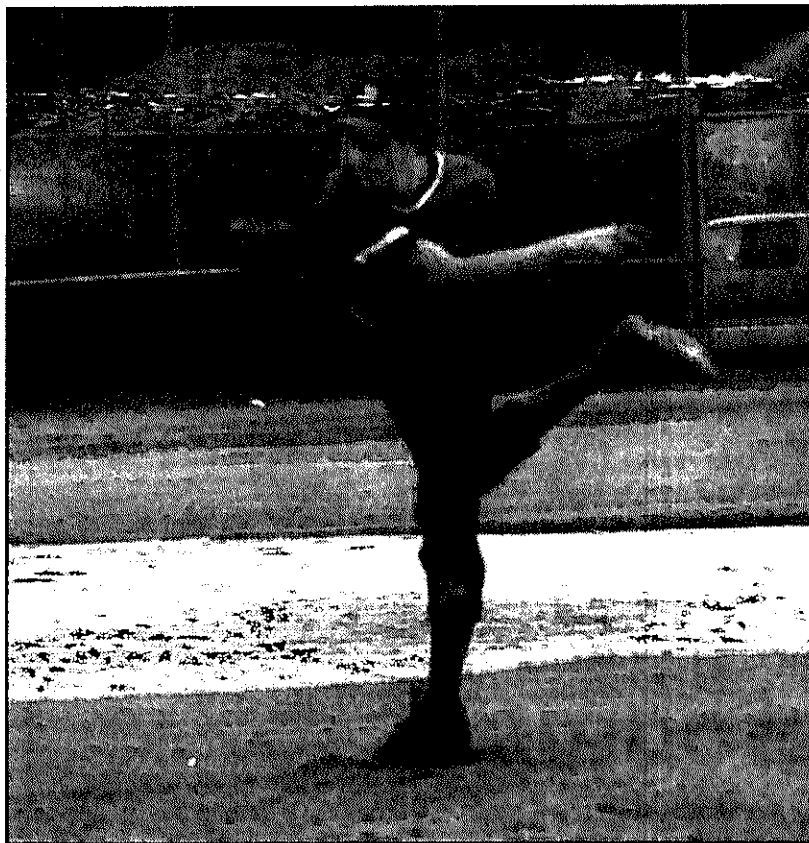
In the fifth inning, with one out Derek Bendle walked before Halligan singled up the middle. A double steal would advance the runners to second and third, and David Gorby's flyball to right would score Bendle to make it 3-0.

The Wildcats broke it open in the sixth inning as Matt Bailey reached on an error. Snyder followed with a single to right and Wickham with a base hit to left which scored Bailey. The Wildcats would get another run when Snyder would score on a throwing error on a Bendle ground ball.

Halligan cleared the bases with a triple off the right centerfield wall to plate two more runs.

Dustin Kliner pitched well in defeat. He allowed just six hits, but was the victim of four Buckeye errors. He fanned three and walked five while carrying a ho-hitter into the fourth inning.

Buckeye Local 000 000 0 -- 0 3 4
Edison 010 114 x -- 7 6 0
BATTERIES: Kliner, Boroski (6) and Prall, Otto (6). Halligan, Streblo (7) and Gorby.



T-L Photo/PAULA GINTHER
FIRING A strike to a Harrison Central batter Saturday is Bellaire's Chris Ofat during the OVAC 3-A championship game. Ofat pitched well, recording seven strikeouts. The Huskies, however, behind southpaw ace Trent Luyster, gained the title via a 4-3 triumph.

First OVAC Championship for Harrison Central

Defense the key as Bellaire's Ofat hung with hard-luck loss

By SHAWN RINE
For The News-Register

Harrison Central tried on the Cinderella slipper for size in the OVAC Class AAA championship game at Vaccaro Field Saturday and found it fit like a glove.

A baseball glove, of course. The Huskies, who barely squeezed into the playoff field as the No. 4 seed, upset No. 2-seeded Bellaire 4-3 to win the first OVAC Class AAA baseball championship in school history.

Defense was the key for Harrison Central (16-12) as the Huskies played errorless defense and took advantage of some crucial miscues on the part of the Big Reds (14-11) to hang a rare loss on Bellaire ace Chris Ofat.

The Huskies got off to a rocky

start in the bottom of the first as Bellaire's Frankie Hibbits, who had led off the inning with a single, worked his way around to third with two out and scored on a wild pitch by Trent Luyster.

Harrison Central team knotted the count in the top of the third when the Big Reds' right fielder whiffed on Steve Albaugh's leadoff single. The two-base error put Albaugh at third and he jogged home on a B.J. Kuhn single.

The game settled into a pitcher's duel for the next few innings as Ofat and Luyster matched zeros until the top of the sixth.

Michael Bertz put Harrison Central snapped the 1-all tie in style by jerking an Ofat pitch deep over the left field wall for a leadoff homer but there was more where that came

Class AAA	
Harrison Central	201 202 0-4 28 0
Bellaire	100 002 0-3 2 3
HC—Luyster (8aa, 7a) and Kuhn, kuhn	
2S, rbi; Bertz S, HR, rbi; Luther T, rbi.	
B—Ofat (7aa, 2aa) and Thoburn, Hibbits	
2S, rbi; Frizzi S, D; Frizzi D; Thoburn 2S; Homer S, rbi.	

from for the Huskies.

Luyster followed with a ringing single, stole second and came home when Willy Luther tripled into the right centerfield gap. Joe Buxton then bounced a ground ball on the infield that was booted, allowing Luther to score.

Ofat managed to escape with no further damage but the Huskies had a 4-1 lead.

It almost wasn't enough.

With one out in the Bellaire sixth, Derek Frizzi doubled and Rocky Thoburn singled to put runners at first and third. Justin Homer then singled up the middle to score Frizzi, cutting the lead to 4-2.

Luyster struck out the next batter but Hibbits singled up the middle to drive in Thoburn, trimming the margin to 4-3 and leaving runners on first and second for Ofat, but Luyster got his mound counterpart to fly out to the outfield to end the inning.

The Harrison Central ace then shut down the Big Reds in 1-2-3 order in the bottom of the seventh to lock up the win. Luyster gave up nine hits but struck out eight and walked

just one. Ofat, who probably deserved a better fate, had seven strikeouts and two walks.

THE TIMES LEADER - Page 2B
Monday, May 8, 2000

OVAC baseball playoff field set

By RICK DeLUCA
Times Leader Sports Writer

Steubenville and Toronto coasted, Magnolia came from behind and St. John Central had to battle to the wire.

As a result, all four are OVAC regular season champions in baseball.

With final standings released today by OVAC baseball director Bob Solar, Steubenville and Toronto easily finished the season atop their respective divisions.

Magnolia, who trailed Bellaire through much of the season, captured the 3-A crown and St. John Central was able to hold off runnerup Linsly for the 1-A title by the slimmest of margins.

Big Red, under veteran coach Fred Heatherington, posted wins in their final 19 games to run away with the OVAC's Class 4-A crown and earn the top seed in the conference playoffs.

