

Martins Ferry, Beallsville earn OVAC crowns

By GREG HARKNESS
Times Leader Sports Writer

Martins Ferry, Beallsville and Wheeling Park claimed OVAC Championships Saturday afternoon at Moundsville's East End Complex. The final OVAC title will be handed out next week when River will oppose the Wheeling Central-Fort Frye winner.

TO BE the best you've beat the best.

Martins Ferry did just that, using an improbable rally by scoring five runs in its last two at bats capped with a two-run home run by sophomore Sarah Kelner, to dethrone Indian Creek, 6-4, to capture the Class AAA championship.

"My hat's off to Indian Creek," Martins Ferry head coach Jess Cordery. "They are a very good program and to beat a team as good as they are makes it all the more special.

"It is a testament to all of the hard work that the girls put in," Cordery added. "The girls came to the lifting and the plyometrics in the summer, and this is the culmination of all of their hard work."

Trailing 4-1 entering the top of the sixth inning, Kelner singled and took second on an error. After an out, junior Michelle Zavatsky doubled deep to centerfield to score Kelner.

With freshman Jennifer Rice pinch-running for Zavatsky, sophomore Danielle Neavin reached on an infield single to place runners at first and third. The Lady Riders perfectly executed the double steal with Rice scoring to make it 4-3.

With one out in the top of the sixth, freshman Lindsay Coyne reached on an error. Sophomore Courtney Allar followed with an infield single, and the throw was bobbled by the Creek first baseman, which allowed Coyne to take third.

That throw eluded the IC third baseman and Coyne scored and Allar moved to third. Kelner followed with a deep blast to left center and she was able to motor around the bases to complete a two-run inside-the-park home run.

Sophomore Natalie Vinci fed off the energy and recorded a perfect seventh to cap the victory. Vinci was superb on the mound for the Lady Riders in allowing just four hits. She fanned eight batters and allowed two free passes.

"I can't say enough about my teammates and their defense," Vinci said. "It feels great to see all of our hard work pay off with a championship."

Indian Creek scored its first two runs on a pair of errors, and had the bases loaded with one out. However, Vinci was able to work out of the jam to keep it at 2-0.

Ferry sliced it to 2-1 when senior Ashley Wensyl plated sophomore Ashley Bruney with a bloop double to left.

Indian Creek scored its other two runs on Lori Steinard's triple to left. She scored when Mindy Nash grounded out to the third baseman.

BEALLSVILLE completed its rags to riches story by claiming the Class A championship.

The Lady Blue Devils struggled through a 1-22 season just a year ago, but turned things around in a hurry as they rallied to down defending champion St. John's, 12-11, in nine innings.

St. John's had three consecutive innings where it could've sealed the deal, but each time the Lady Blue Devils rallied.

Beallsville scored two runs in the bottom of the seventh to force extra innings and then scored one in the bottom of the eighth to extend the game. The Lady Blue Devils then rallied to score two in the bottom of the ninth to win it.

The Lady Irish took the lead in the first inning as senior Tiffany Moscato would double down the left field line to score classmate Janice Masters to make it 1-0.

St. John's would stretch the lead to 3-0 in the second as Masters and Moscato would receive free passes with the sack full.

With St. John's leading 3-0 entering the bottom of the second, Beallsville would send 10 batters to the plate - five of which would reach on walks. The Lady Blue Devils would also receive clutch singles from Amber Pyles and Tiffany Crum to take a 5-3 lead.

St. John's rallied to retake the lead as Kristen McCormick and Jacque Baker each singled and moved up on a wild pitch. McCormick would score on a ground out by Lauren Bumgardner.

Sophomore Arin Kress would follow with a bloop single to right to score a run to score Baker. Lauren Crecion followed with a base hit and then Scarlett Lynn's sacrifice fly scored Kress. Masters closed the inning with a single to score Crecion.

Masters finished with a double, two singles and three RBI. Kress donated a double, single and had two RBI.

Crum led the winners with a single, triple and drove in four teammates. Pyles closed with two RBI on a double and a single.

WHEELING PARK captured the Class AAAA title by holding off John Marshall, 4-3.

Beth Doyle highlighted Park's offense with a double, single and a RBI. Michelle Depto added two singles for the Lady Patriots.

Angie Newland earned the victory with a complete game effort. She allowed four hits while striking out four and walking two.

Gina Gorby had a two-run single in defeat for the Lady Monarchs.

Linescores:

River Runs Through It

Pilots rolling toward OVAC crown

By SAM AMICO
The Intelligencer Staff

You know it's a good night when the coach lets fans poke him in the belly.

Such was the case following River's 10-0 win over Toronto in Thursday's OVAC softball semifinals.

"We have a nice team that consists of nice girls," said Pilots coach Mark Romick, smiling like a man who had just been elected president. "We work very, very hard."

The game only lasted five innings because of the 10-Run Rule, which basically states any team that's too good doesn't get to play as long.

And the Pilots are very good — as in 21-2. They'll meet either Wheeling Central or Fort Frye for the league's Class AA title next week.

"But we haven't always been this good," Romick said. "There was a time when we took our lumps."

Romick should know. He started the program nine years ago, and has been its coach ever since.

At first, River competed in the Wheeling Recreational League, not the OVAC.

"We got beat pretty badly, a lot of times," Romick said. "But winning and losing didn't matter. All we wanted to do was develop players for the future. Today, we have a tremendous group of girls. Our team is a nice mix of upperclassmen and underclassmen."

