

OVAC Class AAA Softball Championship



Photo by Alex Kozlowski

Martins Ferry's Lynsey Agnew (5) is forced out at second base as Harrison Central second baseman Sara Santille takes a throw during action of their OVAC Class AAA championship game Friday at the J.B. Chambers I-470 Complex. At right is umpire Tom Bechtel. Martins Ferry won, 8-2.

Riders Roll to Title

Martins Ferry bangs out 15 hits in 8-2 win over Harrison Central to claim OVAC Class AAA crown

By TRACY WATSON
For The Intelligencer

After having their Ohio Valley Athletic Conference softball championship dreams dashed by Magnolia in the 2004 tournament, coach Jess Cordery's Martins Ferry squad was on a mission entering this year's event.

And after a three-game rampage through the Class AAA field, the Purple Riders finally got to hoist the trophy they have been waiting for Friday afternoon for the first time since the 2000 campaign.

Martins Ferry pounded out 15 hits and senior pitcher Angie Cerasoli fanned 14 Harrison Central hitters as the Purple Riders rolled to a convincing 8-2 victory over the upstart Huskies at the J.B. Chamber's I-470 Complex in Wheeling.

The victory moves Cordery's squad to 17-3 on the season, and the streaking Riders will begin sectional play next week having won 15 of their 16 contests, thanks in large part to their powerful hitting, mistake causing base-running and Cerasoli's right arm.

Ferry's three-day tournament totals, including victories over Union Local

and Magnolia, have the Riders outscoring their opponents by a 26-4 margin, with a 31-12 hit differential while committing only two errors to 17 for their victims. Meanwhile, Cerasoli collected 34 strikeouts during the tournament.

"This is just a real good feeling," Cordery admitted. "These kids play as such as team, and there is not one girl out there that puts herself about the team. They just all love to play this game."

"Angie (Cerasoli) has been our rock and we depend on her so much, so when the other girls get the bats going she is normally able to keep us close. We also seem to get the big hits after that and take advantage of the other team's errors."

But while the Purple Riders were able to hit the ball early, picking up five hits over the first two innings, the game remained scoreless heading to the bottom of the fourth.

The Riders did get a double and two singles in the opening frame, but had two runners thrown out on the basepaths, including Ashley Suto at the plate.

Ferry's home-half of the fourth

Today's Championship Games

OVAC SOFTBALL Class AAAA

John Marshall vs. Edlson, 12:15 p.m.

Class AA

Wheeling Central vs. Steubenville Central, 2 p.m.

Class A

Bellaire St. John's vs. Cameron, 3:45 p.m.

proved to be the difference as three singles and three Harrison Central (14-11) errors paved the way for a three-run rally. Senior Megan Ware picked up an RBI single while Jessica Hilton chased home a run on a fielder's choice during the inning.

Things only got worse for coach Donnie Bethel's Huskies in the fifth as the designated hosts banged out six more hits and collected a pair of walks to extend the advantage to 8-0 after five.

While Suto, Kayla Lewis and pinch-hitter Megan Anzak were all credited with RBIs during the uprising, the big hit was a two-run double off the bat of senior Lynsey Agnew, who collected

three hits in the contest.

Harrison Central, which did manage seven hits off of Cerasoli, put together a short rally of its own in the sixth, with Andrea Davis stroking an RBI double and Melinda Dunlap adding a two-out, run-scoring single before Gena Everhart was thrown out at second to end the inning.

The Huskies went quietly in the seventh on a pair of Cerasoli strikeouts and a fly ball to center to end the game, which set off a wild Martins Ferry celebration.

"Cerasoli did what a senior pitcher is supposed to do, take her team on her shoulders and carry them until her team's bats come alive," Bethel said. "You would expect no less from a pitcher of that caliber."

"Good pitching always tops good hitting, and that was the case today."

"Katy Leeper is only a freshman for us and I think she may have lost a little confidence on the mound with some of her pitches today, but she is what got us here. We never gave up and I am very proud of my team right now."

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SPORTS

Friday, April 29, 2005

Martins Ferry gets past Blue Eagles

By SETH STASKEY
Times Leader Sports Writer

Teams who are playing Martins Ferry had better jump on senior pitcher Angie Cerasoli early.

Magnolia learned that the hard way Thursday afternoon.

The Lady Blue Eagles struck for one run in the top of the first, but from there Cerasoli was lights out, leading the Lady Riders to the OVAC Class 3-A title game by virtue of a 7-1 victory at the Chambers I-470 Complex in Elm Grove.

"Angie was as good tonight as I have seen her in the last month," said veteran Ferry softball coach Jess Cordery. "When she's throwing like she did tonight, there's not many who can beat her."

After getting through a first inning where Magnolia had a base hit and took advantage of a Lady Rider error to produce a tally, Cerasoli settled down. She allowed just two more hits the rest of the way and retired 13 of the final 14 she faced.

"We're going to have to stop her starting out rocky," Cordery joked. "When she gets to the point where she feels comfortable and settles into a groove then she's got command of all of her pitches and makes it tough on the hitters."

For the game, Cerasoli struck out nine, walked two and plunked a batter.

"Angie changed speeds, moved the ball around and it makes the game pretty easy for the rest of us," Cordery continued.

Magnolia's lead was short-lived as the Lady Riders wasted little time in asserting themselves with the bats.

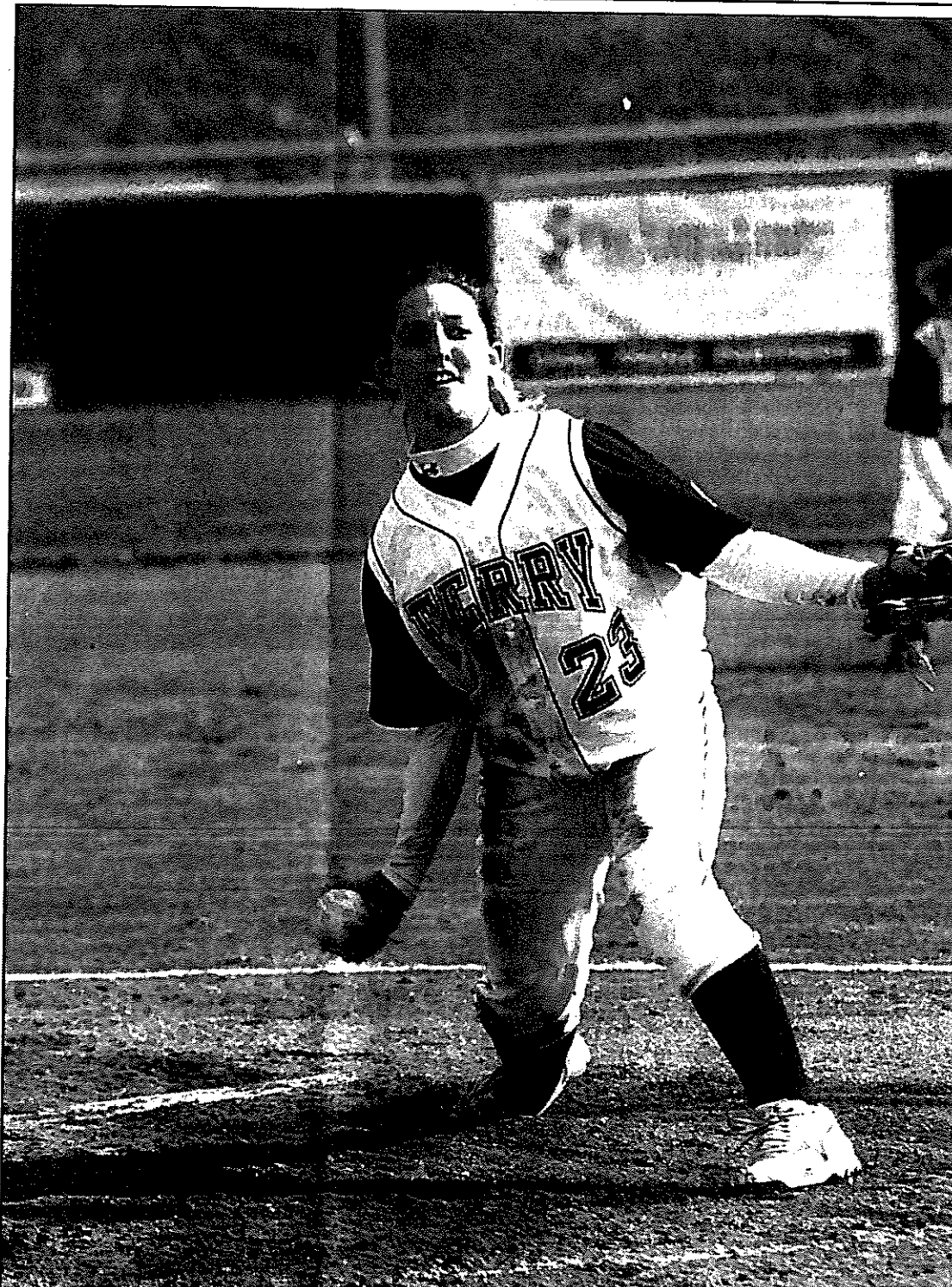
Senior lead-off hitter Ashley Suto once again served as the sparkplug for the rally, igniting the inning with a single. She went to second on a passed ball.

After an out was recorded, Cerasoli drew a base on balls as did clean-up hitter Kelsey Carpenter. That loaded the bases for hard-hitting shortstop Lynsey Agnew.

She unloaded a single into right-center that scored both Suto and Cerasoli to put the Ferrians up for good.

Ferry's second-inning offense was fueled by porous Magnolia defense, which committed four errors in the frame and led to four runs and nine hitters coming to the plate.

Suto again started the rally with her second single of the game.



Knights hammer Monroe

By SETH STASKEY
Times Leader Sports Writer

One of the most anticipated games of the OVAC softball tournament left a little to be desired.

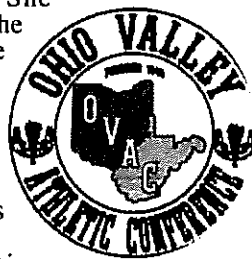
Wheeling Central - winners of 16 straight - handed Monroe Central one of its worst losses in many a season Thursday evening, eliminating the defending OVAC 2-A and OHSAA Division III state champions by a decisive 8-1 count on Lisa Field at the Chambers I-470 Complex in Elm Grove.

The Lady Maroon Knights - who are now 20-4 on the season - will meet Steubenville Catholic Saturday afternoon for the 2-A hardware.

Getting to the title game wasn't nearly as easy as it looked.

"It wasn't as easy as the scoreboard indicated," said co-Wheeling Central head coach Ambrose Bober. "We hit the ball well and had to fight for every run we got."

Coming into the game, the task of meeting Lady Seminole ace LeeKycia Brown who led the Lady Seminoles to a 32-0 record a year ago and had only lost seven games in her career, was relished by the Lady



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Suto again started the rally with her second single of the game. Stephanie Payne then singled and moved up to second on an error in the infield. Two batter later, Carpenter bounced the ball to short and the throw to home was late, scoring Suto.

Agnew then lifted what looked like a routine pop-up on the infield, but the ball was dropped, allowing both Payne and



MARTINS FERRY ace Angie Cerasoli delivers a pitch to the plate during Thursday's OVAC Class 3-A semifinal game against Magnolia at the Chambers I-470 Complex. The Lady Riders scored a 7-1 victory and will take part in today's final against Harrison Central.

T-L Photo/MICHAEL HARVILLA

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"We told the girls coming in that there were going to be a lot of people at the game to see (LeeKycia) pitch," said



See, CENTRAL, Page B2

St. John reaches fifth straight OVAC 1-A final

By SETH STASKEY
Times Leader Sports Writer

It was a birthday that St. John Central senior Meghan Johnson won't soon forget.

On the very day she turned 18 years of age, the Lady Irish ace pitcher hurled her team into the OVAC Class 1-A title game for the fourth straight season after they disposed of Linsly 9-1 Thursday afternoon at the Chambers I-470 Complex in Elm Grove.

The Lady Irish will now meet Cameron, which disposed of Bishop Donahue in the other 1-A semifinal Thursday.

"As usual, Meghan did her job and I thought we hit the ball hard today," said St. John Central head coach Jerry Magistro.

It wasn't just a special day for Johnson, but also for Magistro who picked up his 100th career victory in his five years at the helm of the SJC program. For the season, the Lady Irish are now 19-2.

Magistro couldn't have any more correct than

when he said as usual in reference to Johnson. She was up to her same old tricks, fanning eight, allowing a walk and just one hit. The lone Cadet run was of the unearned variety in the fourth inning.

"The mound wasn't in that great of shape, but she still pitched really well under tough conditions," Magistro said. "Again, we did what we had to do, and that's what you have to do from this point on."

The potent Lady Irish offense wasted little time in giving Johnson some run support.

After she mowed down the Cadets with little trouble in the top of the first, the St. John offense went to work.

The Green struck four times in the first inning, taking advantage of Linsly miscues, but also with solid contact.

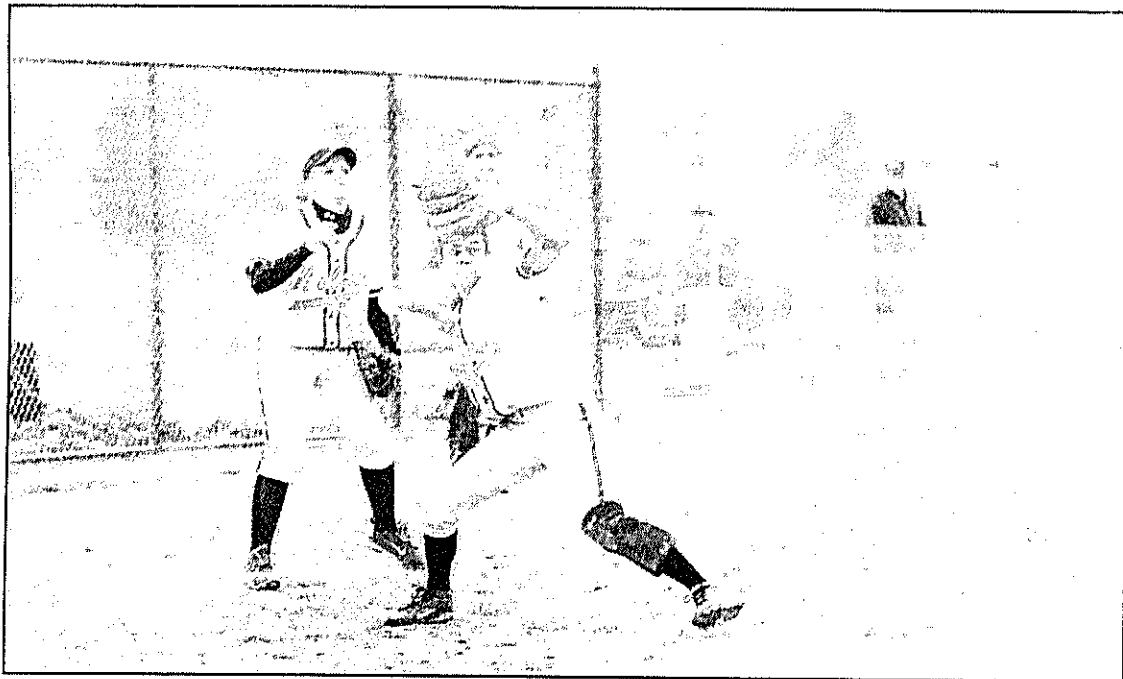
"Yeah, they made some errors, but we hit the ball well," Magistro explained. "Sometimes I think we were hitting it too well because they were playing us back to fence, so we have to learn to start hitting line drives."

See, ST. JOHN, Page B2



ST. JOHN CENTRAL pitcher Meghan Johnson comes home with a pitch during the early innings of Thursday's Class 1-A OVAC semifinal game. Johnson -- who was celebrating her 18th birthday -- hurled a one hitter and the Green advanced to its fifth straight title game.

T-L Photo/MICHAEL HARVILLA



T-L Photo/MICHAEL HARVILLA

MONROE CENTRAL pitcher LeeKycia Brown throws to first during the OVAC 2-A semifinal game at the Chambers I-470 Complex. Looking on is Monroe Central third baseman Brandy Stephens.

● Central

Continued from Page B1

Central co-head coach Rick Magruder. "But, we wanted the fans to leave talking about how we hit the ball."

While the Lady Knights are preparing for Saturday's title tilt, Monroe Central's focus now goes back to the OHSAA tournament, but rookie head coach Missy Knowlton knows her team had better play a lot better.