Steubenville finished with a sparkling 22-1 record and racked up 1230 points, tops in the conference, to lead the 4-A division. John Marshall finished second with an 11-5 mark and a 36.9 record.

Edison, closing the regular season at 15-7, was just a fraction behind the Monarchs in third with a 36.4 average, while Buckeye Local's impressive final week in which they reeled off five straight wins, grabbed the final playoff spot ahead of fifth place Weir. Buckeye closed at 15-10 with a 32.0 average.

In Class 3-A, coach Dave Cisar's Magnolia nine posted an impressive 14-4 mark to snare first place from a competitive field. The Blue Eagles closed with 610 points and 33.9 average.

Bellaire, the 3-A leader most of the season, finished second at 28.3 with its 11-7 mark.

St. Clairsville finished third after posting a 12-10 mark and sporting a 27.7 average while Harrison Central grabbed the final playoff spot ahead of Buckeye Trail with a 12-9 record and a 26.7 average.

In Class 2-A, Toronto left little doubt as to who was No. 1 after putting together a 23-2 record and rolling up 1100 points for a 44.0 average. Coach Matt Morrison's club put together a couple long winning streaks during the season.

Steubenville Central finished second with a 15-8 record and a 30.9 average while Wheeling Central had a stranglehold on third with a 17-5 mark.

Barnesville edged three competitors to secure the final playoff spot. The Shamrocks closed at 10-8 with a 20.6 average, just ahead of fifth place Caldwell.

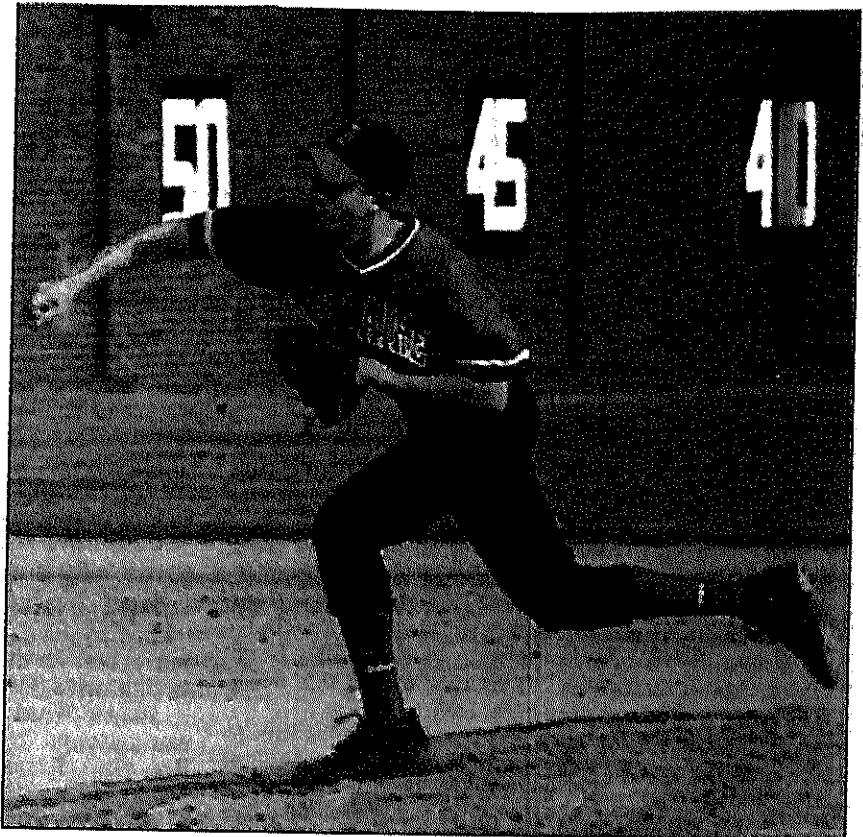
In Class 1-A, St. John Central garnered the regular season title and No. 1 seed with a 16-3 record and a 27.9 average. Coach Tom Sliya will be returning his club to the OVAC tourney for a third straight year.

Linsly finished second with a 17-6 record and a 26.9 average while Shadyside closed out at 12-7 and placed third.

Frontier grabbed the fourth spot with a 10-7 record and a 21.8 average to beat out fifth place Paducah City for the final playoff spot.

Semi-final action is slated for Saturday at four locations, Brookside, New Martinsville, Brooke and Toronto. Finals are set for the following Saturday at Vaccaro Field in Steubenville.

Matchups in the semis will pit the No. 1 seed opposite the No. 4 seed and the No. 2 and No. 3 seeds will play in the other contest. Locations for each game have yet to be determined.



T-L Photo/PAULA GINTHER
DELIVERING to the plate during Wednesday's OVAC Baseball All-Star clash between Ohio and West Virginia at Perkins Field in Brookside is Bellaire's Chris Ofat. The standout hurler pitched the first two innings of Ohio's 20-7 victory. See story page 4B.

OVAC baseball pairings released

By RICK DeLUCA
Times Leader Sports Writer

As luck would have it, Toronto and New Martinsville drew the big dogs.

With pairings announced for the start of OVAC baseball tournament this weekend, Toronto and Magnolia high school fields will each play host to two of the four regular season champions.

Toronto drew the two winningest teams this season with Steubenville and the hometown Red Knights playing at the up-river diamond.

Semi-final action will take place at four locations, Bridgeport and Brooke along with Toronto and Magnolia.

At Toronto, Big Red will open play at noon with its 19-game



John Central battling fourth-seeded Frontier while Magnolia, the Class 3-A champion, goes after fourth-seeded Harrison Central.

Not to be outdone, Perkins Field in Brookside will host a noon Class 3-A battle between second-seeded Bellaire and third-seeded St. Clairsville. In the 2 p.m. matchup, second-seeded Linsly takes on third-seeded Shadyside in a Class 1-A semifinal.

Brooke High will play host to what could be the most evenly-matched pairings of the tourney with third-seeded Wheeling Central playing second-seeded Steubenville Central in a Class 2-A game at noon and third-seeded Edison taking on second-seeded John Marshall at 2 p.m. in a 4-A semi.

Winners on Saturday will advance into next Saturday's OVAC championship finals at Vaccaro Field in Steubenville.

Ticket prices at all sites have been set at \$3 for adults and \$2 for students.

OVAC Baseball Pairings

At Bridgeport -- (Class 3-A) St. Clairsville vs. Bellaire, noon; (Class 1-A) Shadyside vs. Linsly, 2 p.m.

At Toronto -- (Class 4-A) Buckeye Local vs. Steubenville, noon; (Class 2-A) Barnesville vs. Toronto, 2 p.m.

At Magnolia -- (Class 1-A) Frontier vs. St. John Central, noon; (Class 3-A) Harrison Central vs. Magnolia, 2 p.m.

At Brooke -- (Class 2-A) Wheeling Central vs. Steubenville Central, noon; (Class 4-A) Edison vs. John Marshall, 2 p.m.

streak against fourth-seeded Buckeye Local in a Class 4-A matchup. At 2 p.m. Class 2-A top-seed Toronto, with a 23-2 record, takes on fourth-seeded Barnesville.