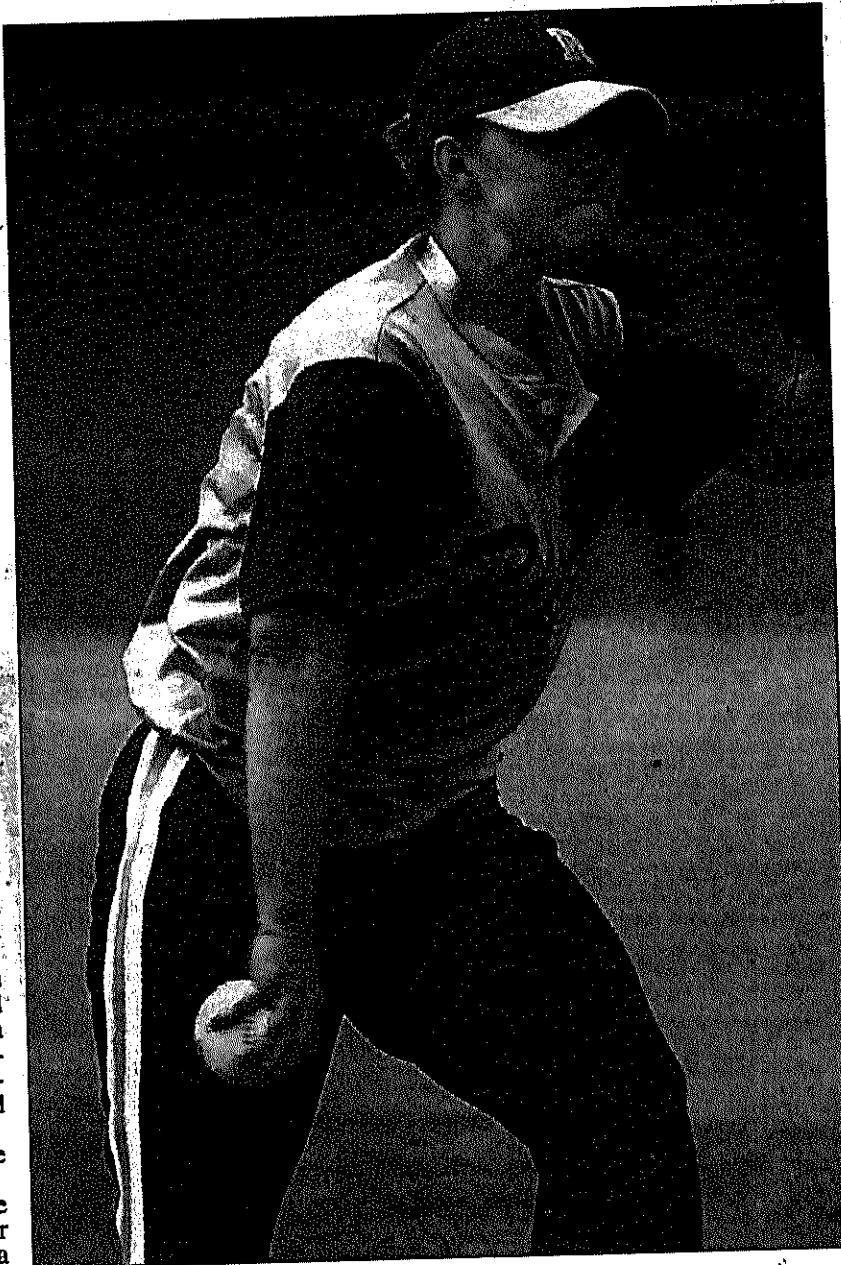
One of those upperclassmen is senior Sarah Langsdorf, who pitched all five innings Thursday. She had a perfect game through three and two-thirds, finishing the night with a one-hitter. She also struck out five Red Knights and didn't walk any.

It was as if the Knights were swinging helplessly at a gnat.

Langsdorf's strong performance came on a night when "three or four scouts were in the stands taking a look at her," according to Romick.

"Sarah's a wonderful young lady, and that applies to both softball and life," Romick said. "In softball, her control as a pitcher is just unreal."

In life, Langsdorf is a "B-plus" student who likes to win and talk about her teammates. She also spent countless hours in the gymnasium throwing to her father, Tom Langsdorf, this past winter, and continues to pump iron four times a week.



River pitcher Sarah Langsdorf brings a pitch to the plate against Toronto in the OVAC Class AA semifinals at East End Complex in Moundsville.

But Langsdorf learned how to pitch by studying older players.

"I started playing when I was very young, and I've listened to a lot of advice," she said. "I paid close attention to other pitchers, and tried to learn as much as I could from

watching them."

Langsdorf isn't alone in her drive to succeed, or her extreme confidence.

That's something anyone who witnessed Thursday's game could attest to, especially after seeing the

likes of Nicole January, Leah Baker, Jordan Wright, and Kari Taylor.

Baker scored the Pilots' first two runs (finishing with three), and had a triple and an RBI.

January had an RBI, and Wright was 1-for-1 with a triple and a run. Taylor had a run and an RBI, as did Ashley Armann.

Also, Jessica Pyles contributed a double and an RBI.

So this remarkable season truly has been a team effort — something the Pilots like to promote.

"We have T-shirts that read, 'It's a team thing,'" Romick said. "Our girls live by that."

Romick isn't the type of coach who pretends the entire free world should genuflect at the mere mention of his name. He laughs a lot, shakes plenty of hands, and doesn't mind taking an index finger to the gut.

He's been teaching in the Hannibal-area school district for 20 years, and currently teaches junior high science and math. He's also River's boys basketball coach.

He's particularly amazed by how well his softball team has meshed.

"There's so many different personalities, and as I mentioned, a difference in age," he said. "Sometimes that type of mix doesn't match. It can cause problems. But the camaraderie on this team has been great."

Each of River's losses have come by just one run ... and not even Langsdorf expected the team to be this good.

"I expected us to be about even (.500)," she said. "We have a lot of young players, but somehow, we've found a way to win. And we've done it just about every game."

Langsdorf and her coach are not fibbing about the team's youth, as three freshmen — Lindsay Romick, Kayla Matesick, and Armann — start for the Pilots.

Despite all of this, River rarely comes up when the discussion is Ohio Valley softball powers.

"We are a secret, I suppose," Romick said, smiling once again. "We're pretty far out of everyone's way, at least when it comes to the Ohio Valley. But what's nice is that the girls aren't intimidated. That's a big reason the season has gone so well."

(Continued on Page 23)

OVAC ALL-STAR SOFTBALL

Big Innings Highlight W.Va. Win

Errors costly to Buckeyes in 9-6 loss

Very similar numbers, yet very different results. That was the scenario on Tuesday in the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference Ohio-West Virginia All-Star softball game at Belle Isle in Wheeling.

West Virginia scored in just two of a possible nine innings, but they were big ones. The Mountaineer squad scored four runs in the top of the first inning and put the game out of reach with a five-run eighth, as West Virginia defeated Ohio for the second consecutive year, 9-6.

West Virginia banged out 12 hits to Ohio's 11, but the category that tells the most about this story is error portion of Ohio's side of the ledger... it read four.

West Virginia, under the direction of Head Coach Tammy Higley (Wheeling Park) and assistants Lyle Higley (Wheeling Park), Liz Hofreuter (Linsly), Chris Conti (Weirton Madonna) and Ambrose Bober and Rick Magruder (Wheeling Central), jumped out early on support of starting pitcher Angie Newland of Wheeling Park. Newland worked the first four innings, allowing two runs and striking out two, leaving the game with a 4-2 cushion.

Newland helped out offensively, with a pair of singles

and an eighth-inning RBI.

Linsly ace Erin McGee entered the contest in the fifth and picked up the victory, despite allowing a three-run Buckeye fifth frame. McGee pitched the 5th, 6th and seventh innings and struck out three while walking just one.

McGee also contributed with a single and a run batted in, while teammate Amanda Pollard singled and added an eighth-inning double.

Linda Reinauer, also of Park, laced a pair of singles. Union Local's Melissa Dunfee was saddled with the loss in this, the 20th version of the event. Dunfee struck out one and didn't issue a walk, but was on the mound for the five-run, West Virginia eighth inning.

Bellaire St. John's Tiffany Moscato singled, doubled and drove in a run, while Maranda Krause (Buckeye Local), Nicole Baker (Barnesville) and Amber Pyles (Beallsville) all drove a runner across the plate.

River's Sarah Langsdorf and Barnesville's Baker also pitched for the Buckeyes. The two combined to allow four runs (all by Langsdorf), strike out six and issue just one walk.

Ohio still holds the overall lead in the series, 13-7.

