

## Coach of the Year



Nikki Hardman, left, girls' basketball coach at Magnolia High School, was presented the OVAC Wheeling News-Register Bill Van Horne Coach of the Year Award by Nick Bedway, executive sports editor of the Wheeling newspapers, at the OVAC Banquet of Champions Monday at WesBanco Arena.

Photo by Alex Kozlowski

## Coach of the Year



**MAGNOLIA GIRLS'** basketball coach Nikki Hardman, left, was the recipient of the OVAC Wheeling News-Register/Bill Van Horne Coach of the Year award at the OVAC Banquet of Champions Monday night at WesBanco Arena. Presenting the award is Nick Bedway, executive sports editor of the Wheeling News-Register.

# Finalists named for OVAC Coach of Year Award



By  
BUBBA  
KAPRAL  
T-L Executive  
Sports Editor

The mother of all banquets is set to unfold Monday at WesBanco Arena. The 20th Annual OVAC Banquet of Champions will kickoff at 6:30 p.m.

Some 32 scholarships will be awarded that evening, totaling more than

\$20,000. Also, championship pennants will be presented to OVAC championship-winning teams.

The highlight of the evening, however, will be the presentation of the News Register Bill Van Horne OVAC Coach of The Year Award.

Last year the award went to Bellaire's boys basketball coach Gene Ammirante who guided the Big Reds to their first-ever state tournament.

The five finalists for the award have been selected. No easy chore for a committee which had to deal with a plethora of coaches who directed their respective teams to banner and some championship campaigns.

The five finalists -- in alphabetical order -- are Nikki Hardman, Magnolia girls' basketball; Fred Heatherington, Steubenville baseball; Bob Kramer, Weirton Madonna football; Larry Shaw, Oak Glen wrestling and Mel Stephens, Wheeling Central boys' basketball.

All five are more than deserving to grab the brass ring.

HARDMAN has enjoyed great success coaching at her alma mater. She led her Lady Eagles to the West Virginia Class AA state championship this winter.

The feat took on added significance after she lost her stellar point guard Ashley McSweeney due to a torn ACL.

HEATHERINGTON -- a previous OVAC coach-of-the-year recipient -- took his Big Red baseball team on a magic carpet ride last spring. Steubenville advanced all the way to the Division II state championship game.

KRAMER guided the Blue Dons to a most memorable grid campaign. The Dons went 10-0 in the regular season. They then advanced to the Super Six Class A title game, bowing to Wheeling Central.

SHAW just continues to win state championship after state championship. He led his Golden Bears to their ninth consecutive Class AA title. In the process, they also won the OVAC Tournament.

STEPHENS and state championships go hand-in-hand. Stephens led his Maroon Knights to their fourth straight West Virginia basketball crown. Stephens served the first two title runs as an assistant while being the head over the past two





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SEVERAL other coaches were worthy of making the final five but came up just short.

Martins Ferry's Dave Bruney enjoyed his finest season yet in Purple land. He led the Purple Riders to the Division IV semifinals, losing to eventual state champion Youngstown Cardinal Mooney.

Two Barnesville coaches received heavy consideration, and rightly so.

Veteran and highly-successful Shamrock baseball coach Brad Wilson was a strong candidate after leading the Red & Green into the Division III state tournament.

Barnesville track coach Darrell Davis also was in the hunt after leading the Lady Shamrocks to an impressive runnerup finish in the Division II state meet.





Jeff Harrison/The Daily Jeffersonian

Among the highlights of the 20th annual OVAC Banquet of Champions on Monday at WesBanco Arena in Wheeling was the announcement of the OVAC Coach of the Year. This year's winner is Nikki Hardman, head girls' basketball coach at West Virginia Class AA state champion Magnolia. Making the presentation is Nick Bedway, who will be retiring in July as executive sports editor of the Wheeling News-Register and Intelligencer.