At Magnolia, the noon matchup features Class 1-A top-seed St.



Photo supplied by Doeg Hartlieb

Three-Time Champions

The Bellaire St. John's baseball team capped yet another successful season last week by defeating Linsly 8-4 at Vaccaro Field to win their third consecutive Ohio Valley Athletic Conference Class A championship. The Fighting Irish, who finished the year with a sparkling 22-4 record, also won OVAC Class A and Eastern Ohio Baseball League regular season championships. Front row, from left: Ben Shutler, Joey Vavra, Josh Shutler, Rocky Swift, Ben Baldwin and Andrew Bannon. Second row, from left: Mark Hartlieb, head coach Tom Sliva, David Shutler, Jimmy Poland, Matt Nardo, Eric Taylor, Willie Clegg, J.D. McCracken, Kyle Ogilbee and assistant coach Eric Petho.

OVAC Baseball Committee



T-L Photo/RICK DeLUCA

PICTURED are the members of the OVAC Baseball Committee. Front row, from left, are Linsly's Gary Sprague, St. Clairsville's Richard "Lefty" Hall, director Bob Solan, and Barnesville's Brad Wilson. Second row, from left, are Bellaire's Terry Espina, Bridgeport's Steve Powell, Steubenville's Fred Heatherington, and Brooke's Rob Robinson.

Toronto takes 2-A title

Toronto's Red Knights made the most of only five hits and rallied from an early three-run deficit to topple Steubenville Central, 8-5, in Saturday's OVAC 2-A title game at Steubenville's Vaccaro Field.

Behind mound ace Ryan Rankin, the Crusaders struck for three runs in the top of the first.

Toronto, however, worked its way back and rode the slants of southpaw ace Mitch LeMasters to conclude a superb 25-3 season under Matt Morrison.

LeMasters, came on in the top of the first for starter Scott Stutler. The Knights' lefty finished with eight strikeouts and three walks.

Second baseman Shawn Cain clubbed a run-scoring triple to highlight Toronto's game-clinching two-run bottom of the sixth. LeMasters followed with a sacrifice fly.

Rankin compiled 11 Ks and six walks in a complete game outing. At the plate, he pounded a single and double, good for a run batted in.

Central third baseman Steve Cramblett contributed a triple, single and RBI. Designated hitter Matt Miller and catcher Ryan Cummings

each added RBI base raps.

LeMasters accounted for two Red Knight runs.

Line score:

Steub. Central 300 110 0 -- 5 6 2
Toronto 222 002 x -- 8 5 2

OVAC Baseball Capsules

CLASS 1-A FRONTIER COUGARS (4)

Head coach: Eric Weber (3rd year)
1999 record: 12-13
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 10-7
Seniors: Jamie Binegar, Glynn Goodwin, Rick Kroll, Jason Rinnard, Bob Roley, Eric Reed.
Juniors: Bob Sharpley, Casey Morris.
Sophomores: Ed Kayser, Eric Pritchett, Rory Kroll, Karl Graham, Sean Hankel.
Freshmen: Nick Boley, Josh Thomas, Nathan Tewksbury.

LINSLEY CADETS (2)

Head coach: Gary Sprague (28th year).
1999 record: 13-6
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 17-6
Seniors: Brent Buch, Dan Buchwach, Jason Clay, Trevor Hopewood, George Korsnick, Jon Kurtz, Ryan Saari, Dan Stephens.
Juniors: Mike Bippus, Steve Fragale, Charlie Sines, Eddie Swierkos.
Sophomores: Mike Clifford, R. J. Zizalberger.

ST. JOHN CENTRAL FIGHTING IRISH (1)

Head coach: Tom Silva (3rd year)
1999 record: 21-3
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 16-3
Seniors: Rocky Swift, Eric Taylor, Josh Shutter, Ben Baldwin.
Juniors: Matt Nardo, David Shuter, Kyle Ogilbee, Jimmy Poland, J. D. McCracken, Willie Glegg.
Sophomores: Paul Hartlieb, Joey Vavra, Ben Shutter, Sean Zaakes, Andrew Bannon, Joe Rykowski, Derek Romaranski, Josh Vaughn, Jason Timko.
Freshmen: Scott Gretchen, Kyle McIntosh, Tyler Moscato, Jon Curran, Michael Coyne, Ryan Rico, Joe Tennant, John Anderson, Michael Sullivan, Chris Jingle, Alan Pacifico, Trentin Pribe, Chad Taylor, Thomas Kosky, Chris Panepucci.

SHADYSIDE TIGERS (3)

Head coach: Gary Cunningham (3rd year).
1999 record: 15-11
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 12-7
Seniors: Cory Clark, Bob Emery, Chris Kaplan, Matt Stottlemeyer, Willie Talbert, Derek Ritchie.
Juniors: Matt Coffland, Trent Ging, Justin Magyar, Derek Meek, Ryan Fluharty.
Sophomores: Ryan Briggs, Larry Falbo, Serge Gentile, Andrew Lacheman, Zac Parker, Kris Zeller.
Freshmen: Danny Dunsmore, Jason DeVanzo, Mark Fialkowski, Brandon Holmes, Colby Mathews, Sean McElfresh, Nick Ongley, Stefan Pampa.

CLASS 2-A

BARNESVILLE SHAMROCKS (4)

Head coach: Brad Wilson (20th year)
1999 record: 11-10
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 10-8
Seniors: Mike Fisher, Casey Flood, Joey Gallagher, Jason Lucas, Rick Oliver.
Juniors: Nathan Butler, Clay Wilson, Max Laithin, Kyle Neptune, Josh Dennison, Jay Stephen.
Sophomores: Mike Welch, Boomer Reed, John Jefferies, Jat Swallie.
Freshmen: Cameron Davis, Nathan Hunkler, Mike Phillips, John Stephen, Josh McFarland, Sam Bopp.

STEBENVILLE CENTRAL CRUSADERS (2)

Head coach: Tom Bartemes (1st year)
1999 record: 12-10
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 15-8
Seniors: Ryan Corabi, Paul Koniski, Jason Morelli, Matt O'Leary, Ryan Rankin, Luke Witkowski.
Juniors: Steve Cramblett, Josh Hawrott, Brian Joyce, Jesse Ray.
Sophomores: Ryan Cummings, Andrew Marissa, Matt Miller.

TORONTO RED KNIGHTS (1)

Head coach: Matt Morrison (6th year)
1999 record: 27-4
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 23-2
Seniors: Mitch Lemasters, Scott Stutler, Bill Kuhn, Randy Litvicol, Jay Foster.
Juniors: Shawn Cain, Don Price, Doug Lucsko, Josh Nett.
Sophomores: Matt Ludwig, Billy Williams, J. D. Hannan.