Wheeling Park Captures OVAC Softball Title

Martins Ferry wins AAA championship; Beallsville dons Class A crown

It came down to a play at the plate in the bottom of the seventh inning, but Wheeling Park came up with its fourth win over John Marshall in five meetings this season to win the OVAC AAAA championship crown, winning by a score of 4-3.

The madness started for the Patriots in the seventh inning, when Wheeling Park watched its 3-run lead shrink to a 1-run advantage with the tying run on third. The inning started with a walk, and then a pop-up dropped between the pitcher and the third baseman to leave Monarch runners on second and third. Gorby then singled, knocking a run home. The next batter hit a foul ball on the right side of the field that was caught by the Patriot first baseman, but the runner on third tagged up and scored.

With two outs in the last frame and Gorby standing on third with the tying run, a pitch got past Patriot catcher Kristen Schell, and Gorby took off for home. Schell grabbed the ball and tossed it to pitcher Angie Newland, who tagged Gorby and ended the game for a Park victory.

The Monarchs (14-12) come out early with a Merideth Bourne double to start the game. Annie Hoffer sent Bourne to third on a sacrifice, to set the stage for Kristen Doyles, who grounded out to second, but sent Bourne home for the score.

Park (21-8) came back in the second to score a pair, when Beth Doyle doubled with one out in the inning and Sara Sheller singled to send Doyle across the plate. Stephanie Luzader then singled home Sheller.

Sommer Strothers crossed the plate in the fourth inning for Patriots to end up scoring the winning run. Lazader sent Strothers to second, and Michelle Depto singled to send Strothers home.

Newland gained the mound victory, striking out four and giving out a pair of free passes while only allowing four hits. Abby West struck out three and walked one in the loss for



Wheeling Park baserunner Sommer Struthers (right) slides safely into home plate as John Marshall catcher Gina Gorby (left) awaits a throw. Wheeling Park won the game, 4-3, to capture the Class AAAA OVAC softball championship Saturday at East End Field in Moundsville.

John Marshall.

Doyle doubled, singled, and knocked a run home, while Depto singled twice for an RBI in the win.

In the losing effort, Bourne ended the day with a double and a single, while Gorby singled and collected

two RBIs.

Martins Ferry 6 Indian Creek 4

The Purple Riders were down by one coming into the seventh inning, but Sarah Kelner belted a two-run homer to gain the OVAC AAA Championship, beating Indian Creek

6-4.

The Riders tied the game when the Redskins committed an error that allowed a Martins Ferry runner to score. Courtney Allar then singled and Kelner belted her homer to give the Purple Riders the victory and

earn the crown.

Pitcher Natalie Vinci struck out eight batters and walked a pair in the win, and Indian Creek ace Mike Nash suffered the loss, despite finishing seven and walking only one.

Kelner ended the game with a home run, along with a single and pair of RBIs. Helping her effort were Michelle Zavatski and Ashle Wensyel with a double and a run batted in apiece.

Michelle Oblockovich singled twice and Lori Stinard tripled and sent a runner across the plate for the Monarchs.

Beallsville 12

Bellaire St. John's 11

Beallsville (16-9) came out on top of a nine inning game, beating the Fighting Irish and win the Championship game of the OVAC playoffs. The game included 27 hits and nine errors.

St. John's scored seven runs in the first three innings, but the Blue Devils had a five-run second frame to keep the lead relatively small.

Beallsville scored a pair of runs in the bottom of the seventh to tie the game before both teams would score a run in the eighth. The Irish again scored a run in the top of the ninth but the Blue Devils bettered the effort, scoring two runs to win the game and the crown.

Erica Nippert struck out eight and walked six for the Blue Devils to gain the mound victory. Tiff Carr and Amber Pyles took care of things offensively for Beallsville. Carr singled and tripled for four runs batted in, while Pyles doubled and singled for two RBIs.

For Bellaire St. John's, Jared Masters had a double and a pair of singles for three RBIs and Ari Kress doubled and singled for a pair of runs batted in.

The OVAC AA Semifinal will be held Monday at 4:30 p.m. at East End Field in Moundsville between Fort Frye and Wheeling Central. The winner of that contest will face River in the Championship game.

N-R Photo/Art Lanning

Park Survives Semifinal

Patriots will battle John Marshall for fourth time this year

By SHAWN RINE
The Intelligencer Staff

Like a pair of heavyweight prize fighters, Wheeling Park and Weir traded jabs, albeit light ones, for 7½ innings before the Patriots' Maura Hamilton floored the Red Riders with a two-out RBI single in the bottom of the eighth inning to lift Wheeling Park (20-8), to a 1-0 victory over Weir in an OVAC Class AAAA Softball tournament semifinal at the East End Complex in Moundsville Friday.

John Marshall will have another shot at Wheeling Park, which eliminated it from postseason play.

The two lock horns in today's 12:15 Class AAAA final at the Moundsville complex.

"We have been in a couple of these (close games) the last couple of days," said Wheeling Park Coach Tammy Higley. "It's been really nerve-racking."

The game featured a combined eight hits — all singles — and 12 strikeouts, six each for Park starter Beth Doyle and Weir hurler Morgan Martin.

Each was superb, but the key was Doyle's ability to get the key out.

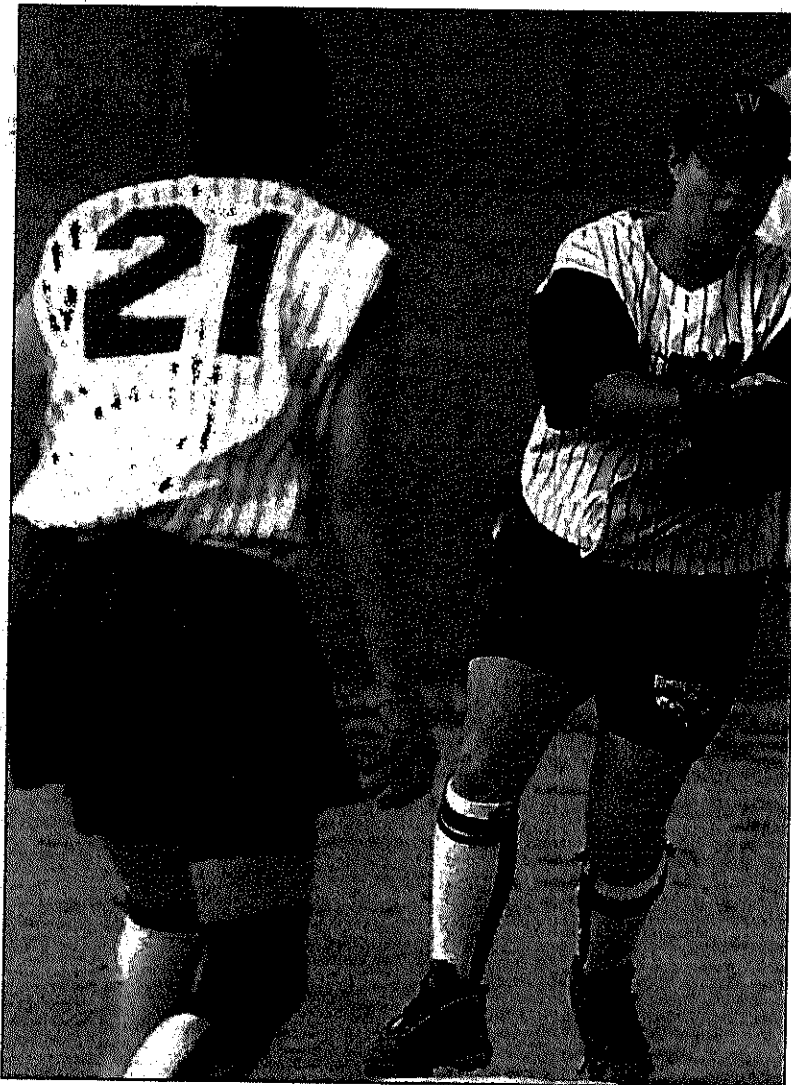
Neither team could mount any type of a rally until the bottom half of the third inning.