"This wasn't even the same group that I have known and loved all year," Knowlton smiled. "We made some inexperienced mistakes today that you shouldn't be making at this time of the year."

Brown appeared to be on cruise control in the opening three innings, retiring all nine hitters, including five via the strikeout.

However, the second time through the Maroon Knights' lineup proved to be a slightly different story.

"We had some good cuts the first time through," Magruder said. "I kept telling the girls you would get to her the second time around and they definitely came up with some big hits."

Casey Savage led off the third inning with a solid single into right. After a pop-out on the infield, Kayla Gray came to the dish. She took a 2-2 offering deep into the evening. The ball hit the top of the fence and bounced over for a two-run home run.

"LeeKycia was pitching real well through three innings," Knowlton observed. "But the home run just seemed to take the wind out of her balloon and a lot of us for that matter."

Monroe Central got its only run of the contest in the bottom of the fourth when Brandi Stephens reached on an error. Taylor Jorris followed with a triple to the left-centerfield gap that scored

Stephens.

Wheeling Central wasn't rattled. The Lady Maroon Knights came back up in the top of the fifth and struck for four spot. Cat Stylich went to second on a two-base error. She scored when Andy Burke roped a base hit.

After a strikeout, Val Palmer reached on an error. Gray then reached on an error, allowing Burke to race home. Angela Petros then came through with a two-run double. She added a RBI double in the seventh.

All told, Monroe was charged with seven errors. Brown worked the distance, fanning nine and walking none.

"You have to give Wheeling Central credit because they hit the ball hard," Knowlton said.

Central added two more runs in the seventh, both of which were unearned, but the Lady Knights had more than enough with pitcher Cassie Garen throwing a gem.

She worked the distance, striking out eight and walking one. She limited the Lady Seminoles to five hits.

Carrie Knowlton had two singles for Lady Seminoles.

Monroe Central (15-4) returns to the diamond on Wednesday in the Division III sectional tournament at Cambridge to begin defense of its state title.

"If we don't play a little better than we did tonight we won't be going very far in the tournament," Knowlton said.

Linescore:
Wheeling Central 000 240 2 8 5 1
Monroe Central 000 100 0 1 5 7
BATTERIES: Garen and Orkoskey. Brown and Jorris.

● St. John

Continued from Page B1

The first Lady Irish run of the game came on a passed ball, but from there the Green produced three run-scoring hits in the opening frame. Senior catcher Ellie Swartz had a RBI double, while Loraine Skorich singled home a run. Amber Irwin was also credited with a RBI hit.

The Green all but sealed the deal in the bottom of the third inning when it scored another quartet of runs.

Johnson helped her own cause when she reached with a one-out single. Swartz then reached on an error and the over-throw allowed Johnson to race home. Irwin tallied her second RBI when she lifted a sacrifice fly to score Swartz.

Betsie Smith and Jenna Vavra also had RBIs in the third-inning rally.

Linsly's lone hit came courtesy of Jessica Schucht who had a single. Kaleigh Parsons was credited with the RBI on a groundout to produce the lone run for Linsly.

Though the Lady Irish will be the favorite in Saturday's championship game, Magistro knows his team had better come ready to play.

"We don't play Cameron (in the regular season), but from what I saw here today they have a nice team," Magistro noted. "They have some nice hitters, speed and are fundamentally sound."

Linescore:
Linsly 000 100 0 1 1 6
St. John 404 010 x 9 5 2
BATTERIES: Zane and Flowers.
Johnson and Swartz.

CAMERON reached its first-ever OVAC title game following a 6-3 victory over Bishop Donahue Thursday afternoon.

Lacey Tustin picked up the mound for the Lady Dragons. She worked the distance with five strikeouts and nine walks.

Kori Gouldsberry led the Lady Dragons at the plate with a double and a single.

Linescore:
Cameron 010 410 1 6 6 1
Donahue 000 000 3 3 3 4
BATTERIES: Tustin and Gouldsberry. Gross and Crockard.

Riders

(Continued from Page 17)

"We are very young and it took them getting an 8-0 lead to get some pressure off of us before we really started playing."

"We didn't come here to settle for second place, but there is not a team I would rather lose to than Martins Ferry and a coach like Jess Cordery. I have so much respect for him and his team and they really conducted themselves in a professional manner with this win today."

Cordery, meanwhile, was impressed with Harrison's early-game defense, but knew he could not change the game plan because of it.

"We tried to make things happen in the first inning, but they made some nice plays," he said. "I knew they were a good defensive team, but I was not going to change our style because of that."

"We just kept the pressure on hoping they would break and they finally did."

"This is just what we wanted, to go into the sectionals on a roll."

Agnew and Stephanie Payne each collected three hits for the winners while Cerasoli, Lewis and Ware had two each. Dunlap singled twice for the Huskies.

● Riders

Continued from Page B1

Carpenter to score.

"We want to put pressure on defense by moving runners and we always look for an extra base," Cordery said. "It makes it tougher on the defense because they start looking around for us

of our order," Cordery said. "You have to pitch to everybody and you have to pitch everybody honest because we have so many girls who can hit the ball."

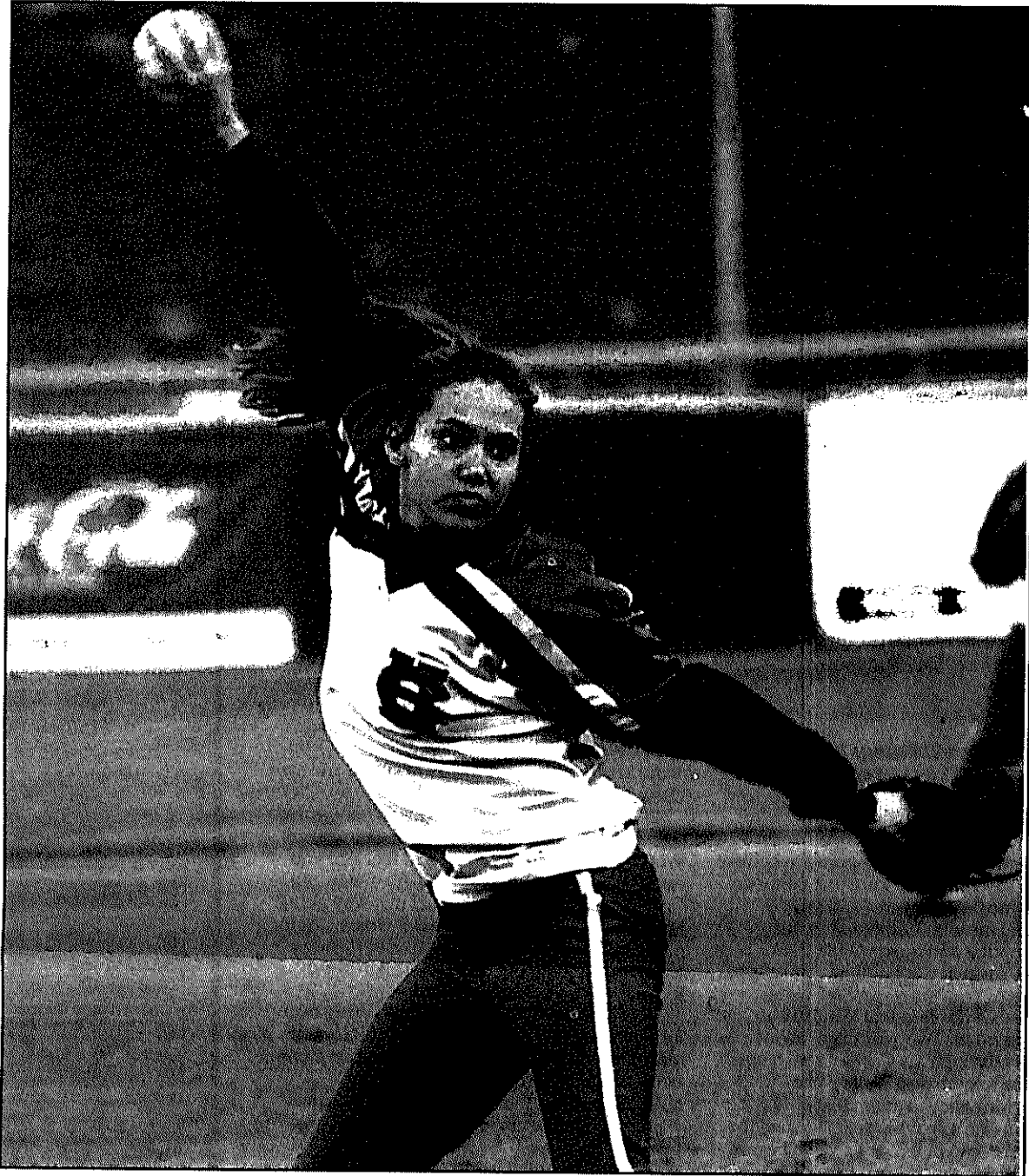
While the Lady Blue Eagles were kicking the ball around to a

Harrison Central, which eliminated Bellaire Wednesday night, today at 4:30 p.m. for the title.

"I sat here (Wednesday night) and watched Harrison Central play Bellaire and I am looking forward to it because it's going

DELIVERING A pitch to home plate in Wednesday's OVAC Class 3A semifinal is Harrison Central's Katy Leeper. Leeper led the Lady Huskies to a 6-2 win, striking out six while walking only two batters. Harrison Central will face the winner of today's semifinal between Magnolia and top-seeded Martins Ferry. The 3A final is scheduled for Saturday.

T-L Photo/MICHAEL HARVILLA



Huskies win OVAC semifinal

• Harrison breaks 0-13 drought against Lady Reds

By **SETH STASKEY**
Times Leader Sports Writer

Donnie Bethel and his Harrison Central Lady Huskies had faced Bellaire some 13 times in his career.

He had never tasted victory against the Lady Reds.

He couldn't have asked for a better time than Wednesday night in the semifinals of the OVAC Class 3-A tournament at the Chambers I-470 Complex.

Thanks to a four-run seventh inning, Harrison Central's hopes turned into reality

as the Huskies broke a two-all deadlock en route to the 6-2 win.

"Bellaire has definitely been a thorn in our side," Bethel admitted. "I feel good for these kids because they made the plays tonight when we needed them. This is the second game in a row where we have performed extremely well."

Third-year Bellaire head coach Melissa Kaldor watched her team check out of the OVAC tournament short of the final for the first time in her career.

"Give Harrison Central credit because they played really well," Kaldor said. "We

just didn't get the job done tonight, and it's disappointing because we had some opportunities."

The Lady Huskies appeared to be on their way to a 3-2 deficit entering the seventh inning.

However, the Harrison defense came up big when it had to.

Bellaire senior slugger Nikki Driscoll led off the inning with a triple to dead center field.

Kaldor called for catcher Sarah Delbert to

See, **HUSKIES**, Page C4

Buckeye falls to JM

By **SETH STASKEY**
Times Leader Sports Writer

Buckeye Local was just a few innings too late.

The Lady Panthers waited just a little too long to get their bats going as they fell to John Marshall 4-2 in the first OVAC Class 4-A semifinal game Wednesday evening at the I-470 Chambers Complex.

The Lady Monarchs advance to Saturday's 12:15 p.m. 4-A title game where they will meet Edison, which ousted Brooke by a 3-0 count in the middle of the tripleheader.

"We played good defense again and our hitting has been coming around," said acting JM head coach Ed West, who is filling in for veteran coach Poncho Flores, who is continuing his recovery from health problems.

While the Lady Monarchs scored all four of their runs in the first three innings, Buckeye Local had just two hits through four frames.

"We struggled early with the bat," said Lady Panthers' head coach Barry Closser. "We just didn't have the bats out early. We had some runners on, but we couldn't cash them in."

The Lady Monarchs wasted little time in jumping on Lady Panther starting pitcher Casey Magyar who lasted just one-plus innings before being lifted for ace Tabettha Gretchen.

"Gretchen threw a lot of pitches the other day," said Closser. "Casey has been doing the job for us all year long, so we feel comfortable with her on the mound."

See, **BUCKEYE**, Page C4

● Huskies

Continued from Page C1

drop down a bunt. She executed the bunt, which went back to freshman pitcher Katy Leeper. The Lady Huskie frosh ace looked Driscoll back to third before throwing onto first for the out.

After the throw was released, Driscoll broke for home. First baseman Andrea Davis delivered a quick throw

back to catcher Chelsea Coconougher who had the plate blocked perfectly and laid the tag on Driscoll for the second out of the inning.

"It was just a bunt to see how (Harrison) would react," Kaldor said. "Nikki is one of the smartest players we have ever had at Bellaire and she just hesitated a little too much and she knew she was out."

The momentum officially shifted toward the Harrison dugout in the top of the seventh.

"We work on that where we look the runner back," Bethel said. "But, earlier in the game we kind of screwed it up, but it worked out well when we needed it."

Designated player Melinda Dunlap led off the seventh with a solid single. After Annie Yarrish dropped down a perfect sacrifice bunt, the hit parade began.

Harrison Central watched Gena Everhaul rope a single to score Dunlap. Leeper then reached on an error. Ashley Cunningham followed with another single back through the box, scoring Everhaul. Sara Santille then grounded out that scored Leeper.

Coconougher then singled to score Cunningham to complete the rally.

"Harrison Central hits the crap out of the ball," Kaldor said. "We had a couple of errors that hurt us at times tonight and as the game went on Leeper got better, so Harrison deserves all the credit."

Bellaire's offense was silenced in the bottom of the seventh as Leeper mowed the Lady Reds' down. She allowed a harmless walk, but she got no further than first base.

For the game, Leeper allowed only two hits, two earned runs, while striking out six and walking just two.

The Lady Huskie offense was stymied for the first three innings as Lady Reds' senior Amanda Coulter sat down the first nine in order.

Harrison broke through in the second when Cunningham led off with a single. She took second when the ball was mishandled in the outfield. A groundout moved Cunningham up to third. Coconougher then rolled into a fielder's choice, but another Bellaire error allowed Coconougher to slide safely into home.

Bellaire got those two runs back in the bottom half of the frame. Freshman Monica Chase drew a lead-off walk. Driscoll then singled into left. Delbert dropped down a bunt. Leeper opted to try to go to third, but the throw was late and the sacks were juiced.

Tara Whitely grounded out to second, but the play allowed Chase to score. Sophomore Michelle Tomlan then reached on an error, scoring Driscoll. However, Leeper got out of the jam with back-to-back groundouts.

Harrison Central must now play the waiting game to find out its opponent in Saturday's finals. The Lady Huskies will face the winner of today's 3-A semifinal between top-seeded Martins Ferry and defending champion Magnolia.

Linescore:

| | | | | | | |
|------------------|-----|-----|---|---|---|---|
| Harrison Central | 000 | 200 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 2 |
| Bellaire | 000 | 200 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 |

BATTERIES: Leeper and Coconougher. Coulter and Delbert.

● Buckeye

Continued from Page C1

John Marshall got going in the first thanks to some two-out lightning.

Third-baseman Courtney McGilton singled to ignite the rally. Hard-hitting first baseman Vanessa Illovar took the first pitch she saw deep into rightfield and went all the way to third with a stand-up triple, scoring McGilton.

Illovar came across after an error was committed in the Buckeye Local infield.

"Vanessa has been crushing the ball since she was a freshman," West said. "She started hitting the ball as a freshman and has never slowed down."

Another fielding miscue ignited another Monarch rally in the second inning. Starting pitcher Devin Heilman reached when her fly ball was dropped. Bria Morris followed with a single and two pitches later Heilman went to third on a passed ball.

Catcher Emily McDermott produced an infield single and Illovar raced home on the errant throw.

The aforementioned Illovar was back at it in the third inning. Again, she took the first pitch she saw deep into centerfield for a triple. Samantha Stout produced a sacrifice fly to left that scored Illovar easily.

From there, the Lady Monarchs turned it over to Heilman and then stopper Sarah Swogger who put the clamps down on the Lady Panthers.

Buckeye Local broke through in the fifth. Megan Kachur led off the inning with a triple into the left-center gap. Ashley Miller then singled her home. She moved up to second on a fielder's choice.

Megan Bartrug drove in Miller from second with a single. That led West to go to his bullpen.

He called for Swogger to replace Heilman who had allowed two runs on four hits, while striking out one and walking three.

"Devin has pitched some really good games for us and we actually have a three-pitcher rotation going," West said. "I thought she was getting a little tired, but she still deserves a lot of credit for her performance."

Swogger came on and fanned back-to-back hitters to thwart the Buckeye rally. She allowed two singles over the final two innings and fanned four of the final six outs to record the save.