WHEELING CENTRAL MAROON KNIGHTS (3)

Head coach: Terry Edwards (15th year)
1999 record: 25-9
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 17-5
Seniors: Dave Lallam, Todd Flading, J. T. Richardson, Jason Bower.
Juniors: Jeff Hartman, Jared Zavolta, Morgan Kent, Chros

Drosieko, Justin Bowles, Dabe Malatinski, Chad Mararski, Jason Owens, Keith Wodusky, Aaron Wilkinson, Mark Sapon.
Sophomores: Justin Edwards, Josh Sleime, Jacob Dailer, Brendan Ball.

CLASS 3-A

BELLAIRE BIG REDS (2)

Head coach: Terry Espina
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 11-7
Seniors: Frankie Hibbits, Kenny Bennington, Chris Olat, Justin Homer, Derek Frizzi, Mike Marling.
Juniors: Rocky Thoburn, Derek Myers, Matt Frizzi, Taylor Hughes.
Sophomores: Matt Wallner, Jason Blumling, Jayson LaRoche.
Freshmen: Kevin Sechrest.

HARRISON CENTRAL HUSKIES (4)

Head coach: Mike Saffell (3rd year)
1999 record: 0-0
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 12-9
Seniors: Matt Phillips, Joe Buxton, B. J. Kuhn.
Juniors: Willie Luther, Trent Luyster, Steven Albaugh, Chad Taylor, Brian Thaxton, Shad Gross, Chris Chesla, Jeremy Bartrug, Sanford Dowdle.
Sophomores: Beau Burger, Michael Bertz.

MAGNOLIA BLUE EAGLES (1)

Head coach: Dave Cisar (27th year).
1999 record: 18-8
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 14-4
Seniors: Steve Iams, Rick Brookover, Josh King, Rich Pefferman.
Juniors: Eric Blake, Ben Justice, Chad Akin.
Sophomores: John Smith, Joe Blatt, Craig Mason, Brett Ripoly, Mike Tracey, Russ Shepherd, Chad Shepherd, Tim Simms, Joe Weaver, Nick King, Dennis Miller.

ST. CLAIRSVILLE RED DEVILS (3)

Head coach: Richard "Lefty" Hall (33rd year)
1999 record: 11-12
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 12-10
Seniors: Ben Balocco, Chris Baugh, Corey Shrieve, Kevin Jaworski.
Juniors: D. J. Hynes, Ricky Leach, Todd Garlinger, Brent Williams, Mark Neuenschwander, Josh Sloan, Mike Reese, Jeff Lofton.
Sophomores: Adam Quirk, Billy Wesley.

CLASS 4-A

BUCKEYE LOCAL PANTHERS (4)

Head coach: Joe Smarella (1st year)
1999 record: 13-10
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 15-10
Seniors: George Laase, Cain Noble, Dustin Kliner, Ryan Posgai, Larry Boroski.
Juniors: Nathan Pratt, Chad Figurski, Brian Zack, Billy Marchbank, Eddie Kachur, Chris Vinci, Jared Schultz, Mike Glasure.
Sophomores: Jack Otto, Deron Young, Justin Posgai, Justin Torok.

EDISON WILDCATS (3)

Head coach: Bill Beattie (12th year)
1999 record: 14-12
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 15-7
Seniors: Matt Bailey, Derel Bendle, Matt Garman, Cory Gast, David Gorby, Matt Halligan.
Juniors: David Goodwin, Doug Wickham, Dan Ramsay, Joe Rose, Wes Strebio, Josh Booth.
Sophomores: Ken Vescori.
Freshmen: Justin Richards, Caleb Meyer.

JOHN MARSHALL MONARCHS (2)

Head coach: Bob Montgomery (25th year)
1999 record: 22-5
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 11-5
Seniors: Jarod Rine, Matt Malkovich, Trapper Skrypek, Drew Villani, Jonathan Wilfong, Jeff Crowe, Philip Miller.
Juniors: Jerome Schwing, Jason Kamrowsky, Brian Cross, Chris Amedro, Steve Conchoff, Corey Lysaski, Shawn Huglins, Chad McKown, Billy Kinderer.

STEBENVILLE BIG RED (1)

Head coach: Fred Heatherington (12th year)
1999 record: 18-6
2000 record (as of 5-6-00): 22-1
Seniors: Al Andrews, Chris Schloss, J. J. Bainbridge, Mike Joyce, Matt Vein, Rob Crowe, Bernie Battistef, Zach Sciscani, Greg Besozzi, Ralph Burke.
Juniors: David Eit, David Crisante, Rob Kocher, Brad Jones.
Sophomores: Justin Banks, Mike DiAngelo.

OVAC CLASS AAA FINAL WHEELING PARK 4 JOHN MARSHALL 3

John Marshall-Wheeling Park
BATTERIES: West and Gorby, Newland and Hohman, Schell (6).
100 000 2 - 3 4 1
021 100 x - 4 8 3

OVAC CLASS AAA FINAL MARTINS FERRY 6 INDIAN CREEK 4

Martins Ferry-Indian Creek
BATTERIES: Vinci and Mackey, Nash and Bell.
010 002 3 - 6 8 3
200 020 0 - 4 4 3

OVAC CLASS A FINAL BEALLSVILLE 12 ST. JOHN CENTRAL 11

St. John Central-Beallsville
BATTERIES: Lynn and Bumgardner, Nippert and Crum.
124 011 011 - 11 14 5
050 110 212 - 12 13 4

Steubenville Central, Edison advance

Edison and Steubenville Central scored OVAC semifinal baseball triumphs Saturday at a rainy Brooke High diamond in Wellsburg.

After the Crusaders wiped out Wheeling Central by an 11-0 count in a 2-A tilt, Edison eliminated John Marshall by 5-2 in a 4-A affair.

As a result, Edison and Buckeye Local will battle for the big school banner next Saturday at Steubenville's Vaccaro Field.

Steubenville Central, meanwhile, opposes Toronto for the 3-A crown.

STEBENVILLE CENTRAL'S Ryan Rankin mowed down the Maroon Knights on three hits in Saturday's opener. Rankin racked up eight strikeouts and issued but one walk.

Designated hitter Matt Miller clubbed a two-run homer in the fourth inning and shortstop Jason Morrelli led off the game with a solo shot as Central improved to 17-8.

Miller also singled twice and totaled four RBIs. Morrelli added two hits for a three-RBI afternoon. Rankin aided his cause, collecting a single, double and run batted in.

Jason Bower, Todd Flading and Jason Owens accounted for the Knights' lone base raps.

SATURDAY'S 4-A semifinal was delayed two hours while tournament officials worked tirelessly to make the field playable.

The Wildcats' Matt Halligan then proceeded to make life miserable for Bob Montgomery's Monarchs. Halligan recorded nine strikeouts and two walks en route to hurling a four-hitter.

Matt Bailey's two-run double in the top of the fifth enabled Edison to take a 3-0 upperhand. The 'Cats added two more tallies in the sixth then held off a JM comeback bid.

Matt Matkovich lined two singles for the Monarchs. Jon Wilfong drilled a double. Billy Rinderer clouted a sacrifice fly.

OVAC 2-A

Steub. Central 341 30 -- 11 13 1
Wheeling Cent 000 00 -- 0 3 3
BATTERIES: Rankin and Cummings, LaFlam, Edwards (3) and Bower.