Weir got the leadoff runner aboard as Carrie Phillips drew one of her two walks on the day. Danielle Sharott advanced Phillips to second base with a sacrifice bunt and Lisa Costello followed with another walk to put runners on first and second with one down.

After the runners moved up to second and third respectively on a passed ball, Leah Brock got aboard thanks to a Park error and the bases were full of Riders.

Then it was time for Doyle to buckle down.

Doyle induced Lacy Bennett to ground the ball to third baseman Angie Newland who calmly fired



Alex Kozlowski/The Intelligencer

Wheeling Park's Cassie Greathouse (10) gets a handle on the ball after receiving it from the Patriots' Jamie Holeczy (21) on a forceout at second base in the bottom of the eighth inning of their OVAC Class AAAA semifinal game vs. Weir.

the ball to the plate to get the force out.

After falling behind the next batter Kelli Niesslein 3-0, Doyle buckled down once more to whiff Niesslein and end the game's first threat.

"Our pitchers have worked their way out of jams a lot lately, especially in the last week," said Higley.

The Red Riders again put run-

ners on first and second with two outs in the fourth, but Sharott struck out swinging to end the inning.

The biggest play of the game occurred in the Weir half of the seventh.

Phillips singled to lead off and Sharott followed by earning a free pass to put runners on first and second with nobody out.

(Continued on Page 24)

Park

(Continued from Page 21)

Lisa Costello attempted to sacrifice the runners over but popped the ball straight up and it was caught for out number one by Newland at third and she turned and fired a strike to second to double up Phillips and end another threat.

Park's only real rally against Martin occurred in the top of the eighth. Summer Strothers got on by way of an error — one of three on the day for Weir.

Stephanie Luzader and Cassie Greathouse each grounded into fielders choices and Linda Reinauer singled Greathouse to second. Hamilton then followed with what proved to be a game-winning single up the middle to score Greathouse

from second.

Doyle picked up the victory. She fanned six and walked four.

Martin was the hard-luck loser as she allowed just three hits and didn't issue a single walk.

"We have beat them (JM) twice this week," said Higley. "Hopefully we will keep it going."

John Marshall 1 Buckeye Local 0

In the other Class AAAA semifinal, Brandy Bungard scattered four hits and the Monarchs (14-11) took advantage of three errors by the Panthers (15-10).

Coach Pancho Flores' team tallied its only run when Annie Hoffer singled, advanced to third on an error and passed ball and scored on a Kristen Steinman fielder's choice.



Devils Down Linsly

OVAC Softball Tourney game lasts over 3 hours

By SAM AMICO
The Intelligencer Staff

Eventually, something had to give.

After 12 innings, three hours, 29 minutes, and countless hunger pains suffered by players and fans, it finally did.

The final: Beallsville 8, Linsly 7, in the first round of the OVAC softball tournament Tuesday at Moundville's East End Fields.

That's right, the game went a whopping 12 innings — five more than planned. It didn't end until Amber Pyles crossed home plate to break a 7-all tie that held up for five innings — and nearly two hours.

To make matters worse, the players were tortured by the unrelenting sun and humidity. It was as if they were playing one of the biggest games of their lives inside of a microwave oven.

"As my dad said, 'Whoever gets a break is going to win,'" said Linsly coach Liz Hofreuter.

Hofreuter's dad said that in the middle of the 11th inning.

By the bottom of the 12th, everyone had an idea as to who would get that break. That's when Pyles walked, then stole second base.

Coty Marcum was the next batter. She grounded out to the pitcher, but advanced Pyles to third.

Then sophomore Tiff Crum stepped into the batter's box with a glare in her eye. She hit a shot between the shortstop and third baseman, scoring Pyles for the game-winner.

Crum was huge in this game, as she was the young lady who stole home plate in the bottom of the sixth to tie it. Without her, Beallsville doesn't overcome a 6-3 deficit (which it did).

Crum also had a double and scored two runs.

"She's a real fighter," said Devils coach Deb Street. "I never doubted that she could come through."

Street didn't have any doubts about Pyles either. Pyles may be ninth in the batting order, but she's also the team's lone senior. Her experience showed in the 12th, when she raced toward home like there was a hundred bucks lying on the plate.

Then there was pitcher Erica Nippert.

She pitched the entire game, striking out 11 and walking just four. More importantly, she improved with each inning.

"She's a real go-getter," Street said. "When she steps on the mound ..."

Street paused, then reflected on her own days as a player. She went to Beallsville High School, but there was no such thing as school-sponsored softball in her day. Street had to play for a club team.

That's one reason why this win was so special for her.

"We've never done anything like this," said the second-year coach. "I'm so proud of the girls. They worked so hard all season."

Jaime Stephens (triple, two RBI) was also big for Beallsville.

Meanwhile, the Cadets just couldn't seem to hit anything after building that three-run lead.

But they remained in the game, and pitcher Erin McGee was the reason why.

Like Nippert, McGee pitched all 12 innings. Most observers were just waiting for her arm to fall off. Instead, she threw 16 strikeouts (and walked only two).

"Outstanding," was how Hofreuter described McGee's performance. "She's been there for us all season."

And what a season it's been at Linsly.

The Cadets were 4-10 through their first 14 games. "Then I told the girls that we had to win five of our final six," Hofreuter said.

That's exactly what the girls did, "and I'm very, very, very proud of them for that," Hofreuter added.

Linsly had a scare in the 11th inning, when right-fielder Katie Williams dove for and misplayed a ball, which ended up hitting her on the back of the head. She returned to her spot in the outfield, only to collapse one batter later.

She was removed from the field by stretcher, when it was learned she had suffered a concussion.

McGee, Melissa Smith and Amanda White each had two RBI for Linsly (9-12).

(Continued on Page 20)

SPOTLIGHT ON SPORTS

Lady Blue Devils turn in magical softball season



By
Bubba
Kapral
Times Leader
Sports Editor

Remarkable. What better way to describe the Beallsville girls' softball team this spring.

The Lady Devils pocketed the OVAC 1-A championship Saturday by outlasting a talented and veteran St. John Central

team, 12-11, in nine innings.

That victory enabled the Lady Devils to post a sparkling 14-8 record for the season.