"Sarah has really come on as a pitcher," West continued. "She's increased her speed and she locates her pitches better and better each time out."

Jamie Fillipi had a single and a double to lead Buckeye Local at the dish.

Linescore:

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----|-----|---|---|---|---|
| John Marshall | 211 | 000 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 1 |
| Buckeye Local | 000 | 020 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 4 |

BATTERIES: Heilman, Swogger (5) and McDermott. Magyar, Gretchen (2) and Brown.

Buckeye Local Steals One From Park in 7th

By JIM ELLIOTT
Staff Writer

Courtesy runner Brianna Finey scored the winning run on a wild pitch in the bottom of the seventh inning, leading second-seeded Buckeye Local to a 3-2 win over seventh-seeded Wheeling Park in OVAC Class AAAA quarterfinal action Tuesday in Connorville.

Finey came on to run for pitcher Tabettha Gretchen, who crushed a double with one out in the bottom of seventh. She moved to third on single by Jamie Fillippi and scored the game-winner when Park's Jen Sparachane uncorked a wild one.

It was as close a play as you'll find, as Sparachane alertly covered the plate and applied a quick tag, but one that the Pan-

thers (13-3) will take, nonetheless. They continue action in the tourney today at 4:30 p.m. vs. John Marshall at the Chambers Fields at I-470.

"All 14 kids contributed," Buckeye Local coach Barry Closser said.

"With good teams, everybody contributes, and we had that today. We've been doing that all year."

It was not an isolated incident.

In the top of the seventh, Park's Anna Haber led off with a walk and advanced to second with no one out.

Sparachane then ripped a liner to right that appeared to be deep enough to advance a courtesy runner.

Please See BUCKEYE, Page 18



OVAC Softball Semifinals
(all games at I-470)

Wednesday
Class AA

Wheeling Central vs.
Monroe Central 5 p.m.
Steubenville Central vs.
Fort Frye 6:30 p.m.

Class AAAA

John Marshall vs.
Buckeye Local 4:30 p.m.
Edison vs. Brooke 6 p.m.

Class AAA

Harrison Central vs.
Bellaire 7:30 p.m.

Thursday
Class A

Cameron vs.
Bishop Donahue 4:15 p.m.
St. John's vs Linsly 6:30 p.m.

Class AAA

Martins Ferry vs. Magnolia 5
p.m.

Cerasoli's Gem Sends Ferry Into Semifinals

By TRACY WATSON
For The Intelligencer

Experience and talent can be a deadly combination in sports, and Tuesday afternoon Martins Ferry's girls' softball team showed once again that it has both and it will be a team that needs to be dealt with in the postseason.

Angie Cerasoli tossed a two-hitter, while fanning 11, and the top-seeded Purple Riders pounded out nine hits and took advantage of six Union Local errors in cruising to an 11-1, six-inning, victory over the Jets in an Ohio Valley Athletic Conference Class AAA quarterfinal contest in Martins Ferry.

Coach Jess Cordery's 15-3 record squad will now face fifth-seeded Magnolia (16-

12), which defeated St. Clairsville on Monday, at 5 p.m. Thursday in a semifinal contest at the Chambers I-470 fields.

"We pride ourselves on playing real fundamental softball, and that is what we did again today," Cordery said.

"Union Local was a little shorthanded, but they gave a good effort and played hard, just like we like to do."

Coach Bill Weller's 3-18 record Jets started four freshmen and four sophomores, and trailed only 4-0 after three frames before committing all six of their miscues over the final three innings. That paved the way for the final seven Purple Rider tallies.

Please See FERRY, Page 18

Seniors lead Bellaire to OVAC semis

By SETH STASKEY
Times Leader Sports Writer

Bellaire has just two seniors on its softball roster.

And head coach Melissa Kaldor definitely believes in quality over quantity.

She and the Lady Big Reds got a brilliant pitching effort from senior Amanda Coulter and classmate Nikki Driscoll did basically everything else Monday evening at the Bellaire Swimming Pool Field.

Behind the seniors' effort, the Lady Big Reds punched their ticket to the semifinals of the OVAC 3-A softball tournament by virtue of a 4-1 victory over seventh-seeded Oak Glen.

"I think when Nikki went down, we were all kind of nervous...but she looked at me and said, 'I'm not coming out.'"

— Melissa Kaldor

"Our two seniors give us everything they have in every game every game," Kaldor said. "They have the

innings. After lacing a single back through the box,

hearts of a lion and do everything they possibly can to help this team to be successful." The win advances the Lady Reds into Thursday's conference semifinal against the winner of Harrison Central and Indian Creek at the Chambers? I-470 Complex in Wheeling.

"This is do or die time now," Kaldor said. "You can't take anything for granted once the tournaments start. I thought Oak Glen played pretty well against us."

The entire Lady Reds softball family took a deep breath in the bottom of the first

inning. Driscoll made a wide turn for second. The Oak Glen defenders threw to first and Driscoll's knee seemingly locked up. She fell to the ground in pain and was tagged out.

She was helped off the field by members of the Bellaire coaching staff.

"I think when Nikki went down we were all kind of nervous," Kaldor said. "Our coaches were screaming, 'what do we do, what do we do?,' but she looked at me said, 'I'm not coming out.'"

With a noticeable limp, Driscoll trotted back onto the field in the top of the second inning.

One out into the inning, the injury was put to the test when the talented senior shortstop had to

See, BELLAIRE, Page B2

Ferry

(Continued from Page 17)

A walk and a hit batsman got the hosts rolling in the first before Kelsey Carpenter chased home a run with a single and catcher Kayla Lewis plated two more with a base hit past second.

Cerasoli's leadoff triple in the third and Carpenter's RBI fielder's choice gave the Riders a 4-0 lead.

The first of two singles by Megan Ware and the second of a pair of triples from Ashley Suto led to the next Ferry run in the fourth before a walk and the first Union Local error pushed two more across and make it 7-0.

While the Jets did not score in their half of the fifth, freshman

Jamie Smith did get the visitor's first hit of the game with a one-out single up the middle that broke up Cerasoli's no-hit bid.

Jessica Hilton's double and another error made it 9-0 in the fifth before the only Ferry miscue of the day and sophomore Laura Griffin's double got Union Local its only run of the game.

The Riders put things away in the sixth with a single and three more Jet errors.

"We have been hitting the ball and running the bases very well and I hope that can continue," Cordery added. "We are swinging the bat well all the way through the lineup and we really

don't have any easy outs in there.

"Hopefully we can continue playing this way, and we will be a team that will be difficult to deal with.

"We also got another great performance from Angie. When she is on she is awfully tough to hit."

Suto, Carpenter and Ware all had two hits for the winners while Lewis plated a pair of tallies. Along with her pitching performance, Cerasoli was also a menace at the plate, reaching all four times she hit. Along with a triple, she was hit by a pitch, reached on a pair of errors and scored three runs.

Buckeye

(Continued from Page 17)

Casey Hunter, playing right in place of Megan Kachur who'd already been lifted twice and thus had no capability to re-enter, threw a strike to third to nail the baserunner for the double play.

"She'd have been safe if she'd have slid," Wheeling Park coach Dee Davis said, "but she didn't slide at all."

Closser got a little antsy on the bench as the throw was made — any type of bad throw would have given Park the lead — but was clearly happy with the result.

It was more of what he'd been talking about.

"We had a big-time throw from right field to double that runner off in the top of the inning," Closser said. "Everybody's been picking each other up every game this year."

Wheeling Park jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the first inning on

back-to-back run-producing hits by Jen Gruber (a triple) and Jil Wright (a single).

Buckeye Local got one back in the bottom of the frame when Gina Hicks singled in Megan Bartrug.

It remained that way — Park leading 2-1 — until the bottom of the sixth.

That, Closser said, was unexpected.

"Considering the last time we played them it was 15-12, and after they got two in the first, we figured this was going to be a slugfest," he said. "The game settled on. Did I think it was going to be one-run, 3-2? No. I thought it was going to be maybe 11-10."

The Panthers got a big break in the sixth, when Erica Stuart took advantage of a miscue in right field. She ripped a one-hop single to right that got away from the

fielder and bounced all the way to the wall. Stuart didn't stop running until she reached the dugout, tying the score at 2.

The timing on a three-base error couldn't have been worse for the Patriots.

"Two mistakes," Davis said. "The play out there (the three-base error) should have only been a single and the girl didn't slide here (at third base) and got out. The next play was a little bunt hit. Two mistakes, that's a pretty good game for us, only two mistakes."

Gretchen earned the win for the Panthers. She struck out eight and walked six, while limiting Park to just three hits.

Sparachane, again, took the tough-luck loss despite striking out four and walking none.

Hicks, Bartrug, and catcher Amanda Brown each had two hits for Buckeye Local.

Bellaire

Continued from Page B1

sprint into shallow left field to track down an Oak Glen pop-up.

That allowed Coulter to settle into a groove.

She retired the first seven in order before a runner reached on a passed ball on a third-strike call. Bellaire got out of the jam when Coulter induced a 1-6-3 twin killing.

In the bottom of the third inning, Bellaire's bats came slightly to life.

Driscoll reached first on an error when there were already two outs. Catcher Sarah Delbert then drew a walk. Driscoll came home to score when Tara Whitely reached on another Lady Bear error.

"We are playing pretty good softball right now," Kaldor explained. "We left our bats at home a little longer than I would have liked, but our defense was exceptional and that's what kept us in the game."

The one run appeared to be plenty as Coulter retired Oak Glen in order in both the fourth and fifth innings. Tasha Richard led off the sixth with a double, but when she made a wide turn to third, Driscoll threw to sophomore second baseman Michelle Tomlan, who promptly put the tag on for the out.

"We use Nikki on all of our cut-offs," Kaldor said. "We probably have more outs on relay throws (from the outfield) than we do on fly-balls. Nikki Driscoll is probably the smartest player I have seen at Bellaire."

Through six innings, Coulter had allowed two base runners and had faced the minimum 18 hitters.

Bellaire tacked on three insurance runs in the bottom of the sixth.

None other than Driscoll started the rally when she ripped a double to left-center. After a ground-out, Whitely looped a base hit into right to score Driscoll.

"We call Tara the spark-plug, and I don't think she likes it too well, but she's really stepped up for us," Kaldor said. "We are a young team with three freshman, two sophomores and a junior who play, so these kids have really impressed me."

Tomlan then reached on an error and Ashley McCorkle singled, scoring Whitely. Tomlan — who had stolen second base during the at-bat — came around to score when the ball was misplayed in the outfield.

Oak Glen finally got to Coulter for a run in the seventh inning, but it was of the unearned variety. For the game, Coulter allowed three hits, struck out six and didn't walk a hitter.

"Amanda has been sick all day at school and missed practice (Sunday)," Kaldor said. "So we didn't really know what to expect, but I think she threw the best game she's ever thrown for us tonight."

Driscoll led the way for Bellaire with a single, double and two runs scored. Defensively, she had three put-outs and three assists. Coulter also had a single to go along with her pitching antics.

Chelsea Shanton and Kristen Pryor each had a single for Oak Glen to complement Richard's double.

Linescore:

Oak Glen 000 000 1 -- 1 3 5

Bellaire 001 003 x -- 4 5 1

BATTERIES: McMichael and Boyd. Coulter and Delbert.



Photo by Alex Kozlowski

Buckeye Local's Brianna Finey (42) is tagged out by John Marshall's Emily McDermott during action of their Ohio Valley Athletic Conference Class AAAA semifinal game Wednesday at the J.B. Chambers I-470 Complex. JM won, 4-2.

Third Time A Charm?

John Marshall to play in OVAC 4-A title game for third straight year

By TRACY WATSON
For The Intelligencer

John Marshall interim head coach Ed West hopes that the third time will be the charm for his Lady Monarchs in the OVAC Class AAAA championship game Saturday afternoon.

But for right now, West and his squad are just happy to escape Wednesday's semifinal with a hard-fought victory over second-seeded Buckeye Local.

Junior slugger Vanessa Ilovar ripped two triples and a double and freshman pitcher Sarah Swoger fanned six in 2 2/3 innings as John Marshall scored four runs in the initial three innings and held on for a 4-2 victory over the Panthers at the Chambers I-470 Complex.

The victory moves the Monarchs (19-7) into Saturday's 12:15 p.m. championship contest against Edison, a 3-0 winner over Brooke. It will be John Marshall's third consecutive trip to the finals, having lost by one run to the Wildcats and Wheeling Park the past two campaigns.

"This is our third chance in three years, and we are hoping to come

through this year," West said. "I really believe we have a good shot this year ... the Wildcats are the team to beat until someone steps up and does it."

The first three innings were the difference in Wednesday's game with the Monarchs bashing six of their nine hits and taking advantage of all four of Buckeye Local's errors early on.

After Courtney McGilton reached on a two-out single, Ilovar blasted a shot deep down the right-field line that kicked up chalk for an RBI triple. The alert junior then raced home on an errant Panther (13-4) throw to put the designated visitors up by a 2-0 score.

John Marshall made it 3-0 in the second as starting pitcher Devon Heilman reached on an error, went to second on a Bria Morris single and scored on an error after catcher Emily McDermott reached on a bunt single.

Ilovar got the Monarch machine rolling again in the third, this time with a leadoff triple deep to centerfield. She scored four pitches later on Samantha Stout's sacrifice fly to left for a 4-0 reading.

"The early part of the game really killed us," Buckeye Local coach Barry Closser said. "We couldn't get the bats going early, and then we gave them a couple of runs. The story was really the early innings."

"When we did get runners on, we couldn't do anything with them."

"We probably could have played deeper on Ilovar early on, but she is just such a great hitter. We were also a little surprised that they started (Devon) Heilman. We started Casey Magyar because Tabetha Gretchen threw a lot of pitches (Wednesday) and Casey has done a fine for us all year."

Gretchen entered to pitch in the second inning for the Panthers, but the early damage had already been done. Buckeye was able to control the Monarch hitters for most of the rest of the game.

Closser's club did have opportunities, stranding two runners in scoring position in the first two innings before appearing ready to break through in the fourth.

Please See CHARM, Page 19

Edison tops Brooke, stands in JM's way

By CHRISTOPHER S. NASH
Staff Writer

Pitching and defense can carry you a





Photo by Alex Kozlowski

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Please See CHARM, Page 19

Edison tops Brooke, stands in JM's way

By CHRISTOPHER S. NASH
Staff Writer

Pitching and defense can carry you a long way in softball.

And for the Edison Wildcats, that includes a berth in the OVAC Class AAAA championship game.

Lakyn Bendle fanned seven batters and allowed only one hit, leading No. 1-seeded Edison (15-5) past Brooke 3-0, in the semifinals of the tournament Wednesday evening at the I-470 Complex in Wheeling.

"She pitched a very fine game," said Edison coach Spencer Bendle. "That hit there was probably my fault."

"I called a pitch I probably shouldn't have called, but she didn't hit her spot either, so I guess we are both to blame."

The lone hit tallied against Bendle came with two outs in the seventh, as Megan Riggs split the gap between first and second for a single.

Ironically, the Wildcats also ended the game on the play, as Amy Bullock was thrown out at the plate trying to score from first. Bullock had reached with a walk.

"They made a nice defensive play to get the girl out at home," said Brooke coach Jim Cicchirillo. "We also made a nice defensive play at the plate earlier in the game."

"Both teams played very good defense."