OVAC 4-A

Edison 100 022 0 -- 5 6 1
JM 000 001 1 -- 2 4 1
BATTERIES: Halligan and Gorby, McKown, Amedro (3), Wilfong (6) and Crowe, Skrypak (5).

OVAC Baseball Pairings

At Bridgeport

Class 3-A -- (3) St. Clairsville vs. (2) Bellaire, noon
Class 1-A -- (3) Shadyside vs. (2) Linsly, 2 p.m.

At Toronto

Class 4-A -- (4) Buckeye Local vs. (1) Steubenville, noon
Class 2-A -- (4) Barnesville vs. (1) Toronto, 2 p.m.

At New Martinsville

Class 1-A -- (4) Frontier vs. (1) St. John Central, noon
Class 3-A -- (4) Harrison Central vs. (1) Magnolia, 2 p.m.

At Brooke

Class 2-A -- (3) Wheeling Central vs. (2) Steubenville Central, noon
Class 4-A -- (3) Edison vs. (2) John Marshall, 2 p.m.

Harrison Central hammers Magnolia

Huskies advance to OVAC 3-A title game

RICH GIBSON
Associate Sports Editor

Worth the wait? "Well worth it," smiled Mike Saffell after his Harrison Central skies mowed down Magnolia, 3-0, in the conclusion of an OVAC 3-A semifinal Monday evening in New Martinsville. Both teams endured a 48-hour off when last Saturday afternoon's game was halted by inclement weather at the George Mul-

lett Complex.

Play resumed Monday in the bottom of the third with Harrison Central in front, 3-0, behind southpaw Trent Luyster.

The Blue Eagles were to strike for two quick runs off the Huskies' junior before Luyster slammed the door.

Harrison Central was to take big-time advantage of four Magnolia errors and nine walks issued by Blue Eagle pitching.

"When you fail to execute and

play fundamentally sound baseball, bad things are bound to happen," bemoaned veteran Magnolia mentor Dave Cisar, owner of more than 550 career wins.

"Basically, you have to credit everything to Harrison Central," he added. "I'm very impressed with the Luyster kid. I don't think he threw quite as hard (as Saturday), but still, he had enough good stuff to get the job done."

Cisar, in turn, held back his mound ace for West Virginia sectional play. Magnolia was slated to play this afternoon at St. Marys.

"It would have been nice to have (Steve Iams) on the hill, but the (OVAC) is really a second chance tournament for teams who've already been eliminated. We have to focus everything on our state tournament, now. That's how it works."

Harrison Central returns to action Saturday afternoon (5:00) at Steubenville's Vaccaro Field where they'll oppose Bellaire for the 3-A title.

"Bellaire beat us twice in the regular season. We're really looking forward to another shot at them," Saffell said.

Magnolia became the OVAC's

second number one seed to bite the dust. Last Saturday, Buckeye Local stunned Steubenville Big Red in a 4-A semifinal at Toronto.

"(This) is a tribute to all our kids and how hard they've worked," Saffell stated. "We received contributions from everyone in our lineup, top to bottom."

Perhaps none greater than freshman Mike Meadows, who made his first varsity start a memorable one in Monday's pressurized contest.

Not to be confused with Mark McGuire, Meadows entered Monday's game hitting out of the cleanup spot.

The Huskies' second sacker made his presence felt immediately, inducing a bases loaded walk in the top of the fourth.

Meadows' next two plate appearances resulted in a pair of textbook bunts, both of which went for infield hits.

Harrison Central broke open the game, scoring five times in the fifth frame. Luyster lined a two-run single to center; junior Jeremy Bartrug drew a bases loaded walk; and shortstop Joe Buxton belted a two-run single for a 10-2 lighting.

In the sixth, Magnolia was guilty of another costly error leading to a run before Bartrug's fielder's choice plated the final tally.

Luyster, meanwhile, was outstanding on the hill, limiting a usually potent-hitting Eagles' club to just three hits.

"Trent's almost always around the plate. He isn't going to walk many batters," Saffell pointed out.

The savvy junior recorded seven strikeouts and walked only two. At the plate, Luyster was on base four times, three via hits.

Before play was halted Saturday, third baseman Matt Phillips pounded a two-run double and designated hitter Brian Thaxton tagged a run-scoring two-bagger.

Centerfielder Michael Bertz, a sophomore, reached base three times and scored as many runs.

First baseman Chris Chesla ignited a two-run fourth frame with a leadoff hit. Chesla also scored twice.

Blue Eagles' catcher Eric Burke drilled an RBI double. Iams plated Magnolia's other run with a base rap.

Harrison Central takes a 13-10 record into Saturday's title game. Magnolia is 16-6 entering this afternoon's sectional scrap. Line score:

H. Central 102 252 -- 12 11 3
Magnolia 002 000 -- 2 3 4
BATTERIES: Luyster and Kuhn.
Brookover, Smith (5), Tracey (6) and Mason.

Toronto Repeats as Double-A Champs

Red Knights battle past Crusaders, 8-5

By SHAWN RINE
For The News-Register

Steubenville Central had Toronto down early but couldn't deliver the knockout blow in Saturday's OVAC Class AA final at Vaccaro Field.

As a result, the Red Knights (23-3) came storming back to make a successful defense of their double-A crown with an 8-5 victory.

"Sometimes things don't work out the way you want them to in this game," said Toronto head coach Matt Morrison, "but our guys showed a lot of heart in coming back."

The Crusaders (14-9) jumped on Red Knight starter Scott Stutler right off the bat in the top of the first.

Mike Gianni drew a one-out walk, stole second and trotted home on a double by starting pitcher Ryan Rankin.

Rankin himself came home on a Matt Miller double and that was enough for Morrison, who brought out Jerry Miten Lemasters in to pitch.

Ryan Cummings greeted Lemasters with an RBI single but Lemasters got out of the jam by pick-

ing Cummings off first and then striking out the next hitter.

"I didn't want to start Mitch today because he threw so many pitches Tuesday (in Toronto's District semifinal loss to Hiland)," said Morrison. "We had all the confidence in the world in Scott."

The Red Knights got two runs back in the bottom of the first on an error and an infield grounder and then went ahead to stay with two more in the second frame.

Lemasters tied the game with an RBI grounder and Randy Littlecott delivered the go-ahead run with a two-out RBI single.

Toronto padded the margin with two more runs in the third as Don Price came through with a two-out, two-run single to make it 6-3.

Central wasn't ready to pack it in, however, as the Crusaders scratched out runs in the fourth and fifth on clutch base knocks by Rankin and Steve Cramblett to make it 6-5 heading into the bottom of the sixth.

That's when the Red Knights gave Lemasters a little breathing room as

Class AA	
Steub. Central	300 811 6-5 6 2
Toronto	222 882 x-8 5 1
SC—Rankin (11so, 7w) and Cummings.	
Rankin S, D, 2rb; Miller D, rbi; Cramblett S, T, rbi.	
T—Stutler (8so, 1w), Lemasters (1) (8so, 1w) and Kuhn, Cain T, rbi; Lemasters S, 2rb; Littlecott S, rbi; Lucsko rbi; Price S, 2rb.	