The upstart Lady Devils earned the title the hard way, rallying from deficits in the seventh, eighth and ninth innings. Coach Deb Street's team had lost to the Lady Irish twice in regular-season action.

Winning an OVAC championship is special any time, but it's truly magical when the previous campaign you were 1-22.

Moreover, the Lady Devils are quite young. The Monroe Countians start just one senior ... Amber Pyles.

"It's a dream come true," Street said about her team's OVAC championship and amazing turnaround. "Last year was tough on everyone but the girls kept working and stayed committed."

Street cites a sweep of Barnesville in midseason which put the Lady Devils over the hump.

"Barnesville is a quality team with a super pitcher in Nicole Baker," said the second-year mentor. "When we swept them it gave our girls a lot of confidence and pointed us in the right direction."

Street had plenty of praise for her staff and players.

"The girls put in a lot of hard practices. They did everything we asked of them," Street said. "My assistants — Jim Street, Randy Thornberry and Cliff Marcum — dedicated themselves on making this team better."

Street and her youthful squad should be commended for a staggering turnaround in just one season. Obviously, much more success is in the Lady Devils' future.

OVAC Softball

(Continued from Page 17)

To understand how close this game really was, all you had to do was consider that three baserunners were tagged out at home plate during the five extra innings. Two of those runners were Blue Devils.

"The way we worked so hard ... I was hoping that something like this would happen," Street said. "It was great."

Beallsville (14-9) plays in the Class A finals on Saturday.

Indian Creek 4 Meadowbrook 2

One day after being eliminated from the Ohio sectionals, the Redskins bounced back to gain a victory over the Colts in an OVAC Class AAA tournament game in Moundville.

Indian Creek (18-12) received a triple, double and two RBI from Lori Steiner, and double from Jenny

Calabrese. Mindy Nash hurled eight strikeouts — and gave up no walks — for the Redskins.

Meadowbrook (11-11) was led by Karly Ranklin, who compiled a double and an RBI.

Indian Creek will not have a rematch with Beaver Local, the team that beat them out of the Ohio sectionals, as the Beavers were defeated by Martins Ferry in the OVAC tourney Tuesday.

Martins Ferry 4 Beaver Local 1

Natalie Vincy threw five strikeouts, and Sarah Keiner hit a single and double, as the Purple Riders held off the Beavers in the other Class AAA semifinal.

Martins Ferry will face Indian Creek for the title Saturday at 12:35 p.m.

Beaver Local pitcher Vicki McCoy struck out six.



Alex Kozlowski/The Intelligencer

Bellaire St. John's catcher Lauren Bumgardner, left, awaits a throw while charging Weirton Madonna base runner Jenna Fulmer closes in on home plate during their OVAC Class A softball semifinal at East End Complex in Moundsville.

River

(Continued from Page 21)

Toronto's season has also gone well, but on Thursday the Red Knights (12-7) were doomed by mistakes.

They committed five errors, with each resulting in at least one run. That just made pitcher Marisa Young's task that much tougher. Still, Young remained poised most of the night, displaying the type of maturity that helped her become a

hot recruit in basketball (she'll play at Wheeling Jesuit).

Meredith Romey had the Knights' lone hit, a double in the third inning.

Bellaire St. John's 5 Weirton

Madonna 4, 9 innings

At Moundsville, Jacqui Baker doubled to drive home Kayla Magistro with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning, lifting the Fighting Irish to victory in the

OVAC Class A semifinals.

Tiffany Moscato and Kristen McCormick each added two singles and an RBI for St. John's (10-11).

Madonna (11-13) received a triple and two RBI from Megan Finneran, and two singles and an RBI from Amy Finneran.

St. John's will play Beallsville Saturday at 2 p.m. for the championship.

River tripped in OVAC, district championships

By GREG HARKNESS
Times Leader Sports Writer

The OVAC Class AA Championship Saturday was a "Yahn-fest." Wheeling Central ace Nichole Yahn was superb on the mound and her Lady Knights took advantage of six River errors to capture the Class AA title with a 5-1 victory at Moundsville's East End Complex.

Yahn went the distance on the hill for the Lady Maroon Knights. She allowed just four hits while striking out four and walking none.

"Yahn was solid on the mound," River head coach Mark Romick said. "She moved the ball around a lot and changed speeds well to keep us off balance. We had some hard hits early, but her defense made some nice plays."

River's defense would not be as solid. A Lady Pilot error would play a major part in every Wheeling Central run.

"You have to give Wheeling Central credit...they have a nice club," Romick said. "But we were flat early after the loss last night and we made some mental mistakes and against a good team you can't make those."

"When you have two good teams playing, you have to play a perfect game," Romick said. "Usually the team that plays closest to a perfect game wins and today that was Central."

Wheeling Central would get on the board in the top of the first when Sarah Sofka led off with a single up the middle. After an out, Michelle Rausch singled to right to put runners at first and second.

After another out, Elizabeth Wagner hit a pop up that should have ended the inning, but some miscommunication allowed the ball to drop and Sofka to score from second.

River would strike back in the bottom of the frame as senior standout Nicole January would reach on a base hit to left. Lea Baker would sacrifice her to second, and after an out, Jordan Wright would plate January with a single to right.

With two outs in the Central fifth, Rausch would reach with a single to right. Lori Thompson followed with a base knock to right which was fielded, but the throw into the infield missed the cut-off and Rausch was able to score from first.

Disaster would strike for River in the Central sixth.

After Melanie Sechrest reached on an error and moved to second on a fielder's choice, Amy Miller tried to sacrifice hunt but ended up reaching on a throwing error.

After the Lady Pilots record the second out, Sofka reached on an infield single to load the bases. Senior Emily Volpe followed with a hard liner to center which bounced and eluded the Lady Pilot outfielder which allowed all three runners to score.

Pitching well in defeat for River was senior ace Sarah Langsdorf who was the victim of the poor defense. Langsdorf went the distance with four strikeouts and no walks.