The defensive play in the game mirrored the effort being put forth on the mound, as both defenses turned in sever-

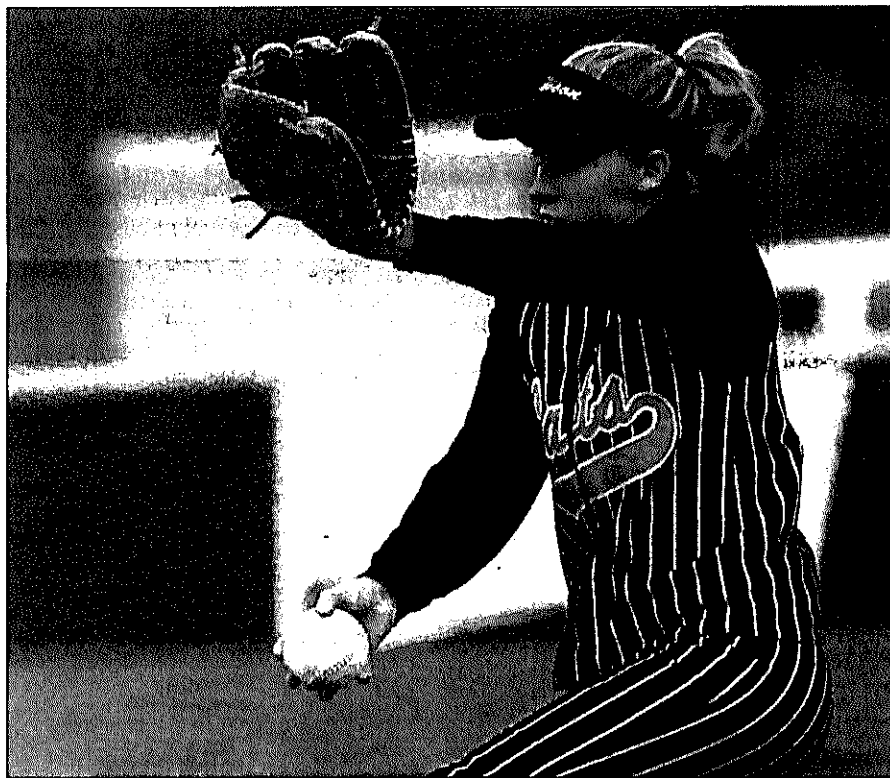


Photo by Alex Kozlowski

Edison pitcher Lakyn Bendle works to the plate during action of the Wildcats' OVAC Class AAAA semifinal game vs. Brooke Thursday at the J.B. Chambers I-470 Complex. Edison won the game, 3-0.

al nice plays to keep runners off the base paths.

Edison finally found a way through the Brooke defense in the sixth.

Jo Beth Householder reached on a fielder's choice with two outs, before Bendle walked to put runners at first and second.

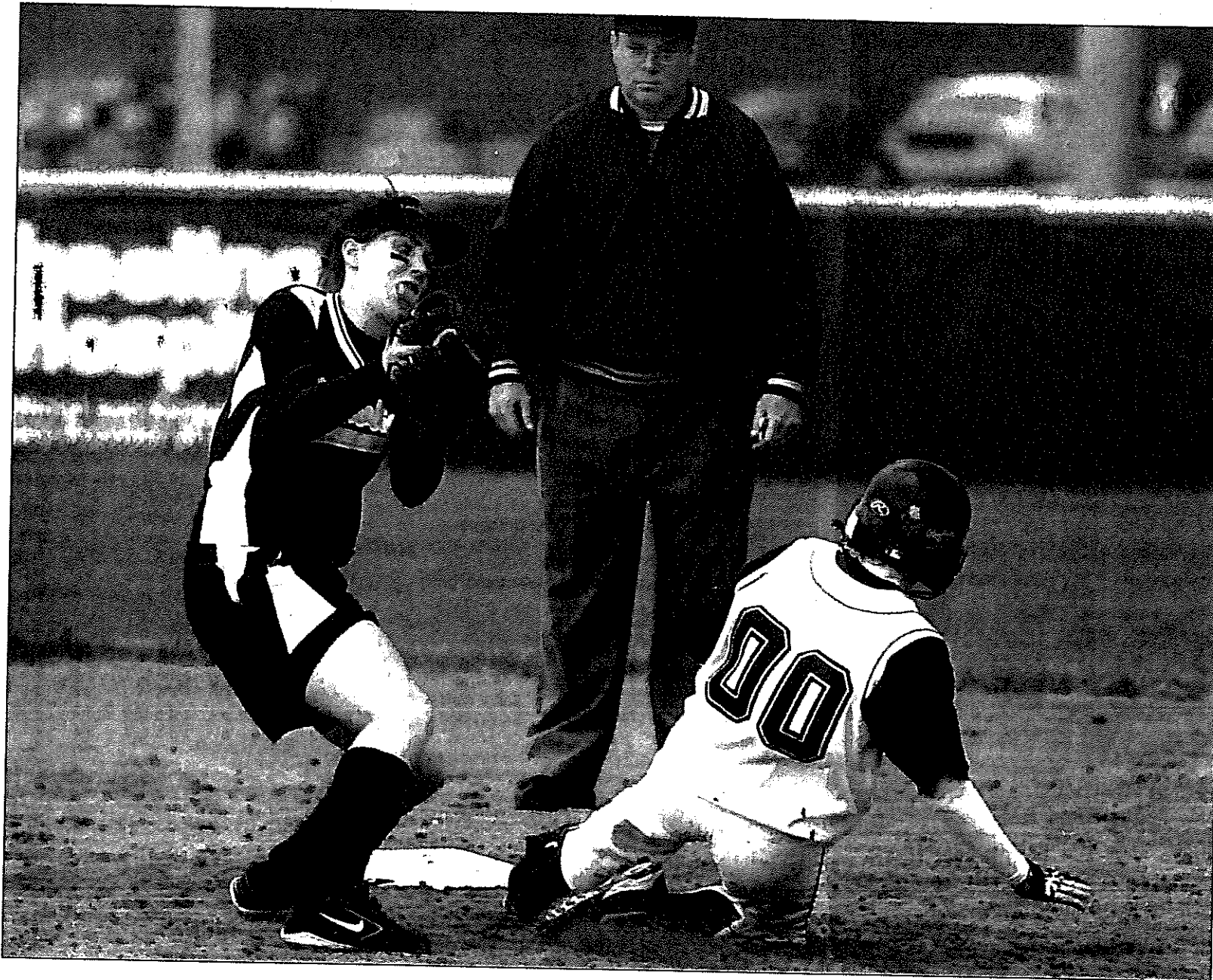
Annie Kovalesky then came through for the Wildcats with a double that

brought home Householder for the game's first — and eventual winning — run.

But Edison wasn't through yet, as Katelyn Givens put a ball in play that Brooke couldn't come up with, allowing two more runs to score for a 3-0 advantage.

Please See EDISON, Page 19

OVAC Softball



Martins Ferry's Megan Ware (00) slides back into second base as Magnolia's Alycia Bell prepares to apply a tag during action of their OVAC Class AAA semifinal Thursday at the J.B. Chambers I-470 Complex. Watching the play is umpire Jon Hamm. Ferry won, 7-1

Photo by Alex Kozlowski

Enjoying the Ride

Cerasoli pitches Martins Ferry into OVAC Class AAA finals against Harrison Central

By TRACY WATSON
For The Intelligencer

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Fagle miscues and a walk

Cameron to play in first Class A final

By DON CLEGG
For The Intelligencer

The third time proved to be the charm for the Cameron girls' softball team Thursday afternoon.

Coach Mark Witzberger's Dragons (14-8) avenged a pair of regular-season losses to Bishop Donahue (13-6) with a 6-3 triumph in the OVAC Class A semifinals at the Chambers I-470 complex in Wheeling.

The revenge win earned Cameron its first-ever berth in the OVAC championship game.

The Dragons will return to the Chambers complex Saturday at 2 p.m. to battle top-seeded Bellaire St. John Central (19-2) for the OVAC single-A crown.

Coach Jerry Magistro's Lady Irish advanced with a 9-1 win over Linsly in Thursday's other small-school semifinal.

"We talked about losing to them (Bishop Donahue) twice during the regular season," said Witzberger. "We knew we had to play better in order to beat them and my girls stepped up and accepted the challenge."

Sophomore ace Lacey Tustin led the way on the mound for Cameron.

Tustin carried a no-hitter into the bottom of the fifth and kept Bishop Donahue off the scoreboard until there were two out in the bottom of the seventh.

"Lacey's been our workhorse all year," said Witzberger. "I've probably pitched her too much, really, for a first-time starter but she's very smart and really knows what she's doing out there."

"I think we played one of our best defensive games of the season behind her, as well, and that's something that's been a problem for us at times."

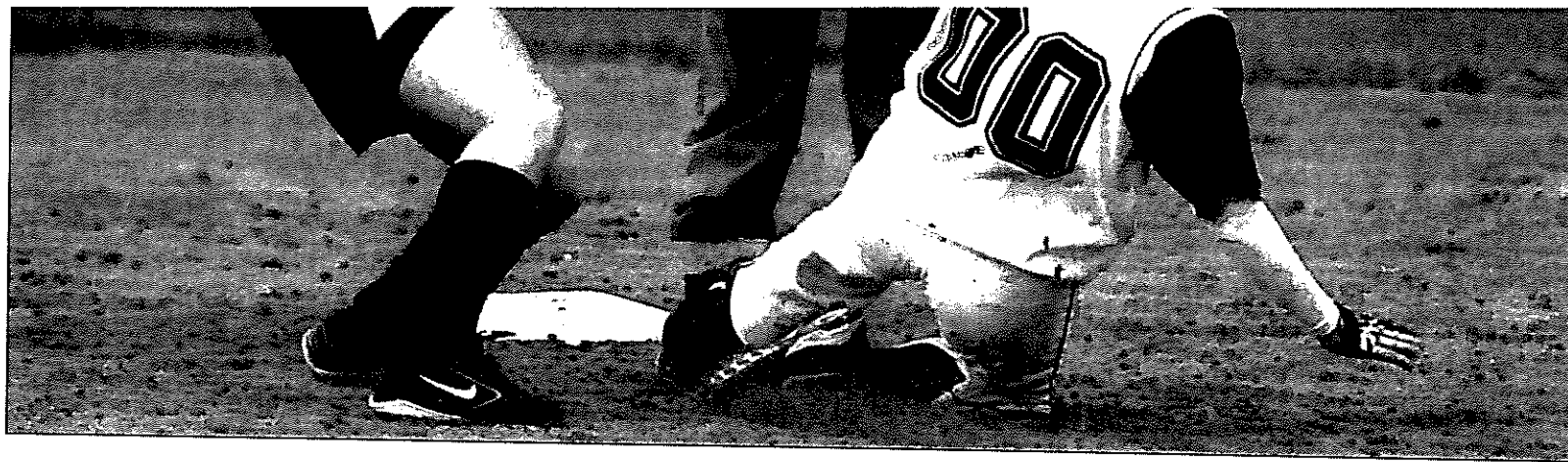
While Tustin and the Cameron defense were holding the No. 2-seeded Bishops at bay, the Dragons still had to find a way to score.

Bishop Donahue hurler JoBeth Gross and the Donahue defense had held Cameron to just one run in 14 innings during the regular season.

The Dragons equaled that output in the top of the second.

Tustin reached base with a one-out single and Michelle Cain then ripped a shot into the hole between third and short.

As the left fielder charged the hard-hit grounder, the ball struck the lip of the outfield grass and bounced several feet over the outfielder's head for a bad-bon RBI triple.



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For The Intelligencer

Coach Jess Cordery has built a well-oiled machine in Martins Ferry, as his girls' softball team is fundamentally sound in every aspect.

However, while there are many contributors, the engine that makes the Purple Rider machine go is pitcher Angie Cerasoli. Thursday afternoon, the senior mighty-mite was at her best. While that was bad news for Magnolia, it equalled a trip to the OVAC Class AAA championship game for Cordery's bunch.

Cerasoli scattered three hits, fanning nine and walking only two, while retiring 13 of the final 14 batters she faced and Ferry took advantage of eight Blue Eagle walks and five errors in earning a 7-1 victory in an OVAC semifinal

contest at the Chambers I-470 fields.

The victory moves the powerful Riders (16-3) into Saturday morning's 10:30 championship tilt against Harrison Central. Meanwhile, Charlie Howell's Magnolia squad falls to 16-13 on the campaign.

"That is as good as I have seen Angie pitch in a month," Cordery said. "She really moved the ball around well and did a good job changing speeds. When she is on like that, it really makes the game easy to call for the coaching staff."

"Angie was in a groove tonight and had command, and she can really dominate hitters when that happens."

Magnolia was only able to muster one single in each of the first three innings before Cerasoli set down 11 in a row, with the help of some

fine fielding plays. Alycia Bell did work a one-out walk in the seventh, however, Cerasoli fanned the final two hitters to close the game.

The Blue Eagles' only run came in the top of the first and was unearned. Bethany Howell led off with a single just ahead of a walk to losing pitcher Brooke Keene.

Following a pair of strikeouts, Kayla Brill reached on an error with Howell crossing the dish to make it 1-0. Cerasoli made sure the walk to Keene did not come back to hurt her when she hustled home following a wild pitch, took a perfect throw from catcher Kayla Lewis, and nailed Keene at the plate for the final out of the frame.

Martins Ferry took the lead for good in the bottom of the inning on a one-out, two-run single by senior Lynsey Agnew. The Purple Riders pushed across four more in the sec-

ond, on two singles, four Blue Eagle miscues and a walk.

Kelsey Carpenter's fielder's choice provided the only RBI of the inning for the designated hosts. Jessica Hilton singled home the final run of the game in the fourth as Ferry moved to a 7-1 advantage.

"Our goal is to try and put pressure on the defense by keeping our runners in motion, and that helped us take advantage of their errors early on," Cordery added. "We have good sticks throughout our entire lineup, and it is tough to pitch to us because we usually put the ball in play."

"Our defense also played well after giving them a run in the first inning, but that may be my fault for not warming them enough before the game."

Please See RIDERS, Page 22

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Cameron broke the game open with four unearned runs in the top of the fourth.

Kori Gouldsberry got things started with a leadoff double and moved to third on a one-out throwing error that put Tustin on base.

After Tustin stole second, both runners scored on a throwing error and Jenet Lewis capped the uprising with an RBI single.

Amanda Hartley tacked on an insurance run in the top of the seventh for a 6-0 Dragon lead and Tustin retired the first two batters in the bottom of the frame only to hit the wall.

Four straight walks erased the zero from the Donahue side of the scoreboard and a two-run single by Katie Beiter left runners on first and second and brought the tying run to the plate.

Tustin bore down to get the final out on a tapper in front of the plate and Cameron was in the finals.

Please See CAMERON, Page 22

Class AA: Wheeling Central Battles, Takes Out Monroe

By MIKE HUGHES
Staff Writer

Wheeling Central and Monroe Central were scoreless through three innings of their OVAC Class AA semifinal matchup Thursday evening.

But with one swing of the bat, the Maroon Knights' Kayla Gray changed a bleak situation into one of great prosper.

Gray crushed a Leekcyia Brown pitched over the fence in left field for a two-run shot, fueling an 8-1 Wheeling Central victory at the I-470 Complex in Wheeling.

Brown had sat down nine

Maroon Knights in order before Casey Savage reached safely to start the fourth.

Savage hit a dribbler down the third base line that Brown fielded and fired to first, a split-second too late.

Two batters later, Gray sent a pitch deep to left, bouncing off the fence and out of play for a round-tripper.

Prior to the fourth inning, Brown collected five strikeouts and while the Knights' hitters were fouling off the ball left and right, they just couldn't seem to put it in play.

"I thought we were right on top of the ball and we kept battling," Wheeling Central co-head coach Ambrose Bober explained. "All I thought we needed was to catch a break and then Kayla hit a home run and it kind of went from there."

It was Gray's only hit of the game, but it was a big one and not just in terms of runs.

Brown is one of the toughest pitchers around to crack and her defense is just as tough behind her.

But Gray's blast seemed to take the air out of the Seminoles'

defense, and while it might not of affected Brown, it did her teammates.

"She pitched well the first three innings but they got that one off of her and it affected a lot of us," Monroe Central head coach Missy Knowlton said. "But Wheeling Central hit the ball well, we can't take that away from us."

In a tight-knit game between two teams with quality arms on the mound, the first one to blink, or in this case commit an error, usually loses.

And in the fifth inning, Monroe

blinked, four times actually, that led to a four-spot for Wheeling Central and a 6-1 Maroon Knights' lead.

"We try to stress that to the girls that the the team that makes the least mistakes almost always wins," Wheeling Central co-head coach Rick Magruder explained.

In the crucial fifth inning, Kat Stiglich hit a ball to left that was dropped with one out, allowing her to advance to second. No. 9 hitter Andi Burke then came through with a two-strike single into right field that scored Stiglich.

After Brown sat down Savage on a called third strike, two more errors followed, allowing Valerie Palmer and Gray to get on base.

Angie Petros then stroked the first of two doubles, this one to the gap in right-center that scored both Palmer and Gray for the 6-0 advantage.

Central tacked two more runs on in the seventh when Savage scored on an error and Palmer was driven in on Petros' second double.

Please See CLASS AA, Page 22

Class AA

(Continued from Page 19)

All told, the Seminoles committed seven errors in the field. "This wasn't the same group that I've come to know and love," Knowlton said with a laugh, talking about her team's play in the field. "We made some inexperience-type mistakes that you can't make at this point in the season." The defensive miscues were compounded when coupled with the job Knights' pitcher Cassie Garan was doing on the mound.