Jay Foster walked and came all the way around to score on a Shawn Cain triple.

Lemasters himself wrapped up the scoring by bringing Cain home on a sacrifice fly.

Lemasters got the win with 6 2/3 innings of four-hit relief. He struck out eight and issued only one walk in his stint and also helped himself at the plate with a single and a pair of RBIs.

Rankin took the hard-luck loss despite yielding only five hits. He struck out 11 but gave up seven bases on balls. He had a single and double for the Crusaders while Cramblett added a single and triple.

Edison's Halligan Fans 15 in 4-A Shutout

Senior ace pitching, hitting star for big-school champions

By SHAWN RINE
For The News-Register

The weather turned a bit chilly as night fell on Steubenville's Vaccaro Field Saturday but Edison ace Matt Halligan had his heater working in the Wildcats' Ohio Valley Athletic Conference's Class AAAA baseball championship game against Buckeye Local.

Halligan struck out seven of the first nine batters he faced and the Panthers only hit the ball in fair territory six times as Edison blanked Buckeye Local, 7-0, to claim the OVAC big-school crown.

The hard-throwing Halligan struck out 15 batters and yielded only three hits in six dazzling innings of work.

Sophomore Wes Streblo came in to

Class AAAA	
Buckeye Local	000 000 0-0 3 4
Edison	010 114 x-7 6 0
BL—Kliner (2so, 5w), Boroski (8) (8so, 6w) and Prall, Otto (8), Poegal D.	
E—Halligan (18so, 3w), Streblo (2so, 1w) and Gorby, Halligan S, T, 2rb; Gorby rbi; Snyder 2S; Wickham S, 2rb.	

pitch the seventh inning and picked up two more strikeouts for a total of 17 whiffs on the night from the Edison (19-8) mound staff.

Halligan went on to fan nine of the first 15 batter he faced and struck out the side in both the second and fifth innings.

The Wildcats scored an unearned run in the bottom of the second and sacrifice flies by Doug Wickham and

David Gorby in the fourth and fifth frames, respectively, pushed the count to 3-0.

While that would have been more than enough with Halligan pumping out the high-octane stuff from the hill, Edison decided to put Buckeye Local (18-9) away in the bottom of the sixth.

Wickham got things started with an RBI single and Halligan then capped the four-run uprising with a ringing two-run triple.

Halligan led a six-hit attack for Coach Bill Beattie's champions with a single and a triple while Tom Snyder chipped in with a pair of singles.

Ryan Poegal broke up Halligan's no-hit bid with a two-out double in the bottom of the third inning.

Red Devils Bitten By Bad Luck, Worse Weather

St. John's blasts Frontier, Red Knights combine for no-hitter of Barnesville

The Bellaire Big Reds were praying for rain, and that's just what they got in their Class OVAC AAA semifinal game against the St. Clairsville Red Devils.

The game ended with a 5-3 win for Bellaire, but that may not have been the outcome without the bad weather. The Red Devils were down two in the top of the seventh, starting the inning with their No. 9 batter, Brent Williams, who belted a home run. Now down by only one, Bellaire pitching walked the next two hitters to leave two on with St. Clairsville's No. 3 batter, D.J. Hynes, coming up to the plate — with no outs.

Then came the rain.

It rained for about 10 minutes, which prompted the umpires to postpone the game for about 35 minutes. After roughly 40 minutes, umpires Greg Hermann and Jim Little decided the field was too slick to continue, ending the game.

Derek Myers earned the mound victory for the Big Reds, striking out three and walking as many. Chris Ofat singled home a run and Matt Frizzi had a triple and a run batted in.

Derek Wood had a pair of singles and an RBI and Brent Williams singled and sent a runner across the plate for the Red Devils in the losing effort.

In the other OVAC AAA semifinal, Harrison Central led Magnolia 3-0, when the game was postponed due to rain in the bottom of the third inning. The game will resume Monday at 5 p.m. in New Martinsville.

The Class AAA Final will be played Saturday at Vaccaro Field in Steubenville.

Class A

Bellaire St. John's 13 Frontier 2

The Fighting Irish (20-3) scored seven runs in the second inning with two outs en route to an easy win over Frontier to earn a spot in the Class A finals on Saturday.

Rocky Swift struck out six and walked only one, combining with J.D. McCracken to limit the Cougars to only four hits.

Josh Shutler hit a three run homer in the second, and he also singled, ending the game with four runs batted in. Rocky Swift had a double and a single for two RBIs and Mark Hartlieb had a bases loaded double to give him three RBIs for the night. Willie Clegg singled for a run batted in.

In the losing effort, Rick Kroll had a pair of singles and an RBI for Frontier.

St. John's will play the winner of the Shadyside-Linsly game, which was postponed Saturday because of rain. The game will take place Monday at 5 p.m. in Bridgeport.

Class AA

Toronto 9 Barnesville 0

Scott Stutler and Matt Ludewig combined for a no-hitter as Toronto (25-2) shut out Barnesville (11-12) in the opening round of the Class AA OVAC baseball tournament at Toronto's Red Knight Complex.

Stutler worked the first four innings, striking out six before giving way to Ludewig in the fifth.



Ludewig worked the final three frames and struck out six. In an effort to save an arm for this week's Ohio Division IV District Tournament, Toronto head coach Matt Morrison lifted Stutler despite the fact that he was tossing a no-hitter.

Don Price rapped a pair of triples, a single and drove in a run while Doug Lucsko and Shawn Cain each recorded a double and a single.

Joey Gallagher lasted only one inning for Barnesville, which used three pitchers on the day.

Class AA

Steubenville Central 11 Wheeling Central 0

Jason Morelli started out the game with a home run to begin a three-run first inning and earn the Steubenville Central Crusaders a trip to the OVAC AA finals by shutting out Wheeling Central.

Morelli ended the game with his home run, along with a pair of singles and three RBIs. Matt Miller homered, singled twice and knocked

home four runners. Ryan Rankin also chipped in for the Crusaders with a double, a single, and a run batted in.

Rankin also put in a stellar performance on the mound, gaining the win by striking out eight batters, walking only one, and giving up only three hits.

Steubenville Central will now face Toronto next Saturday at Vaccaro Field in Steubenville in the Class AA Finals.

Class AAAA

Buckeye Local 9 Big Red 4

Big Red scored four times in the bottom of the third inning of their Class AAAA semifinal OVAC tournament game against Buckeye Local to claim a 4-3 lead, only to watch it evaporate as the Panthers scored three in the fifth and seven innings to slip past Steubenville (23-2).