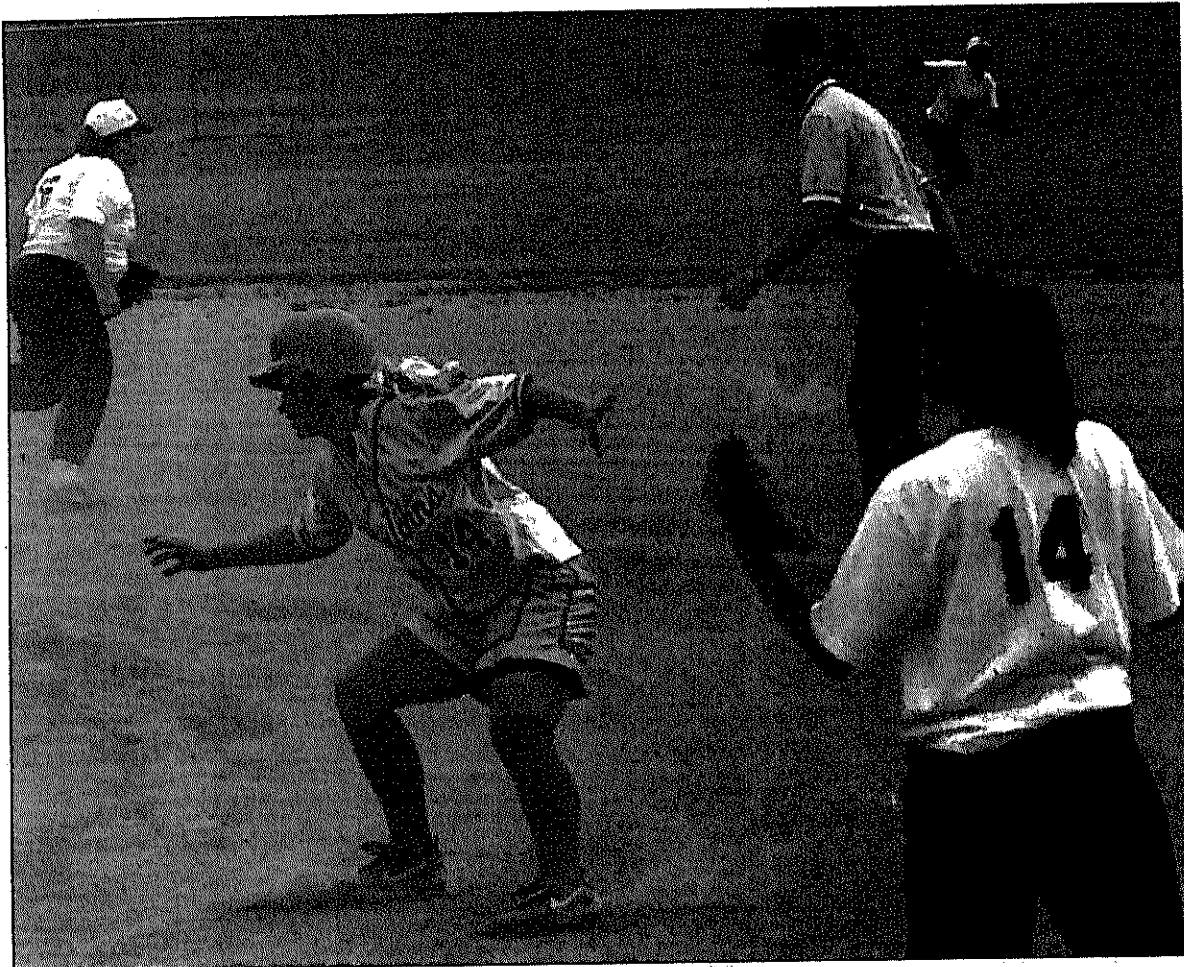
Wheeling Central, meanwhile, will be in search of its sixth consecutive West Virginia Class A title when action starts on Thursday.

Linescore:

OVAC CLASS AA FINALS WHEELING CENTRAL 5 RIVER 1

Wheeling Central	100 013 0 - 5 9 1
River	100 000 0 - 1 4 6

BATTERIES: Yahn and Thompson, Langsdorf and Romick.



T-L Photo/PAULA GINTHER

HEADING to second as the ball gets loose in the outfield is St. John's Tiffany Moscato during Thursday's OVAC 1-A softball semifinal against Weirton Madonna at Moundsville. The Lady Irish prevailed 5-4 and advance to Saturday's final. Story on page 2D.

Wheeling Central girls gain OVAC 2-A finals

Wheeling Central advanced to face River in the finals of the OVAC 2-A softball tournament with a 4-0 shutout of Fort Frye at Moundsville's East End Field Monday.

Nicole Yahn registered the mound win as she hurled the Lady Maroon Knights to a no hitter as she struck out seven and walked just two.

Melanie Sechrest led Fort Frye at the plate with two singles and a RBI, while Michelle Rausch had a double and a single.

Sarah Sofka and Jennifer Smith

each had two singles, while Lori Thompson had a single and two RBI. Elizabeth Wagner roped a run-scoring single.

Wheeling Central, the winner of three straight West Virginia State Championships, will enter the OVAC final with a sparkling 22-3 record.

Fort Frye, which is still alive in district play in Ohio, slipped to 17-7 with the loss.

Line score:
Fort Frye 000 000 0 0 0 3
Wheeling Central 202 000 x 4 12 1
BATTERIES: Brothers and Naylor; Nicole Yahn and Thompson.



Central Girls Take Title

Knights trip River in OVAC Class AA final

Wheeling Central, headed to Summersville later this week looking for a sixth straight West Virginia Class A girls' softball championship, earned an Ohio Valley Athletic Conference on Saturday afternoon.

Led by the four-hit pitching of senior Nichole Yahn and a three-run triple from Emily Volpe, the Lady Maroon Knights turned back River, 5-2, in the title game held at the East End Sports Complex in Moundsville.

Both teams were coming off tournament games held on Friday night. Central, coached by Ambrose Bober and Rick Magruder, earned the Region One crown by blasting Clay-Battelle, 11-0, in five innings at Brooke High School.

The Lady Pilots, however, were on the short end of a 3-2 score against Strasburg in the Ohio Division III final at Cambridge.

Yesterday's loss to Central finished off the season for River, still with a sparkling overall record of

24-4.

Central, now 24-3, collected nine hits off Lady Pilot ace Sarah Langsdorf, who walked four and did not issue a walk. Winning pitcher Yahn also did not allow a free pass, and she recorded three strikeouts.

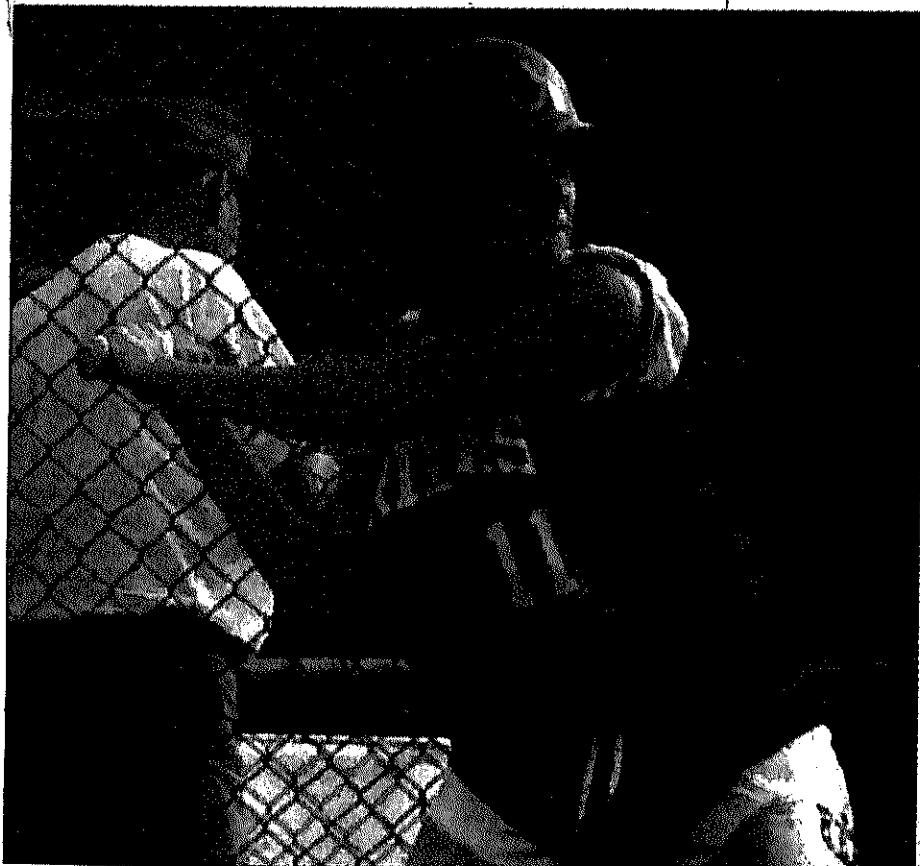
Sara Sofka had two singles, while Lori Thompson collected an RBI for the Lady Knights.