Garan worked the plate well, hitting her spots and keeping the 'Noles' hitters off-balance.

She surrendered only five hits and one run - on a triple to catcher Taylor Jorris in the fourth inning - striking out eight and walking one in the process. "Absolutely, Cassie pitched well tonight," Bober said of his hurler. "Eight strikeouts and one walk, she couldn't miss."

The Maroon Knights (20-4), winners of 16 straight games.

Park

(Continued from Page 19)

The Park sweep was completed by freshman Steve D'Angelo in No. 2 singles.

In one of the most intense matchups of the tournament, D'Angelo slipped past the Cadets'

Georgie Cassoff 10-8.

"I was hoping to win it, but I knew I would have to play against a lot of great players," said D'Angelo.

"Cassoff played a great match and I was lucky to pull it out."

Riders

(Continued from Page 19)

"When we really get into things our defense can be very tough."

Cordery can now turn his attention to Harrison Central, which upset the Riders' arch-rival Bellaire on Wednesday night.

"I watched them play the other night, and they are a very good

team. They hit the ball well and are a good fielding team. It should be a very good game and I look forward to it."

Leadoff hitter Ashley Suto singled three times for Ferry while Agnew singled twice and chased home a pair of runs for the winners.

Cameron

(Continued from Page 19)

Despite some late-game control problems - six of her nine walks came in the final two innings - Tustin surrendered

only three singles and the Bishops only got two balls out of the infield all day.

Gouldsberry was the only player on either team with multiple hits, spanking out a double and single.

OVAC Class A semifinal
Bellaire St. John's 9,
Linsly 1

At Bellaire, Meghan Johnson struck out eight, while Ellie Swartz, and Amber Irwin, and Laraine Skorich each drove in two runs, helping Bellaire St. John's (19-2) dispatch of Linsly and advance to the OVAC Class A championship game.

Johnson, for the second consecutive game, gave up just one hit, a fourth-inning single by Jessica Schucht in the fourth.

Edison

(Continued from Page 17)

"We are trying to build our program to the level of Edison," said Cicchirillo. "They seem to be the top program in the Valley, and we want to get on their level."

While some might have been surprised by the effort put forth by the Bruins, Bendle wasn't one of them.

"Both times we played Brooke in the regular season this year, we kind of controlled the game," said Bendle. "But anytime you get Brooke in the OVAC or the postseason, you know they will rise to the occasion."

"We knew they would play tough and we expected a low-

scoring game tonight."

The Bruins also got a stellar pitching performance from Caitlin Kocher. Only a freshman, Kocher struck out three and limited the Wildcats to five hits.

"She (Kocher) did a fine job," said Bendle. "She will be a very fine pitcher for them."

Edison will now face John Marshall, a 4-2 winner over Buckeye Local, in the Class AAAA title game to be played Saturday at the I-470 Complex.

"It should be a heck of a battle here Saturday," said Bendle. "I thought coming into the season that John Marshall maybe had the most talented offensively of any team in the Valley."

Charm

(Continued from Page 17)

Gretchen worked a leadoff walk just ahead of Jamie Fillippi's double to put runners at second and third with no one out. However, Heilman got a groundout before Amanda Brown grounded back to the mound with Heilman throwing her out at first and Ilovar gunning the ball home to McDermott to nail Gretchen at the plate for the double play.

Buckeye Local cut the lead in half in the fifth when Megan Kachur tripled to lead off the frame and scored on Ashley Miller's shot back through the box.

After Megan Bartrug's RBI single made it 4-2, West went to the bullpen to bring in Swoger.

The freshman fanned the first two hitters she faced to end the inning before setting down a pair

on strikes in each of the final two frames.

"Sarah (Swoger) has really come on for us this year," West admitted. "She has increased her speed and done a great job with her control. We are just so pleased with her."

"Devon also did a nice job early on, but we felt she was getting tired and it was time for a move."

"Our defense also did an outstanding job and we just continue to hit the ball with Vanessa leading the way. She has just crushed the ball for three years and has never slowed down since her freshman year."

McDermott singled twice for the winners with Stout chasing home a run. Fillippi singled and doubled while Miller and Bartrug collected RBIs for the Panthers.



Photo by Alex Kozlowski

Martins Ferry pitcher Angie Cerasoli winds up and fires to the plate during action of the Purple Riders' game against Magnolia Thursday.

Bellaire Moves On

East Liverpool's Carr takes tough-luck loss vs. Edison

Bellaire's Jay Ofat outdueled Meadowbrook's Zach Zifzal, leading the Big Reds to a 4-2 win over the Colts (10-9) in OVAC Class AAA quarterfinal action Thursday.

Keith Sechrest collected a pair of singles and drove in two runs, while Dirk Soland plated a runner with an RBI double. Ofat added a pair of singles at the plate. He gave up just four hits on the mound.

Zifzal struck out eight in the losing effort. Jordan Potts had three hits of the Colts four hits including a double. Ryan Douth had the other hit - a single - and drove in a run.

Regular Season
Steubenville Central 13,
Toronto 1

At Toronto, John Koehnlein scattered six hits and struck out seven, as Steubenville Central walloped Toronto (13-9).

Koehnlein helped himself at the plate with two singles, a triple and two RBIs.

Mike Freshwater had two singles for Toronto.

**Buckeye Trail 5,
Beallsville 3**
At Beallsville, Buckeye Trail

scored three runs in the third and two more in the fifth to win by a pair, despite being out-hit 6-3 by the Blue Devils (14-4).

**Buckeye Local 15,
Brooke 14**

At Connorville, Zack McKim singled, tripled, and drove in three, as Buckeye Local scored five runs in the bottom of the seventh to get past Brooke.

**Edison 4,
East Liverpool 3**

At Richmond, Aaron Hilt drove in a run with one out in the bottom of the seventh, breaking a 3-all tie and lifting Edison (11-9) to a one-run win over East Liverpool.

Taking the tough-luck loss for the Potters was Brandon Carr, who at one point sat down 19 consecutive batters.

Back-to-back errors, followed a three-run homer by Kyle Keeder to start the first got the Wildcats off to a hot start, but Carr settled into a groove thereafter.

In the seventh, Edison got a runner on via another East Liverpool error. He moved to third on a passed ball, and scored on Hilt's single to left, which was

just over the third baseman's head.

Cory Carr singled, and hit a two-run homer for East Liverpool.

SOFTBALL
Regular Season
Steubenville 26,
Toronto 1

At Toronto, an 11-run third inning helped Big Red (16-6) bash Toronto.

Maelynn Johnson ripped three doubles and a single, as she drove in seven runs, while Catherine Moore tripled and drove in four more. Winning pitcher Elaina Wesfall added three RBIs, while Vanessa Clark, Whitney Petrella, and Courtney Sanders each drove in two runs.

Andrea Thomas tripled and drove home the lone run for the Red Knights (5-11).

**Buckeye Trail 12,
Beallsville 1**

At Beallsville, Lacy Black drove in three runs and Raine Lowry added two RBIs, leading Buckeye Trail (8-11) past Beallsville.

Erin Doughty drove in the Blue Devils' lone run.

Riders

Continued from Page B1

Carpenter to score.

"We want to put pressure on defense by moving runners and we always look for an extra base," Cordery said. "It makes it tougher on the defense because they start looking around for us and aren't concentrating quite as much on making the play."

The final Ferry run came in the fourth when Agnew delivered a single into right. After the ball was misplayed, she moved up to second. She took third on a wild pitch and Jessica Hilton drove her home with a base hit.

"We really like the make-up

of our order," Cordery said. "You have to pitch to everybody and you have to pitch everybody honest because we have so many girls who can hit the ball."

While the Lady Blue Eagles were kicking the ball around to a tune of five errors, the Ferrians were guilty of just the first-inning miscue.

"The early errors might be my fault for not warming them up well enough," Cordery joked. "Again, once we settle down, I really feel that we are one of the best defensive teams in the area."

Martins Ferry will now meet

Harrison Central, which eliminated Bellaire Wednesday night, today at 4:30 p.m. for the title.

"I sat here (Wednesday night) and watched Harrison Central play Bellaire and I am looking forward to it because it's going to be a good game," Cordery advised.

"They are a good hitting team and they play well fundamentally."

Linescore:
Magnolia 100 000 0 1 3 5
Martins Ferry 240100 x 7 8 1
BATTERIES: Keene and Brill,
Cerasoli and Lewis.

Inside

Ferry wins 3-A softball title

• Cerasoli leads Riders to first title since 2000

By **SETH STASKEY**
Times Leader Sports Writer

Stick-to-itiveness has been key for the Martins Ferry Lady Riders softball team.

The Lady Riders were on the top of the OVAC Class 3-A softball mountain in 2000.

After four years and no titles, the Lady Riders got back to the top perch Friday evening, handing Cinderella Harrison Central a decisive 8-2 setback at Lisa's Field at the I-470 Chambers Complex in Elm Grove.

"This is a great feeling," said Ferry head coach Jess Cordery. "These kids here are such a team. Not one of them puts herself above each other and they all come to play every day."

The Lady Riders won the regular season title a year ago, but were ousted in a tough game to eventual tournament champion Magnolia.

While the Lady Riders have become a fixture for making runs deep into the OVAC tourney, Harrison Central got out of the first round for the first time in its brief school history.

"We definitely didn't come down here to get second," said Harrison head coach Donnie Bethel. "I am proud of my team because we are extremely young and we'll be back."

The difference in the game as is normally the case in softball was on the mound.

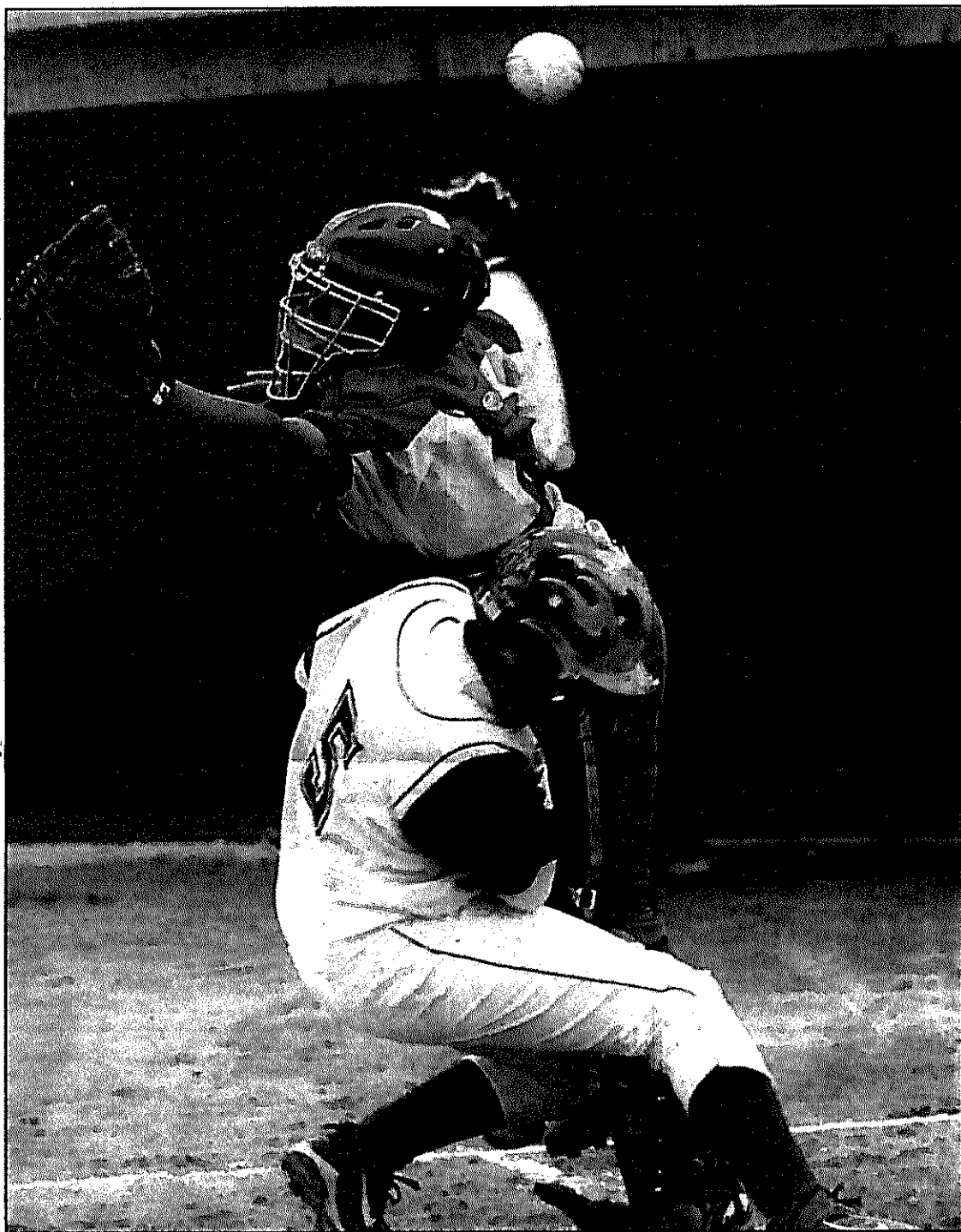
Martins Ferry senior Angie Cerasoli was again her normal self, while the Purple offense touched up Harrison Central ace Katy Leeper for 15 base hits and six earned runs.

"The difference in the game was pitching," Bethel said. "Cerasoli did what she was supposed to do. She carried them until their bats could come alive, and to be honest we expected nothing less. Today, Angie Cerasoli was a better pitcher than we were hitters."

Cerasoli -- who was left holding the trophy during the team pictures after the game -- was once again the rock that Cordery has come to expect.

"We depend on Angie a lot," Cordery said. "We hit the ball and put it in play and Angie keeps us close until we can get our offense going."

For the game, Cerasoli fanned 14 and allowed two base on



T-L Photo/MICHAEL HARVILLA

MARTINS FERRY senior Lynsey Agnew slides safely into home against Harrison Central catcher Chelsea Coconougher who is attempting to block the plate during the fifth inning of the OVAC Class 3-A title game Friday evening at Chambers' I-470 Complex.

balls. Both of the Harrison runs were earned in the sixth inning. All told, she allowed seven hits.

After missing a golden opportunity in the first to score when it got three runners aboard, the Ferry offense got it cranked up in the fourth.

"They made plays (in that first inning)," Cordery said. "We just didn't change our game-plan because we like to use speed and pressure on the defense and we hope they'll eventually break."

Clean-up hitter Kelsey Carpenter led off the fourth with a

single and that was followed by a Lynsey Agnew base knock.

After an out was recorded on the infield, Megan Ware delivered the first timely hit of the contest, slapping a single into right, scoring Carpenter.

Jessica Hilton then reached on a fielder's choice that allowed Agnew to race home. An error during the play, allowed Ware to sprint home, putting the Ferrians up by a 3-0 score.

The three-run cushion was plenty for Cerasoli. She followed the offensive spurt with a

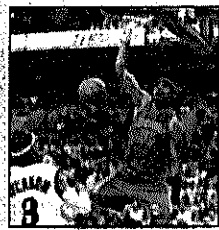
three-up, three-down fifth where she fanned two.

The Ferry offense added five more runs in the bottom of the fifth to all but seal the deal.

Stephanie Payne and Cerasoli both reached with base hits. After a ground-out moved both up a base, setting the table once again for Agnew.

She came through with a two-run, hustling double into shallow leftfield. Kayla Lewis followed with a RBI single to score Agnew. Ware came up with her

See, **RIDERS**, Page 3



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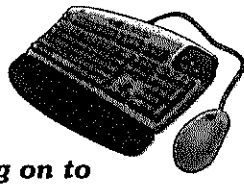
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ON THE COVER

T-L Photo/MICHAEL HARVILLA

MARTINS FERRY pitcher Angle Cerasoli and her catcher Kayla Lewis embrace after the final out of Friday's OVAC Class 3-A championship game. Ferry toppled Harrison 8-2 for the title.



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T-L Photo/MICHAEL HARVILLA

MARTINS FERRY junior Ashley Suto is tagged out at the plate by Harrison Central catcher Chelsea Coconougher in the first inning of Friday's OVAC Class 3-A softball title game at the Chambers I-470 Complex in Elm Grove. Despite the out, Ferry went on to post a 8-2 victory to capture its first title since the 2000 season.

