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The Times Leader

SPORTS

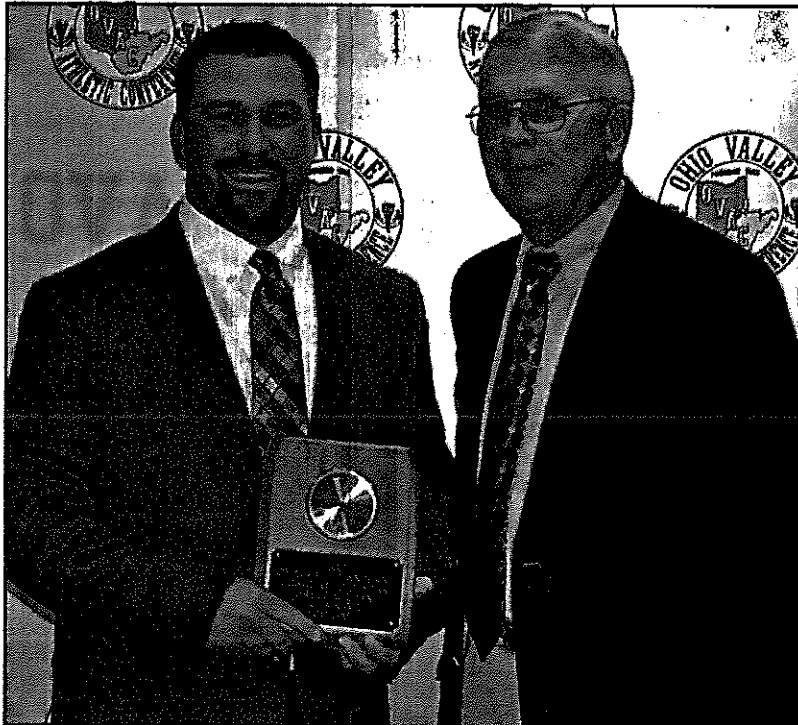
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Tuesday,
May 14, 2013

ST. CLAIRSVILLE head football coach Brett McLean was named the winner of the Bill Van Home OVAC Coach of the Year Award after guiding the Red Devils to a 14-1 record and trip to the Division IV state final. McLean is pictured with OVAC Executive Secretary Tom Rataiczak.

Photo/TONY VIOLA



St. C.'s McLean named OVAC Coach of the Year

By **SETH STASKEY**
Times Leader Sports Editor

WHEELING – You name the award and Brett McLean and his Red Devils' football team has either won it or, at least, played for it during the 2012-13 school year.

Whether it's been team or individual accolades, the Red Devils have had to make plenty of room in the trophy case.

They better start making some more, too.

McLean won the top coaching prize the OVAC awards during Monday's annual Banquet of Champions at WesBanco Arena.

After guiding the Red Devils to a 14-1 record and trip to the school's only appearance in the Division IV

state champion game, McLean was voted the recipient of the Bill Van Home OVAC Coach of the Year.

"I hadn't given this much thought, but this is a huge honor," McLean said. "I sincerely appreciate the recognition, but I am a humble guy. We had kids who took us to a new level and I am proud to be at St. Clairsville with those type of kids that are participating for us."

The Red Devils went on as memorable a season as any Ohio Valley team had ever experienced. They entered the season with a tremendously high level of expectations as most of the spring was spent by McLean dealing with college coaches coming through St. C. to take a look at either Dan Monteroso,

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● McLean

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Michael Ferns or one of the other high-profile players the Red Devils boasted.

"I had an old coach tell me once that to get to the (state) finals in Ohio, 'you have to have talent, talent, talent and more talent,'" McLean said. "He wasn't lying, either. It was a tough pre-season, but our kids just continued to go about their business and didn't get caught up in anything."

McLean and his quality coaching staff, however, was able to find a happy medium and get everyone's attention each and every week.

St. Clairsville was never challenged outside of trailing Wheeling Park at halftime in the season opener last August.