Central was clinging to a 2-1 lead entering the sixth inning when a couple of errors by River gave the Lady Knights an opportunity to put the game away.

With two-out, Sofka reached on an infield hit, and Volpe then unloaded with her blast into the left-center gap which cleared the bases.

Given a four-run cushion, Yahn kept River off the scoreboard in its final two at bats to close out the game.

Wheeling Central 100 013 0-5 9 1
 River 100 000 0-1 4 4
 WC-Yahn wp (360, 0W) and Thompson; Sofka 2B, Emily Volpe T, 3rbi; Thompson S, rbi
 R-Langsdorf lp (4SO, 0W) and Romick; Wright S, rbi.



SLIDING safely into second (top photo) Linsly's Katie Chap during Tuesday's OVAC 1-A semifinals game against Beallsville. Taking a throw for the Lady Devils is Casey Domon. Beallsville advanced to Saturday's title game with an 8 victory in 12 innings.

MARTINS FERRY' Katie Mackey (bottom photo) had a pair of clutch RBI hits Tuesday as the Lady Purple Riders beat Beaver Local 4-1 in an OVAC 3-A semifinal game. Martins Ferry will play Indian Creek in the championship game Saturday.

T-L Photos/PAULA GINTHER

OVAC softball title tilts scheduled for Saturday

The 2000 OVAC softball championships will get under way Saturday afternoon in Moundsville beginning at 10:30 a.m. at East End Field.

The Class AA finals will not be held until sometime next week because of conflicts with sectional play.

BUCKEYE LOCAL will be looking for the Class 4-A repeat when it faces John Marshall tonight in the semi-finals. The winner of that game will face the winner of the Wheeling Park-Weirton tussle which is also tonight.

The Lady Panthers have a solid duo of pitchers in senior Maranda Krause and junior Jayme Kelley. Krause is also impressive at the plate.

Sweet-hitting senior Leslie Lopez, who already owns career records for hits and hits in a season, leads the Lady Panther attack. The Bethany signee also plays a superb centerfield.

Seniors Sarah Phillips and Abbey Ott also are big hitters in the Buckeye Local lineup. Junior Brandi Saltkied and sophomores Alex Corona and Nichole Moore also provide coach Barry Closser with clutch hitting.

Buckeye Local sports an impressive 16-8 record and claimed the regular-season OVAC title.

The winners will meet Saturday at 12:15.

ONE THING is for certain when Martins Ferry and Indian Creek vie for the Class AAA crown - runs will be at a premium.

In his third season at the helm, coach Jess Cordery has turned the Lady Riders into one of the premier 3-A teams in the valley. The Lady Riders have already set a record for most wins in a season with 17.

However, an OVAC championship would only add more credence to the fact that Ferry has arrived.

A big reason for Martins Ferry's transformation is sophomore ace Natalie Vinci, who has been superb on the mound for the Lady Purple.

Her battery mate, senior Katie Mackey, provides Ferry with solid defense and clutch hitting. Sophomore Danielle Neavin and junior Michelle Zavatsky add lively sticks to the offense.

Sophomores Courtney Allar, Ashley Bruney and

Sarah Kelner give the Lady Riders an added dimension with speed. Freshman Lindsay Coyne has been solid in the field and at the plate all season.

Indian Creek, meanwhile, already is where Ferry is striving to get. The Lady Redskins perennially are Class 3-A's top team and this season was no different as they took the regular season crown with a 17-2 record.

Senior fireballer Mindy Nash is a big reason why the Creek has been superb this season.

Seniors Michelle Oblockovich and Shannon Bell, both headed to play softball at West Liberty, provide solid bats for coach Jim DiCarlo's troops. Juniors Jennifer Calabrese and Lori Steinard, and sophomore Haley Orwick also contribute solid hitting.

First pitch for Martins Ferry and Indian Creek will be 10:30 a.m.

THE CLASS A finals will feature St. John Central and Beallsville.

The Lady Irish will be looking for the repeat. St. John's began the season slow but came on late to finish with a solid 10-11 mark.

Beallsville, which had a dismal 1-22 campaign just last year, claimed the regular season OVAC crown with a 12-8 record.

Coach Don Gillis has a solid mound performer in junior Scarlett Lynn.

The Lady Green have a very talented offense keyed by seniors Janice Masters and Tiffany Moscato, along with junior Kayla Magistro.

Senior catcher Lauren Bumgardner is solid with the bat and the glove, while Jacque Baker, Arin Kress and Alisha Ciardelli also are key components of the Lady Irish puzzle.

The Lady Blue Devils of coach Deb Street also have a super performer on the mound in junior Erica Nipert, who also is a solid hitter.

Beallsville gets clutch hitting from senior Amber Pyle, and juniors Megan Burrow and Casey Dorman. Sophomore Tiffany Crum and freshman Coty Marcum also are solid hitters for the Lady Blue Devils.

First pitch for Beallsville and St. John Central will be 2 p.m.



River, SJC post OVAC wins

• SJC's Baker, River's Langsdorf star in wins

AT MOUNDSVILLE, St. John's and River both advanced to finals play in their respective class in the OVAC softball tournament.

The Lady Irish will oppose Beallsville Saturday at 2 p.m., while River will oppose the Wheeling Central-Fort Frye winner sometime next week.

IN THE CLASS A semifinal, junior Jacque Baker plated the winning run as St. John Central advanced to the finals with a 5-4 victory over Weirton Madonna in nine innings.

Junior Kayla Magistro reached on a single in the decisive ninth inning and then swiped second base. With two outs, Baker doubled to drive in Magistro and cap the victory.

Senior Tiffany Moscato and junior Kristen McCormick each aided the offense with two singles and a RBI each.

Junior Scarlett Lynn earned the victory on the mound with a complete-game effort. She fanned two

and allowed three free passes.

Julie Lamantia was solid in defeat on the mound for the Lady Dons. She went the route with 11 strikeouts and seven walks.

Amy Finneran and Megan Finneran each had two singles and a RBI for Weirton Madonna.

The win improved the Lady Irish to 10-11 on the season. Weirton Madonna, meanwhile, fell to 11-13 on the campaign.

RIVER punched its ticket to the Class AA finals in easy fashion as it routed Toronto, 10-0, in five innings.