● **Ferry**

Continued from Page 2

second hit of the contest, putting runners on first and second. Hilton drew a walk to load the sacks, and pinch hitter Megan Anzak drew a free pass, forcing Lewis home. Hard-hitting second baseman Ashley Suto produced a sacrifice fly to center that allowed Ware to score the fifth tally of the inning. Ferry eventually loaded the bases again, but Leeper finally got out of the frame when she induced a pop-up on the infield. "Our defense cracked a little bit," Bethel said. "(Katy) seemed to lose some of her confidence, but she battled the entire game and I am proud of her." Harrison got two runs in the top of the sixth when Andrea

Davis ripped a double to score Chelsea Coconougher from first. Davis was eventually driven in by Melinda Dunlap with a single. "You saw our real team in the sixth inning when the pressure was off," Bethel admitted. "Some of our swings early in the game weren't us, but we became a pretty good team later in the game, so we'll definitely learn from this." In the top of the seventh, Cerasoli struck out the first two hitters and then got a can of corn fly ball to the outfield. It's not out of the question that Martins Ferry and Harrison Central could meet again. Both will begin Ohio sectional play

this week at Cadiz. The Lady Purple will meet St. Clairsville Tuesday at 5 p.m. Harrison Central -- now 14-11 on the season -- will battle Steubenville Catholic on Wednesday. The sectional final will be held Friday evening. "We wanted to get on a roll before the tournament started," Cordery said. "We were 2-2 at one point this season, so we've won 15 of 16 now, so we are playing good softball right now." Linescore: Harrison Central 000 002 0 2 7 3 Martins Ferry 000 350 x 8 15 0 BATTERIES: Leeper and Coconougher, Cerasoli and Lewis.

Edison Cruises By Beaver Local

Linsly ekes past Weirton Madonna

With Lakyn Bendle tossing a one-hitter, Edison coasted into the Class AAAA girls' softball semifinals by blanking Beaver Local on Tuesday evening, 10-0 in five innings at Richmond.

PREP SOFTBALL

Bendle struck out six and was supported by an 11-hit attack that included home runs from Annie Kovalesky and Whitney Tomeucci. Kovalesky also singled and accounted for four RBIs.

The Wildcat girls will play Brooke today at 6 p.m. at the I-470 Complex in Wheeling with a berth in the conference championship game on the line. The other 4A semifinal matches John Marshall against Buckeye Local at 4:30 p.m.

OVAC Class AAA Quarterfinals Harrison Central 10, Indian Creek 0

At Cadiz, Katy Leeper allowed only a Jenna Clapham single in pitching Harrison Central (13-10) past Indian Creek (6-10).

The Huskies, who next meet Bellaire at 7:30 this evening in a Class AAA semifinal game in Wheeling, got three hits each from Melinda Dunlap and Chelsea Coconougher, who also stole three bases and scored three runs. Annie Yarrish drove in two runs with a pair of singles, while Gena Everhart added a two-run single.

The victory was Harrison Central's first tournament win in school history.

The other AAA semifinal takes place at 5 p.m. Thursday as Martins Ferry plays Magnolia.

OVAC Class AA Quarterfinals Steubenville Central 11, River 0

At Steubenville, Kimmy Straker doubled, homered and knocked across three runs for Steubenville Central (11-7).

The Crusaders ripped 10 hits and also got a three-hit pitching performance by Alexis Ferrara.

The double-A semifinals slated today have Wheeling Central and Monroe Central meeting at 5 p.m., followed by Steubenville Central's clash against Fort Frye at 6:30 at the I-470 Complex.

Monroe Central 15, Toronto 0

At Woodsfield, Monroe Central (15-3) coasted as expected behind Leekyia Brown, who tossed a two-hitter and struck out seven.

Brown also contributed with two doubles and two RBIs.

Morgan Ramige singled twice, doubled and plated three runs for Monroe Central.

OVAC Class A Quarterfinals

Linsly 4, Weirton Madonna 3

At Weirton, Rachel Zane quelled a last-inning rally by Weirton Madonna (10-7) to help Linsly hang on for a one-run victory in their quarter-final thriller.

The Blue Dons, trailing 4-1 entering the bottom of the seventh, scored twice and had the bases loaded with two out when Zane retired the final batter on a fly ball to right field. Kaleigh Parsons doubled and drove in two runs for Linsly, which next plays Bellaire St. John's at 6:30 p.m.

Thursday in the conference semifinals. The other single-A semi matches Cameron against Bishop Donahue at 4:30 p.m. Thursday.

Both games takes place at the I-470 Complex in Wheeling.

Johnna Paoloemilio drove in all three Madonna runs, as she singled and doubled.

Regular Season Brooke 4, Steubenville 2

At Steubenville, Brooke scored three times in the fourth inning and held off host Big Red as Morgan Hunter picked up two RBIs and Caitlin Kocher struck out eight while pitching a five-hitter.

Meggan Strachan doubled twice, while Shay Jackson and Catherine Moore also doubled for Steubenville (15-6).

Buckeye Trail 10, Shenandoah 0

At Old Washington, Hannah Miller's two-hit pitching paved the way for Buckeye Trail (7-11) to defeat Shenandoah (3-15). Lacy Black had three singles, scored two runs and drove in two tallies for the Warrior girls.

Tyler Consolidated 13, Beallsville 3

At Kidwell, Tyler Consolidated (2-17) scored nine runs in the fifth inning to finish off Beallsville. Kim Headley pounded out three hits, while Erica Galluzzo and Amanda Chapline added two hits each for the Knight girls.

Magnolia 11, Hundred 7

At Hundred, Rachel Mason's six RBIs, which came on a double, triple and home run sparked Magnolia (16-12) past Hundred. Kayla Brill singled three times and picked up two RBIs.

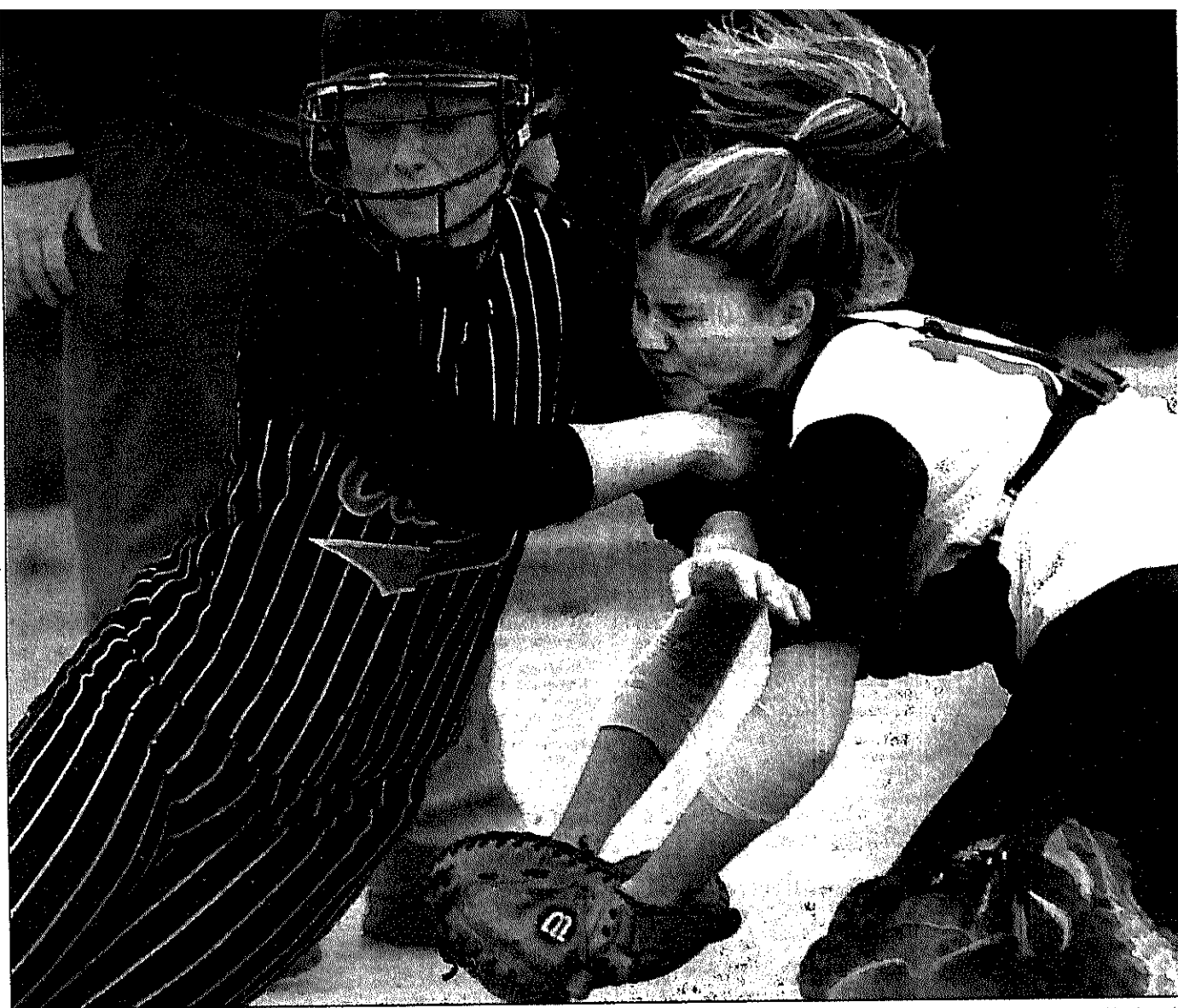


Photo by Alex Kozlowski

Edison baserunner Annie Kovalesky is tagged out by John Marshall's Emily McDermott at the plate during action of their OVAC Class AAAA final at the Chambers I-470 Complex Tuesday. McDermott teamed with centerfielder Samantha Stout for outs at the plate twice in the game, but the Wildcats were able to come away with a 3-0 victory.

Edison Tames JM

Wildcats claim OVAC Class AAAA title, 3-0

By TRACY WATSON
For The Intelligencer

Hitting and runs are two of the things that make softball a fan-friendly sport, however, pitching and defense are what wins championships.

That point was proven once again Tuesday night at the Chamber's I-470 Fields as Edison High and standout pitcher Lakyn Bendle claimed another Ohio Valley Athletic Conference Class AAAA championship.

Bendle limited a potent John Marshall attack to just one hit while getting plenty of help from her defense as the Wildcats claimed their second consecutive big-school title with an impressive 3-0 blanking of the Monarchs.

The victory by coach Spencer Bendle's 16-1 record squad ensured an Ohio sweep

of the four softball crowns and also meant that all four No. 1 seeds in the tournament emerged victorious.

"I truly believe that our defense was the biggest part of this victory," Spencer Bendle said.

"We knew they would put the ball in play because they are such a good, aggressive team at the plate.

"But Lakyn didn't give them much to hit and our defense didn't commit any mistakes to give them opportunities.

"That is what Lakyn does, she is not going to wow people with her heat, but she is a smart pitcher and she gets outs."

Both teams were doing an outstanding job getting out early as Edison's Emily Schaefer had the game's only

hit entering the fourth inning. However, two outs into the Wildcat fourth that all changed.

Annie Kovalesky and Katelyn Givens each singled into right field to put runners at the corners with two down before Sam Taczak's infield single to short plated the game's first run, and eventually the only one the hosts needed.

Courtney Pedersen followed with the 'Cats fourth straight hit, a single to center, however, Monarch center fielder Sam Stout made a perfect throw to the plate with catcher Emily McDermott making the tag on pinch-runner Katelyn DiPasquale to end the frame.

It was also the second time in the game that Stout and McDermott teamed up for an outstanding play at the plate

to end an inning.

"Edison's defense was outstanding and they made every play they needed to," said interim head coach Ed West of John Marshall. "But our defense has been real good lately also and I was not surprised about our play.

"Sam (Stout) is an excellent outfielder and those two plays that her and Emily combined for were just great.

"We did everything we could, but it just wasn't enough. These girls played their hearts out, we just weren't able to get hits."

Edison got an insurance run in the fifth on Kylie Snyder's RBI triple before Courtney Pedersen's run-scoring, two-out double in the fifth capped the scoring.

See EDISON, Page 18

Johnson hurls perfect game as BSJ repeats

By TRACY WATSON
For The Intelligencer

Like the old saying goes, "nobody is perfect."

And while that also applies to sports, Bellaire St. John's senior pitcher Meghan Johnson showed Tuesday afternoon that while it may not be easy, perfection can be achieved.

Johnson fired a perfect game, fanning 13 hitters along the way, and the Fighting Irish collected six hits, eight walks and took advantage of two Cameron errors in rolling to a 7-0 victory to capture their second straight Ohio Valley Athletic Conference Class A Title at the I-470 Complex in Wheeling.



Photo by Alex Kozlowski

Bellaire St. John's pitcher Meghan Johnson works to the plate during action of the OVAC Class A final at the J.B. Chambers I-470 Complex. Johnson fired a perfect game, striking out 13 in a 7-0 victory over Cameron.

Please See CHAMPS, Page 18

Champs

(Continued from Page 15)

Coach Jerry Magistro's power-hitting 21-2 record squad were forced to play small-ball en route to victory, with just one extra base hit, a meaningless fifth-inning double by pinch-hitter Amanda Rosepapa.

The Fighting Irish stranded nine runners in the game, including seven in scoring position.

St. John's first run of the game came in the second as Laraine Skorich lead off with a single, moved to second on a sacrifice bunt and went to third on a fielder's choice. Skorich scored when No. 9 hitter Betsy Smith reached on an error for a 1-0 count.

The Fighting Irish pushed across three more in the third by virtue of one hit, four walks and another Dragon (14-9) miscue. The only hit in the frame was a big one as Amber Irwin ripped a two-out, two-run single past short to make it 4-0.

Skorich added a two-run single in the fourth with Irwin getting her third RBI of the game on a fielder's choice for a 7-0 reading.

"Meghan is just unbelievable," Magistro said. "I say this over and over, but she always comes to play in big games and today was no different."

"Offensively I think we were patient and was taking what they would give us. We have been productive from the top of the order to the bottom all year, so it doesn't surprise me that the bottom part really came through for us tonight."

"I am just so happy for these girls, and especially our seniors. These girls are all about winning and we have two in a row now and five straight regular-season

titles.

"Our defense also did a good job, and that is hard to say with the way Meghan pitched. Our defense has been there in big games all year also. If you want to go far in the postseason you have to do it all and that is what we did today."

Johnson got a pair of fine defensive plays from shortstop Ashley Marinacci along the way and also a dandy from catcher Ellie Swartz, who made a diving catch of a bunt attempt for the second out of the seventh inning.

Cameron head coach Mark Witzberger had nothing but praise for Johnson afterwards.

"She was really on today," he said. "All she was throwing was strikes and I think most of the balls she threw were purposeful."

"Something like that is really tough to watch your team go through as a coach, but if you are a fan of pitching it was sure an exciting game."

"I would also like to give my team all the credit in the world, we lost six seniors from last year and we have nine girls playing nine different positions this year so getting to a game like this is very special to us."

"It was a tough game for us, but no one on this team gave up and no one had their heads down, we are all just so proud of these girls."

Johnson did go to a 3-2 count on four different girls in the contest, including the first batter she faced in the game and the last. Three of the four batters she went full on eventually struck out.

Skorich and Marinacci each singled twice in the game while Irwin chased home three runs.

Edison

(Continued from Page 15)

John Marshall (18-8) had only two base runners in the contest, a lead-off walk to Megan Gouldsberry to open the game and Devin Heilman's two-out single past second base in the fifth.

"I really believe that this is the two best teams in the Ohio Valley and I am glad we got to show people that tonight," Spencer Bendle added. "We got some timely hits, but John Marshall's center fielder made a couple of outstanding plays out there also. But I can tell you this, if it was hit to her again we would have been trying to score again."

"My hats are off to them, they really made us earn everything we got. We made good contact at the plate and got some big hits from a couple of girls including Annie Kovalesky, Pedersen and Emily Schaefer."

"We know that if we can get Lakyn some runs we have a shot to win. It is just so hard to get back-to-back hits off of her,

especially with the way this defense plays."

Bendle fanned five and walked just the one in gaining the mound victory. Meanwhile, Monarch sophomore Sarah Swoger scattered nine hits while fanning four and issuing just one free pass.

"Bendle is just such a great pitcher, and while she doesn't overpower you, she is just so smart and makes it tough for hitters," West said. "Edison is a great team, and most of that has to do with her pitching and their defense."

Pedersen singled, doubled and plated a run for the winners while Kovalesky added a pair of base hits.

Edison returns to sectional play Tuesday against Steubenville Big Red while John Marshall will return to the I-470 Fields on Thursday to take on the winner of today's Brooke-Wheeling Park contest in the West Virginia Class AAA Sectional.