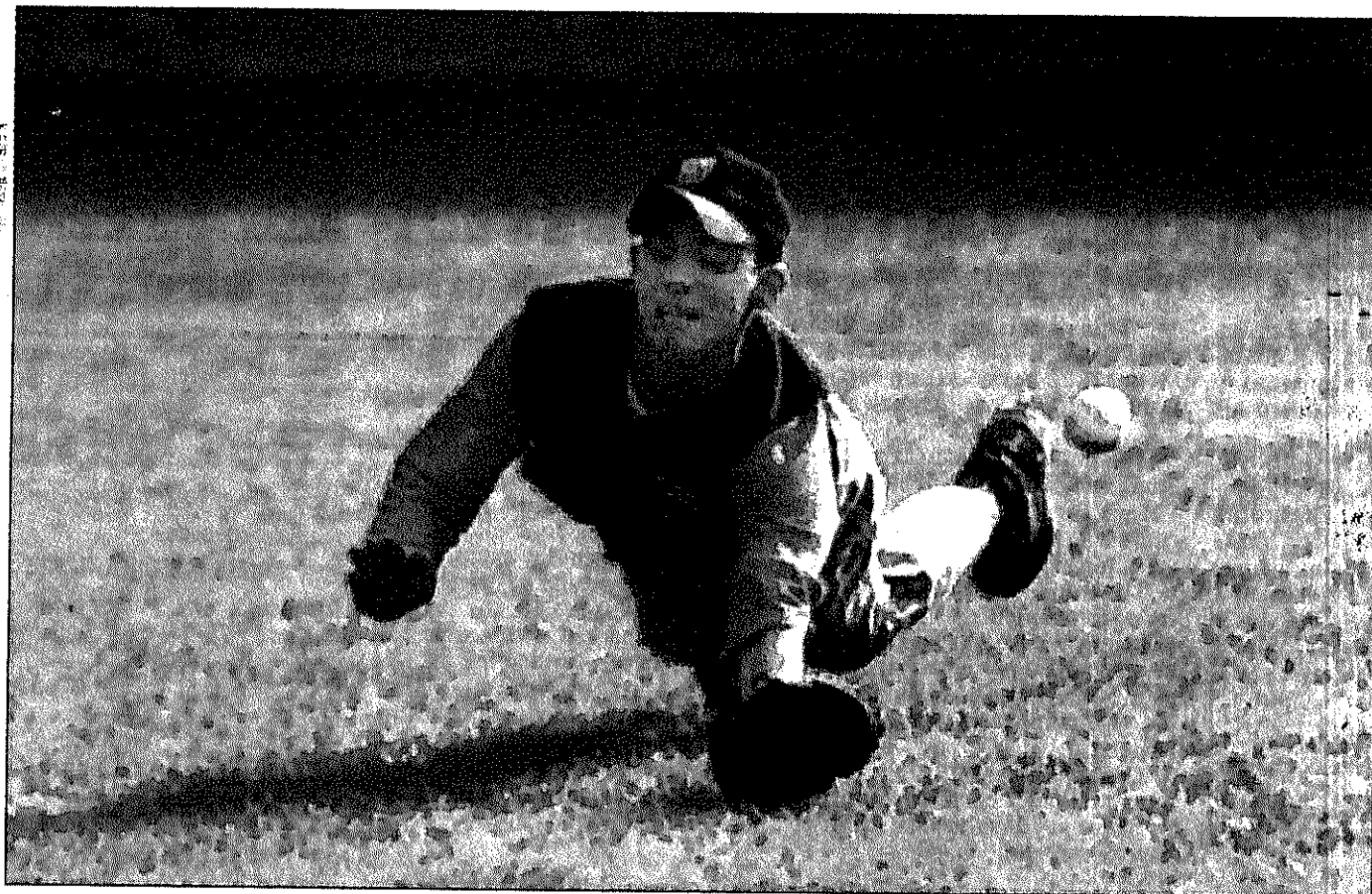
Ralph Burke took the loss for Big Red, giving up 11 hits, including three to his counterpart Larry Boroski. Chad Figurski and Dustin Kliner each had three singles for the Panthers, who withstood homers by Matt Vein and Chris Schloss.

Class AAAA

Edison 5 John Marshall 2

Matt Halligan struck out nine while walking only two and gave up four hits en route to an Edison victory over John Marshall to send the Wildcats to the OVAC AAAA finals against Buckeye Local Saturday.

Matt Bailey doubled, singled and sent a runner home for Edison, while Joe Rose singled home a run and Halligan had a single for two RBIs.



DIVING to make a catch is Shadyside outfielder Trent Ging during Monday's OVAC Class A semifinal game against Linsly at Perkins Field in Brookside. The Cadets advanced to the title game against St. John's with a 10-1 victory

T-L Photo

Linsly earns spot in OVAC 1-A final

• Halt Shadyside bid, face St. John Central

By GREG HARKNESS
Times Leader Sports Writer

Linsly advanced to the OVAC Class A championship tilt with a 10-1 victory over Shadyside Monday night at Perkins Field in Brookside.

The Cadets will now move into Saturday's championship game against St. John Central which is scheduled for an 11 a.m. first pitch. The victory also gave Linsly its 20th victory on the sea-

son — the eighth time in school history.

"The kids really wanted this victory," Linsly head coach Gary Sprague said. "There was some talk about the 20th victory, but more importantly we knew if we won 20 it gave us a chance for 21 and an OVAC title.

"We have some nice power with (Dan) Buchwach and (Dan) Stephens, but we do a lot of little things that help you win games," Sprague added. "We are able to put down a sacrifice bunt and move runners over when we need to."

The Cadet power was a big factor in the victory with Stephens and Buchwach each launching home runs. Stephens