Senior mound ace Sarah Langsdorf was sharp on the mound with a complete-game effort. She fanned five and walked none while allowing only one hit.

Freshman Ashley Armann highlighted the offense with a run-scoring triple, while Jessica Pyles doubled in a run. Kari Taylor donated two singles and a RBI.

Lea Baker and Jordan Wright each tripled in the victory, while

Nicole January added two base hits.

Toronto's lone hit was a Meredith Romey double.

River is now 21-2 and will oppose the winner of the Wheeling Central-Fort Frye game sometime next week. Toronto dropped to 12-7 on the campaign.

LINESCORES

CLASS A	
ST. JOHN CENTRAL 5	
WEIRTON MADONNA 4	
Madonna	010 020 100 - 4 5 2
St. John's	121 000 001 - 5 9 5
BATTERIES: Lamantia and Lamantia, Lynn and Bumgardner.	
CLASS AA	
RIVER 10 TORONTO 0	
Toronto	000 00 - 0 1 5
River	102 16 - 10 9 1
BATTERIES: Young and Brand, Langsdorf and Romick.	
W.VA. SECTIONAL FINALS	
WHEELING PARK 4	
JOHN MARSHALL 2	
John Marshall	000 002 0 - 2 1 0
Wheeling Park	012 001 x - 4 7 5
BATTERIES: West and Gorby, Newland, Doyle (5) and Hohman.	

Park, JM post 1-0 victories in OVAC softball tourney

OVAC 4-A SEMIFINALS PARK 1 WEIRTON 0

AT MOUNDSVILLE, the Park and Weirton played seven scoreless innings before the Patriots broke through.

Maura Hamilton's two-out single in the top of the eighth plated Cassie Greathouse with the winning tally.

Greathouse reached on an error, advanced to second on a Linda Reinhauer base rap, and raced home when Hamilton delivered.

Beth Doyle outdueled Weir's Morgan Martin in a splendid mound matchup. Doyle fanned six and walked four while Martin compiled six Ks and no walks.

JM 1 BUCKEYE LOCAL 0

THE MONARCHS' Annie Hoffer slid home with the game's only run in the top of the sixth. Hoffer was on third and was able to score following a Panthers' putout at second base.

Brandi Bungard bested Buckeye's Miranda Krause in another sterling mound dual.

Both pitchers fanned three and walked one.

Buckeye, which stranded the tying run at second in the bottom of the seventh, received singles from Abby Otto, Brandy Saltkield, Sarah Phillips and Leslie Lopez, the program's all-time hits' leader.

Kristen Steinman singled twice for the Monarchs. Buckeye capped a 15-10 campaign under veteran Barry Closser.

FRIDAY SOFTBALL

MONROE C. 3 FORT FRYE 2
AT WOODSFIELD, Leigh Ann Friday starred as Monroe Central knocked off Fort Frye, 3-2.

Friday went the distance to earn the victory on the mound. She scattered eight hits while fanning six and walking three. Friday added a two-run single at the plate.

Catcher April Russell donated a triple for the Lady Seminoles.

Danielle Polk plated a run with two singles for the Lady Cadets. Rhyann Close, Nici Misel and Danielle Sayer each donated two base hits for Fort Frye.

Monroe Central improved its mark to 7-15, while Fort Frye fell to 17-6.

LINESCORES

OVAC 4-A SEMIFINALS
WHEELING PARK 1 WEIRTON 0
W. Park 000 000 01 - 13 1
Weirton 000 000 00 - 05 3
BATTERIES: Doyle and Schell. Martin and Sobotka.
JOHN MARSHALL 1 BUCKEYE 0
J. Marshall 000 001 0 - 16 0
B. Local 000 000 0 - 04 3
BATTERIES: Bungard and Gorby. Krause and Moore.
MONROE CENTRAL 3 FORT FRYE 2
Fort Frye 000 001 1 - 28 3
Monroe Central 210 000 x - 36 4
BATTERIES: Heldman and Polk. Friday and Russell.

OVAC Champs



WINNING the OVAC Class AAA were this group of Martins Ferry Lady Riders. Pictured, front row from left, are Ashley Brune, Jennifer Rice, Christa Weekley, Courtney Allar, Natalie Vinci, and Sarah Kelner. Second row, from left, are assistant coach Greg Chesonis, Ashley Wensyl, Becky Wilson, Michelle Zavatsky, Katie Mackey, Lindsay Neavin, Danielle Neavin, Lindsay Warren, Shannon Lucas, assistant coach Tina Yates, and head coach Jess Cordery.

Ferry, Beallsville gain OVAC softball semifinal triumphs

CLASS 3-A MARTINS FERRY 4 BEAVER LOCAL 1

THE LADY RIDERS advanced via another sharp mound outing by Natalie Vinci.

Ferry's superb sophomore allowed only three singles. She compiled five strikeouts and a walk.

Katie Mackey and Danielle Neavin produced a pair of clutch RBI hits to highlight a two-run Purple third inning.

Mackey's hit plated Sarah Kelner with Neavin's base rap permitting Mackey to race home.

Kelner socked a single and double and was the game's only multi-hitter.

Ferry and Indian Creek collide Saturday afternoon for the 3-A crown.

INDIAN CREEK 4 MEADOWBROOK 2

INDIAN CREEK advanced thanks to a strong pitching effort

from Mindy Nash. She struck out eight, walked none and yielded just six hits.

Lori Steinar led the Lady Redskins with a triple, double and two RBI. Jenny Calabrese lined a double and single while Michelle O'Blockovich delivered two singles.

Karly Ranklin produced a double, single and RBI for the Lady Colts while Rachel Wakubic crushed a triple. Jenny Wright rapped a run-scoring single for Meadowbrook, which dropped to 11-11. Indian Creek moved into Saturday's finals with an 18-2 mark.

CLASS 1-A

BEALLSVILLE 8 LINSLEY 7
BEALLSVILLE needed 12 innings to outlast Linsly.

Erica Nippert turned in a complete-game mound effort, scattering nine hits. She fanned 11.

Jaime Stephens sparked a 16-hit

Beallsville attack with a triple, two singles and two RBI. Sheena Schneider lined three singles for the Lady Devils and Tiffany Crum blasted a double and single.

Erin McGee -- the hard-luck mound loser -- led the Lady Cadet attack with two singles and two RBI. Melissa Smith matches McGee's production while Amanda White had two singles and an RBI.

Beallsville moved into the title tilt with a 14-9 mark while Linsly fell to 9-12.

I. C. 4 MEADOWBROOK 2

Meadowbrook 000 001 1 2 6 1
Indian Creek 201 001 x 4 9 1
BATTERIES: O'Karma and Workman; Nash and Bell.

BEALLSVILLE 8 LINSLEY 7

Linsly 003 310 000 000 7 9 3
Beallsville 012 202 000 001 8 16 3
BATTERIES: McGee and Chapman; Nippert and Crum

FERRY 4 BEAVER LOCAL 1

Martins Ferry 102 000 1 - 4 4 1
Beaver Local 000 001 0 - 13 6
BATTERIES: Vinci and Mackey. McCoy and Prescott.