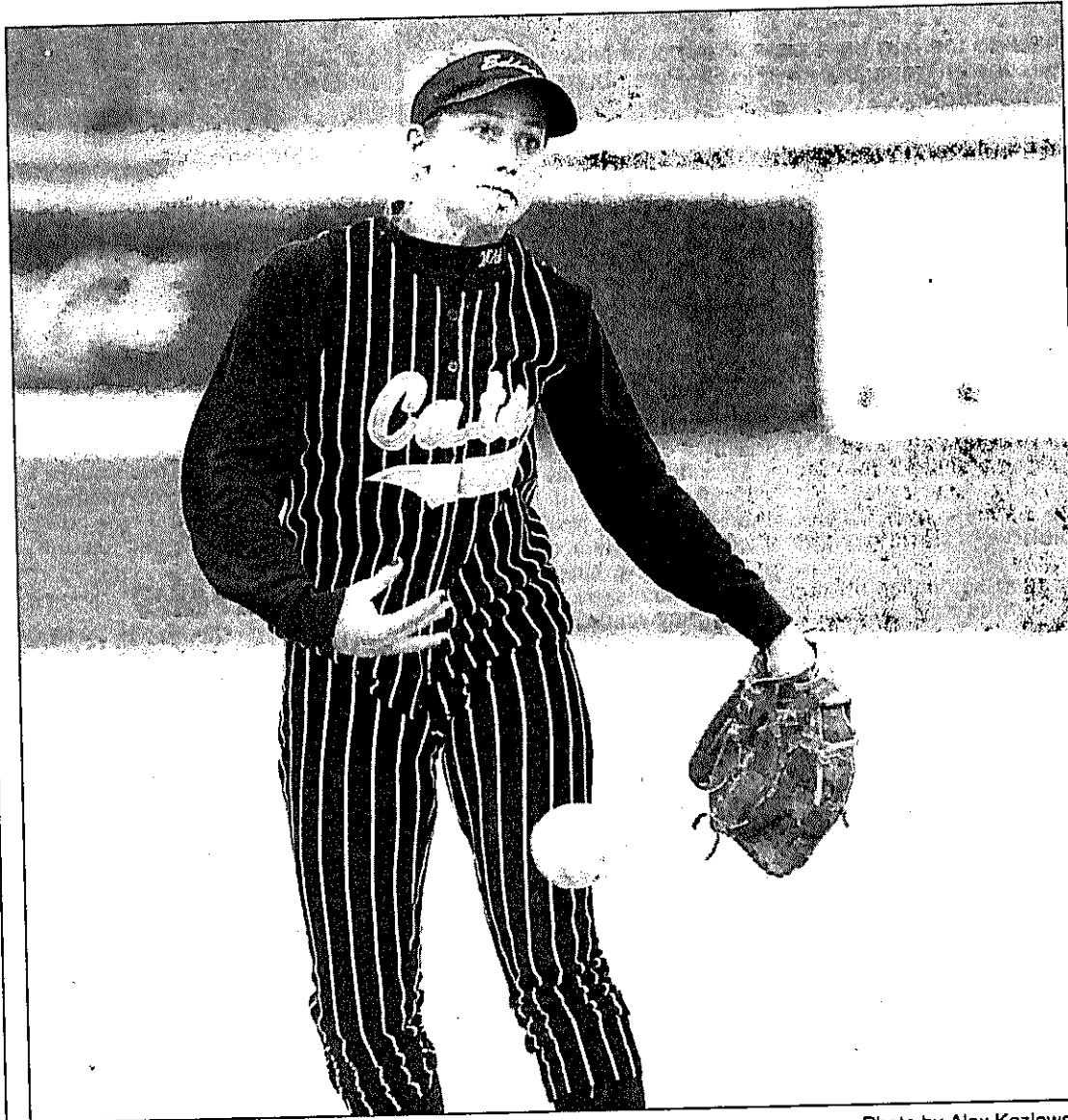


Photo by Alex Kozlowski

Edison's Lakyn Bendle fires a pitch to the plate Tuesday against John Marshall.



Photo by Alex Kozlowski

Steubenville Central's Hilary Jones slides in to home plate as Wheeling Central's Amanda Orkoskey gets set to field the throw to the plate. Jones scored on the play helping the Crusaders to a 10-2 victory over the Maroon Knights. Making the call on the play is umpire Jon Hamm.

Hail to the Champs

Crusaders roll past Wheeling Central for Class AA softball title

By CHRISTOPHER S. NASH
Staff Writer

Having watched her team lose two straight years in the OVAC Class AA finals, Steubenville Central coach Jackie Rossi was hoping for a fast start in this year's final against Wheeling Central.

The Crusaders (14-7) didn't let her down.

Steubenville Central scored four runs in the first inning and never looked back as the Crusaders captured the Class AA OVAC Championship with a 10-2 victory over Wheeling Central (20-5) at the 1-470 Complex Monday evening in Wheeling.

"I don't want to sound too much like a teenager, but this was an awesome win," said Rossi. "I even caught myself smiling there towards the end."

"This means so much after getting to the finals the last two years and just

coming up short."

It was the fourth consecutive season the Crusaders have played in the Class AA finals, and the first time they have captured the title since 2002.

But unlike their last two appearances in the finals, the Crusaders dominated from the start, setting the Maroon Knights down in order before taking control with their at bat.

"That is our No. 1 goal in every game we play," said Rossi. "We want to score the first run."

"We did a good job of getting our bunts down and playing small ball early on. That allowed us to get some big hits later in the game."

Wheeling Central starter Brittany Derr showed her youth in the freshman's first try at a conference championship.

Derr faced seven batters in the opening frame, allowing two hits, four walks and four runs in 1/3 of an inning.

"She struggled early on," said Wheeling Central coach Rick Magruder.

"Steubenville Central is a very good softball team and will make you pay for every mistake."

Kassi Garan came in to relieve Derr, but the four early runs proved to be all the scoring Crusaders' starting pitcher Alexis Ferrara needed.

Ferrara limited the powerful Knights' offense to only two hits, while fanning eight batters and issuing two walks.

"We watched Wheeling Central earlier and thought the change of pitching would throw them off," said Rossi.

"Ferrara doesn't overpower you, but

she does a good job of frustrating hitters."

The Maroon Knights, who faced and beat one of the top fastball pitchers in the Valley in Leekyia Brown last week in the OVAC semifinals, clearly had trouble adjusting to the off-speed pitching of Ferrara.

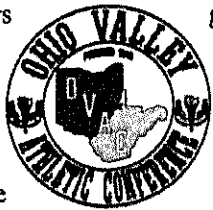
"We were on such a high after beating Monroe Central," said Wheeling Central coach Ambrose Bober.

"I guess we were due for a bad game, but you hate to see it against a team like that."

The Crusaders meanwhile had no such trouble at the plate.

Steubenville Central combined 12 hits with some aggressive baserunning to added six more runs by the end of the game.

Please See CHAMPS, Page 18



Champs

(Continued from Page 15)

Kimmy Straker paced the offensive charge for the Crusaders with two triples and an RBI, while Molly Darrow singled and knocked in a run.

Kelliann Calabria belted two singles and plated a run, while Alaina Augustine smacked two singles.

"My team was really focused and just wanted this so badly," said Rossi.

"We have a lot of juniors who have been playing since they were freshman."

"They came out today and did what they needed to do."

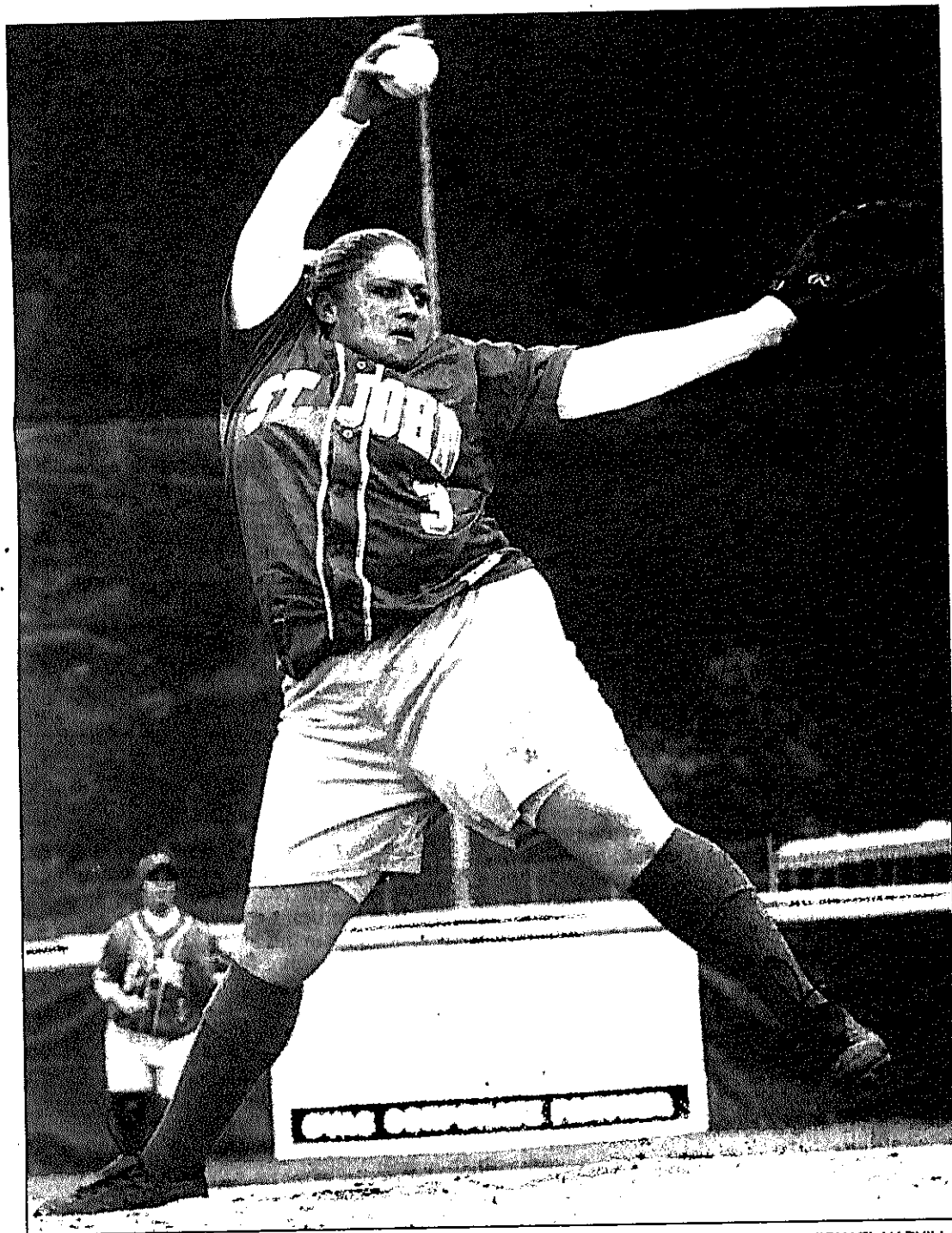
The Maroon Knights' Angela Petros broke up Ferrara's no-hitter and shutout bid with an RBI single in the fourth.

Amanda Orkoskey knocked in run with a double for Wheeling Central's second and final hit.

SPORTS

Wednesday,
May 4, 2005

OVAC title 'perfect' for Irish



T-L Photo/MICHAEL HARVILLA

DELIVERING ONE of her pitches to the plate in Tuesday's OVAC Class-A Championship is Meghan Johnson of St. John Central. Johnson's perfect game led the Irish to a 7-0 win against Cameron and their second consecutive OVAC title.

• 7-0 win over Cameron marks SJC's second consecutive title

By JEREMY MIDEI
Times Leader Sports Writer

21 up, 21 down.

That's how Meghan Johnson and her Irish cohorts roll. All the way to their second consecutive OVAC Class-A title.

Johnson struck out 13, walked none and allowed nary a hit — and her teammates backed her with flawless play in the field — as St. John Central was perfect in a 7-0 rout of Cameron in the OVAC championship game at the I-470 fields.

"She's unbelievable," Irish manager Jerry Magistro said of his pitcher. "I say it after every game, but she is. She's come up big in every big game, and she was ready for this one."

If ready equals unhittable, then yeah, Johnson was ready.

The Lady Dragons managed to put only eight balls into play. The other 13 batters were sent to their rooms by Johnson fastballs and the occasional change-up.

Hitters worked her into only two full counts all game, including the last at-bat of the game. She struck out both batters.

"(Johnson) was on her game tonight," said Cameron's Mark Witzberger. "Every pitch had a purpose. It was tough to watch if you were sitting in our dugout. But if you're a fan of pitchers, it had to be pretty exciting."

Magistro had to be excited after watching the bottom of his Murderer's Row lineup knock in six runs. The top of the order set 'em up, and Loraine Skorich and Amber Irwin knocked 'em in; the duo combined for six RBIs.

The Irish scored their first run in the second inning. Skorich rapped a single to start the frame and advanced to third on a sacrifice bunt and a ground out. Betsy Smith grounded into what should have been out number three, but Amanda Hartley's throw deflected off first baseman Kayla Smith's glove. Skorich dashed home on the play.

"We were patient tonight," said Magistro. "We took whatever they gave us."

St. John's batted around in the third inning, blowing the game open with a three-spot. Jessica Vavra, Johnson and Swartz each drew walks to load the bases with Skorich coming up.

She sent a dribbler up the third base line which Jo Morris fielded cleanly, but catcher Corey

See, JOHNSON, Page B2

● Johnson

Continued from Page B1

Gouldsberry mishandled the throw and Vavra scored. 2-love, Irish.

All three walks hurt Cameron as Irwin knifed a hit through the hole at second, scoring Johnson and Swartz.

And the Irish struck for three additional runs in the bottom of the fourth. Vavra drew another walk, followed by an Ashley Marinacci single. Johnson also watched four balls go by and took her base with Swartz coming up.

The senior catcher hit into a fielder's choice, with Vavra getting forced out at home, but Skorich picked her up with a two-run single.

Irwin grounded out in the very next at-bat, but Swartz raced home on the play.

"It's been that way all year," said Magistro of his prodigious bottom-of-the-order. "We have five girls who can put the ball over the fence. We really do have hitters all over."

Witzberger, to his consternation, would agree. "We didn't give them many opportunities, but they got hits when they needed them."

Taking advantage of opportunities, timely hitting, staunch defense and unhittable pitching — St. John's 21st win in 23 games required a little of everything.

"Our defense was good, though it was kind of hard to notice," said Magistro. "We did a little of everything, and that's what you need to do to go deep into any season."

Cameron dropped to 14-9, no small feat considering the Dragons entered the season with nine new position players.

"We lost six starters from last year, and the three returners are all playing new positions," said Witzberger. "We're pretty excited with how we've played this season."

Linescore:

Cameron 000 000 0 - 0 0 0

St. John Central 013 300 x - 7 6 0

BATTERIES: Tustin and Gouldsberry; Johnson and Swartz.

Potent Pitching



Photo by Alex Kozlowski

Beallsville's Erin Doughty, right, reaches home safely ahead of the throw to Bellaire St. John's catcher Elle Swartz, left, during their OVAC Class A quarterfinal matchup Monday in Bellaire. Ready to make the call is home plate umpire Jim Elliott, rear.

Johnson, Bellaire St. John Baffle Beallsville at OVAC Softball Tourney

By TRACY WATSON
For The Intelligencer

Pitching was the difference in Monday afternoon's Ohio Valley Athletic Conference quarterfinal softball contest between top-seeded Bellaire St. John's and No. 8 seed Beallsville.

And while the Fighting Irish were led by senior fire-baller Meghan Johnson, the Blue Devils were guilty of giving away 10 free passes and allowing the hosts to walk away with the win.

Johnson fired a one-hitter, fanning 13 of the 17 batters she faced in the game, and Laraine Skorich singled, doubled and plated a pair of runs as St. John blasted Beallsville 11-1 in five innings at Bellaire.

The victory moves coach Jerry Magistro's 19-2 record squad into Wednesday's semifinals against either Weirton Madonna or Linsly. That game will be

played at the Chamber's I-470 fields.

"I am happy with this win, but I hope we can play better as we go along," Magistro said. "This is OVAC Tournament and Sectional time coming up and you had better be at the top of your game because if you lose you are out."

Losing was not an issue yesterday as Johnson would not let that happen.