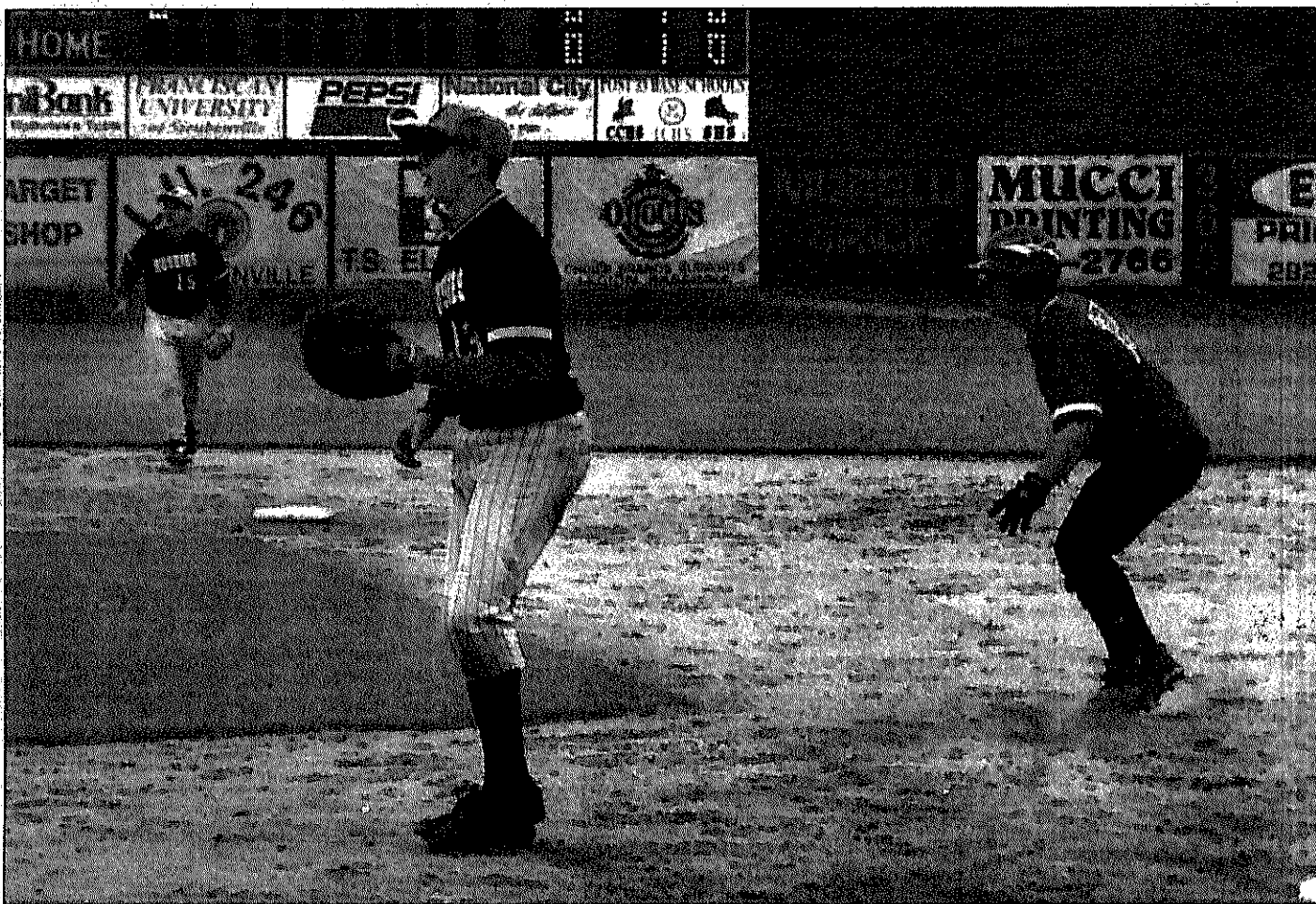
blast was a grand slam which gives him the school's all-time RBI record.

Not to be lost in the shuffle is the effort righthander Ryan Saari put forth on the mound. The senior tossed a complete-game two-hitter with five strikeouts and five walks.

Saari also received some solid defense behind him from his Cadet teammates.

"Our defense hasn't always been solid behind Ryan this season, but tonight we made a couple of nice plays behind him to help him out."

See, LINSLY, Page 4B



ABOVE: Bellaire senior Frankie Hibbits leads off first base after a pitch as Harrison Central first baseman Beau Burger looks on. The Huskies earned a hard-fought 4-3 victory.

AT LEFT: St. John Central's Joey Vavra dives back to first base to beat an attempted pick-off as Linsley's Dan Stephens prepares to apply the tag. The Irish rallied to capture the OVAC Class A Championship by defeating the Cadets.

**T-L Photos/
PAULA GINTHER**

Bellaire St. John's Rallies Past Cadets, 8-4

Fighting Irish claim fourth straight small-school title

By SHAWN RINE
For The News-Register

Good habits are hard to break. An opportunistic, Bellaire St. John's team scored six runs in the bottom of the fifth Saturday to come from behind and beat Linsly, 8-4, in the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference's Class A championship game at Vaccaro Field in Steubenville.

It was the fourth consecutive OVAC small-school title for Coach Tom Sliva's Fighting Irish (22-4) and went a long way toward easing the disappointment of last week's loss to Hilland in the Ohio Division IV District finals.

"This is a big win for our club," beamed Sliva. "It's a fitting end to a great season."

"Linsly has an outstanding program and we have a lot of respect for them. It's big for our kids to get a win over a team like Linsly."

The Cadets (19-7), who had split the regular-season series with St. John's, certainly didn't make it easy for the Irish as Coach Gary Sprague's veteran club came out of the chute with all guns blazing.

Jon Kurtz led off the game with a double, was sacrificed to third and scored on a wild pitch. Dan Buchwach then reached on an error and came sprinting home when Dan Stephens followed with a long double to deep left-center.

When George Korsnick walked to put runners on first and second, Sliva summoned senior righthander Rocky Swift to the hill.

Linsly hurler Ryan Saari greeted Swift with an RBI double to left but, with runners on second and third, Swift bore down and got out of the inning with no further damage via a strikeout and infield popup.

The breaking ball specialist kept the hard-hitting Cadets off stride the rest of the day, allowing just one run on five hits over the final six innings.

St. John's chipped away at the hard-throwing Saari — who has signed pitch collegiately at Otterbein — with single runs in the third and fourth.

Trailing 3-2 heading into the fifth, most of the Irish hitters were getting their third look at the Linsly ace and liked what they saw.

With one out, Eric Taylor singled



Bellaire St. John's second baseman Mark Hartlieb takes the throw from third baseman Matt Nardo (17) to force Linsly's George Korsnick at second base during Saturday's OVAC Class A championship game at Vaccaro Field. The Fighting Irish beat the Cadets, 8-4, to claim their fourth straight OVAC title.

and Swift brought the senior center-fielder steaming home with the tying run by ripping a double to right.

Willie Clegg followed with a single that scored Swift with the go-ahead run and, after David Shuttler was hit by a pitch, Mark Hartlieb reached on an infield error to load the bases with just one out.

Ben Shuttler rolled a grounder to first that scored Clegg, making it 5-3 and leaving runners on second and third with two out. Number nine hitter Matt Nardo then rocketed a double to right that scored both runners and came home himself on an RBI single off the bat of Joey Vavra for an 8-3 lead.

That was more than enough cush-

Class A	
Linsly	200 201 8-4 2 2
Bellaire St. John's	201 100 2-8 11 2
L—Saari (2ea, 2w), Sines (8) (2ea, 0w) and Zitzelsberger. Kurtz S, D; Buchwach 2S; Stephens D, rbi; Korsnick D; Saari D, rbi.	
BSJ—Hartlieb (2ea, 1w), Swift (1) (10ea, Sw) and Clegg. Vavra S, rbi; J. Shuttler 3S; Swift D, rbi; Clegg S, rbi; D. Shuttler D; Hartlieb D; B. Shuttler cbi; Nardo D, 2rbi.	

ion for Swift, who gave up a meaningless run in the sixth but hurled a scoreless seventh to close out the win.

"I'm really proud of the way our guys hung in after getting down early," said Sliva.

"I think that showed what this team is made of."

Swift finished with 10 strikeouts and five walks in 6 2/3 innings of work but the Irish's offensive production was truly a team effort, as every one of Bellaire St. John's nine starters contributed at least one hit or RBI.

Josh Shuttler led the way with three singles while Hartlieb and David Shuttler also cracked out doubles. Nardo, who had the clutch two-out double in the fifth, reached base four times.

For Linsly, Kurtz had a single and a double while Buchwach chipped in with a pair of singles and Korsnick also reached ball all four times.

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