The Fighting Irish ace had a perfect game going for four innings before Erin Doughty reached on an error to break it up. Just three pitches later Kaylan Isaly blasted a triple deep to left and just like that the no-hitter and shutout were also gone as the Devils (3-13) closed to within 5-1.

St. John got things going in the second, scoring three runs on two singles, two walks and two Beallsville errors. Jen

Vavra and Amanda Rosepapa each recorded run-scoring singles while Marissa DeClemente had an rbi sacrifice fly.

Rosepapa, however, did get thrown out at the plate for the final out of the frame, one of three Irish players gunned down on the base paths.

"They needed to make some perfect throws and they did," Magistro said about his team's base-running miscues. "But we were trying to be aggressive on the base paths. I am not sorry about sending the runners we did and I would do it again in the same situation."

"We didn't really hit the ball great today, but we got some production from the bottom of the order. That doesn't surprise me because this whole team has hit all season long."

"When you get to this time of

year it all comes down to focus. We usually play up or down to the competition and we have got to be ready to go every game."

The hosts got two more runs in the third on three more free passes and a 2-run double to center by Skorich.

St. John's then put things away in the bottom of the fifth with Jen Vavra, Rosepapa and DeClemente all recorded rbi on bases loaded walks. Betsy Smith added a fielder's choice to score a run, and the Irish got another on an error and Johnson closed things out with a run-scoring single.

DeClemente, Jen Vavra, Skorich and Rosepapa each had two rbi in the contest.

"Meghan (Johnson) just did a great job for us tonight with 13 strikeouts in five innings," Magistro added.

"She always comes to play in games of this magnitude."

Inside

OVAC Softball action Page 17

THE TIME

Buckeye Local girls edge Park

FOR THE TIMES LEADER

Courtesy runner Brianna Finney scored the winning run on a wild pitch in the bottom of the seventh inning, leading second-seeded Buckeye Local to a 3-2 win over seventh-seeded Buckeye Local in OVAC Class AAAA quarterfinal action Tuesday in Connorville.

Finney came on to run for pitcher Tabitha Gretchen, who crushed a double with one out in the bottom of seventh. She moved to third on single by Jamie Fillippi and scored the game-winner when Park Jen Sparachane uncorked a wild one.

It was as close a play as you'll find, as Sparachane alertly covered the plate and applied a quick tag, but one that the Panthers (13-3) will take, nonetheless. They continue action in the tourney ?? vs. ?? at the Chambers Fields at I-470.

"All 14 kids contributed," Buckeye Local coach Barry Closser said. "With good teams, everybody contributes and we

had that today - we've been doing that all year."

It was not an isolated incident.

In the top of the seventh, Park's Anna Haber led off with a walk and advanced to second with no one out. Sparachane then ripped a liner to right that appeared deep enough to advance a courtesy runner. Casey Hunter, playing right in place of Megan Kachur who'd already been lifted and re-entered once, threw a strike to third to nail the baserunner for the double play.

"She'd have been safe if she'd have slid," Wheeling Park coach Dee Davis said, "but she didn't slide at all."

Closser got a little antsy on the bench as the throw was made -- any type of bad throw would have given Park the lead -- but was clearly happy with the result.

It was more of what he'd been talking about.

"We had a big-time throw from right field to double that runner off in the top of the

inning," Closser said.

"Everybody's been picking each other up every game this year."

Wheeling Park jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the first inning on back-to-back run-producing hits by Jen Gruber (a triple) and Jil Wright (a single).

Buckeye Local got one back in the bottom of the frame when Gina Hicks singled in Megan Bartrug.

It remained that way -- Park leading 2-1 -- until the bottom of the sixth.

That, Closser said, was unexpected.

"Considering the last time we played them it was 15-12, and after they got two in the first, we figured this was going to be a slugfest," he said. "The game settled on. Did I think it was going to be one-run, 3-2? No. I thought it was going to be maybe 11-10."

The Panthers got a big break in the sixth, when Erica Stuart took advantage of a miscue in right field. She ripped a one-hop single to right that got away from

the fielder and bounced all the way to the wall. Stuart didn't stop running until she got into the dugout, and the score was tied at 2.

The timing on a three-base error couldn't have been worse for the Patriots.

"Two mistakes," Davis said. "The play out there (the three-base error) should have only been a single and the girl didn't slide here (at third base) and got out. The next play was a little bunt hit. Two mistakes, that's a pretty good game for us, only two mistakes."

Gretchen earned the win for the Panthers. She struck out eight and walked six, while limiting Park to just three hits.

Sparachane, again, took the tough-luck loss despite striking out four and walking none.

Hicks, Bartrug, and catcher Amanda Brown each had two hits for Buckeye Local.

Linescore:
Wheeling Park 200 000 0 2 3 3
Buckeye Local 100 001 1 3 10 1
BATTERIES: Sparachane and Haber; Gretchen and Brown.

Phillips, JM Stop Potters

Megan Gouldsberry belted two singles and a triple, leading John Marshall to a 8-0 victory over East Liverpool, in OVAC Class AAAA softball tournament action Monday night in Glen Dale.

Also for the Monarchs (18-7), Emily McDermott had two singles, while Samantha Stout hit a single and plated three runs.

John Marshall pitcher Stephanie Phillips held the Potters scoreless through seven innings.

The Potters got help from Mary-Kay Amman with a triple.

Class AAA Magnolia 15, St. Clairsville 4

At New Martinsville, St. Clairsville might have been the higher seed, but Magnolia had no trouble advancing over the Red Devils.

The Blue Eagles (15-12) were paced by Paige DeMarco with a double, a home run and plated four runs, while Alicia Hinerman knocked in a run with a triple.

Lindsey Schroeder ripped an RBI single for St. Clairsville.

Bellaire 4, Oak Glen 1

At Bellaire, Amanda Coulter fanned seven and allowed only four hits as Bellaire took down Oak Glen.

The Big Reds got help on offense from Nikki Driscoll with two singles and a double and by Ashley McCorkle with a single and two RBIs.

Class AA Wheeling Central 5, Buckeye Trail 3

At Wheeling, Wheeling Central scored three runs in the third to slip past Buckeye Trail.

Casey Savage hit an RBI double for the Maroon Knights (19-4), while Kayla Gray cleared the bases with a triple.

The Warriors' Hannah Miller knocked in a run with a double.

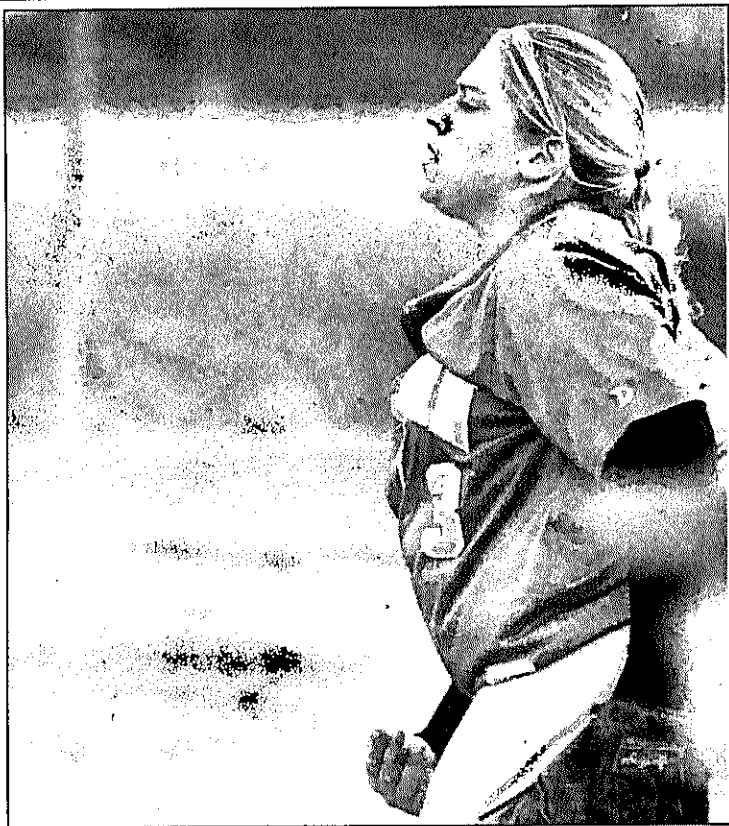


Photo by Alex Kozlowski

Bellaire St. John's pitcher Meghan Johnson works from the circle during Monday's game against Beallsville.

Fort Frye 4, Frontier 3

At Beverly, Carrie Ketelsen ripped a two-run triple to lead Fort Frye past Frontier.

Also for the Cadets (14-2), Danielle Stevens hit a single and chased in a run.

The Cougars got help from Maggie Brunoni with a single, a double and two RBIs.

OVAC Class A Bishop Donahue 12, Paden City 1

At McMechen, Ashley Hill rapped a single and a triple as Bishop Donahue cruised past Paden City.

Jen Hill chipped in for the Bishops (13-5) with an RBI single.

Class AA Cameron 7, Bridgeport 6

At Bridgeport, Cameron smacked 12 hits in a victory over Bridgeport.

For the Dragons (13-8), Amanda Hartley had three singles, while Jonnelle Campbell collected two singles. Lacey Tustin added two singles and chased in two runs for Cameron.

Sarah Wamsley hit two singles, a double, a triple and knocked in

three runs.

BASEBALL Steubenville 16, Buckeye Local 3

At Steubenville John Koehnlein belted two singles, a home run and knocked in four runs as Steubenville Central took down Buckeye Local 16-3 in high school baseball action Monday night in Steubenville.

Mike Emmerling added two singles and chased in a run for the Crusaders (9-9), while Brian Kostantini hit two singles and plated two runs.

For the Panthers, Stan Dobranski singled, tripled and knocked in two runs.

John Marshall 8, Parkersburg 7

At Parkersburg, John Marshall scored seven runs in the first and then hung on to beat Parkersburg.

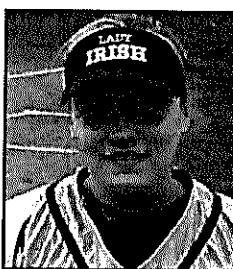
The Monarchs were paced by Troy Mysliwiec with two singles and an RBI, while Colby Mzingo contributed two singles and plated a run.

For the Big Reds, Chance Litton hit a triple and knocked in a run.

Lady Irish capture OVAC quarterfinals

By SETH STASKEY
Times Leader Sports Writer

Needless to say, St. John senior Meghan Johnson was dialed in. And when she's dialed in, it spells bad news for oppositions. Beallsville will definitely attest.



JOHNSON

The Lady Irish, behind Johnson's gem, advanced to the semifinals of the OVAC Class 1-A tournament Monday night by a 11-1 count in five innings over eighth-seeded Beallsville at the Bellaire Swimming Pool Field.

"We didn't play our best game, but it's about advancing," said St. John Central head coach Jerry Magistro. "There's no tomorrow if you lose in this tournament, so the whole thing is about focusing."

Johnson definitely fell into the focused category.

She came out clicking on all cylinders, fanning the first nine hitters she faced. She finished with 13 strikeouts. She allowed just one hit and had only two outs in the game involve the fielders.

"It doesn't surprise me with her anymore," Magistro said. "She comes to play in games like this."

With Johnson on cruise control, the Lady Irish bats got going in the second inning.

Ellie Swartz started the three-run rally when she led off with a walk. After a groundout, Jenna Vavra ripped a single to score Swartz.

Betsie Smith followed with a base on balls, putting runners on first and second for ninth-hitter Amanda Rosepappa.

She came through with a clutch single to score Vavra and move Smith around to third. Marissa DeClemente then flew out to leftfield, but it was plenty deep enough for Smith to tag and score on the sacrifice fly.

After Johnson mowed down the bottom three hitters of the Lady Blue Devil order, the Lady Irish went back to work offensively in their half of the frame.

Junior slugger Ashley Marinacci drew a lead-off walk and then Johnson worked a free pass. After an out was recorded, second baseman Loraine Skorich roped a double into right-center, scoring both Marinacci and Johnson.

"Our whole team has been hitting pretty well all year," Magistro said. "We didn't hit as well as we would have liked early in the game. When you have a hitting team like we do, you have to be aggressive when the count is in your favor."

Beallsville finally broke through on Johnson in the fifth. After Erin Doughty reached on an error, Kaylan Isaly ripped a triple to the fence in center that scored Doughty all the way from first.

However, Johnson then got back into her groove and retired the side via the strikeout.

The Lady Irish closed out the game with a six-spot in the fifth inning. The Green was the beneficiary of five walks in the frame. Smith, Vavra, Rosepappa, DeClemente and Johnson each had a RBI in the frame.

In the semifinals, the Lady Irish will meet the winner of fourth-seeded Weirton Madonna and fifth-seeded Linsly at the I-470 complex on Thursday at 6:30 p.m.

Linescore:
Beallsville 000 01 -- 1 1 4
St. John Central 032 06 -- 11 7 1

BATTERIES: Ankrom, Reisz (5) and Tyo. Johnson and Swartz.

St. C., Bridgeport drop OVAC softball games

Magnolia proved a rude host to St. Clairsville, drilling the Lady Red Devils, 15-4, Monday in an OVAC Class 3-A quarterfinal softball game at Magnolia.

Paige DeMarco led the Lady Blue Eagles with a home run, double and four RBI. Alicia Hinerman clubbed an RBI triple for 15-12 Magnolia.

Lindsay Schroeder had an RBI single for St. C.

CAMERON 7 BRIDGEPORT 6

AT PERKINS FIELD, the Lady Dragons eliminated the Lady Bulldogs in the OVAC tournament in eight innings.

Amanda Hartley led Cameron with three singles while Jonnelle Campbell collected two hits.

The Lady Dragons improved to 13-8.

Sara Wamsley paced

Bridgeport with a triple, double, two singles and three RBI.

WHEELING CENTRAL 5 BUCKEYE TRAIL 3

AT WHEELING, the Lady Knights improved to 19-4 after defeating Buckeye Trail, 5-3, in an OVAC Class AA quarterfinal.

Brittany Derr picked up the mound win, despite striking out only two, while walking eight batters.

Kayla Gray sent home three runners for the Lady Knights, going two-for-three on the day with a triple.

Casey Savage also had an RBI for Wheeling Central.

Trail's Hannah Miller was the hard-luck loser; she struck out six, walked one and scattered eight hits over six innings of work. She had an RBI for the Lady Warriors.

Prep Softball Linescores

JOHN MARSHALL 8 EAST LIVERPOOL 0
East Liverpool 000 000 0 4 1
John Marshall 103 013 X 8 9 0
BATTERIES: Doyle and Davis. Phillips and McDermott.
WHEELING CENTRAL 5 BUCKEYE TRAIL 3
Buckeye Trail 002 001 0 -- 3 7 1
Wheeling Central 103 100 X -- 5 8 0
BATTERIES: Derr and Orkoskey; Miller and Nealey.
FORT FRYE 4 FRONTIER 3
Frontier 000 120 0 -- 3 9 1
Fort Frye 004 000 X -- 4 5 0

BATTERIES: Stehly and Ketelsen; M. Brunoni and L. Brunoni.
MAGNOLIA 15 ST. CLAIRSVILLE 4
Magnolia 01(11) 30 15 13 2
St. C. 200 20 4 5 6
BATTERIES: Keene and Brill; Stewart and Thrash.
CAMERON 7 BRIDGEPORT 6
Bridgeport 050 100 00 6 8 2
Cameron 000 120 31 7 12 4
BATTERIES: S. Wamsley and Foose; Tustin and Gouldsberry.

OVAC softball tourney schedule is changed

Due to bouts with Mother Nature, the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference was forced to alter its schedule for the softball semifinals at the Chambers I-470 Complex.

Today's schedule features five games on two fields, starting at 4:15 p.m.

The Class 1-A semifinal between Cameron and Bishop Donahue will begin the afternoon on Field 4. The other 1-A game, pitting top-seeded St. John against Linsly, will begin at 6 p.m.

At 4:30 p.m. on Field 3, the remaining Class 3-A semifinal will be staged. Top-seeded Martins Ferry meets defending OVAC champion Magnolia at 4:30 p.m.

The 2-A games will round out the evening. Wheeling Central will meet defending OVAC and Ohio Division III state champion Monroe Central at 6:15 p.m. on Field 3. The other 2-A semifinal, which features Steubenville Central against Fort Frye, will begin at approximately 8 p.m.

The finals schedule is unchanged. The 3-A game will begin at 10:30 a.m. The 4-A game is slated to begin at 12:15. The 1-A game is scheduled to start at 2 p.m. and the 2-A title tilt rounds out the day's action at 3:45 p.m.