"We knew we had some special talent and they just had to mature, grow and they did," McLean said. "The entire group handled the expectations well. We stayed healthy, which is a huge key, and we took it week by week."

The Red Devils steamrolled everyone that got in their path for 12 straight weeks before having to get past Johnstown-Monroe in the regional championship game and Creston Norwayne in the state semifinals.

The St. C. magic carpet ride came to an end on the final day of November when the Red Devils fell, 46-36, to Clarksville Clinton-Massie in the title game.

"We'll never forget this group or this season," McLean said. "We just want to soak up the moment and enjoy it as much as we can. There's going to come a time when we might look back at it as the 'glory days.'"

Unfortunately for McLean and St. Clairsville, Monday night's award and presentation of their OVAC Class 4A championship banner officially closes the book on the 2012 season.

"I don't ever want to close the chapter on this season," McLean said. "I hope it's instilled a lot in our program and I think it's made our kids hungry to continue to be successful. We'll never forget the 2012 season."

McLean was also quick to congratulate the four other finalists, which included Kim Clifford (St. Clairsville boys' basketball), Mike Blackburn (Steubenville wrestling), Dan Liedtke (Fort Frye girls' basketball) and Ed West (John Marshall softball).

"Coach Clifford is a mentor to me and I work hand-in-hand with him almost every day," McLean said. "Two of his sons (Ryan and Justin) have worked with me and his third son (Kurt) played for me."

Also receiving a high level of thanks and praise from McLean was his coaching staff.

"I think my coaching staff is underrated by some, but I certainly don't do that at all," McLean said. "They do a ton of things for me and sacrifice day-in and day-out and I can't ask for anything more from them."

Along with the coach of the year honor, all of the championship winning teams picked up their pennants and the overall class champions - Madonna, Steubenville Central, Linsly, St. Clairsville and Morgantown - received their trophies and banners.

Many of the top scholars of the OVAC were also recognized as more than \$26,000 worth of scholarships were presented.

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Bill Van Horne/NR Coach of the Year



St. Clairsville football coach Brett McLean, right, poses with retired Intelligencer Sports Editor Doug Huff after being selected as OVAC Coach of the Year.

Photo by
Tony Viola

McLean Named Top Coach in Conference

Red Devils came within an eyelash of state crown

By **TONY VIOLA**
Staff Writer

WHEELING — Brett McLean is a pretty humble guy.

When the St. Clairsville football coach was named one of the five finalists for the News Register-Bill Van Horne OVAC Coach of the Year, he was just honored to be mentioned in the same breath as the other four.

After McLean won the prestigious award, he was left thinking 'how did I get it?'

"There's a lot of guys with a lot more tenure than me who are Hall of Fame guys," McLean said. "I'm really proud to be recognized, but in the same

sense, I have total respect for all the other candidates. It's just a real honor anytime someone gives you something like this to look at your career.

"I appreciate the recognition, I do. But I'm a humble guy."

That's a phrase that was repeated time and time again through the loudspeakers at WesBanco Arena during the 28th Annual OVAC Banquet of Champions.

More than \$30,000 in scholarships were handed out to 40 athletes to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the largest high school athletic conference in America.

The night ended with Doug Huff, former sports editor of The Intelligencer, presenting McLean with the award.

"It's a huge honor, obviously," McLean said. "I'd like to congratulate all the other candi-

dates, especially (St. Clairsville boys' basketball) Coach (Kim) Clifford. He's like a mentor to me. I work hand in hand with him everyday. His sons have coached with me. One of the sons played at St. C for me."

Along with Clifford, McLean edged out Fort Frye girls' basketball coach Dan Liedtke, John Marshall softball coach Ed West and Steubenville wrestling coach Mike Blackburn to lay claim to his first OVAC Coach of the Year honor.

After he lead the Red Devils to a 10-0 regular season and the 4A OVAC title, McLean took St. Clairsville deep into the Ohio Division IV playoffs where the team picked up the Region 15 title and made an appearance in the state championship game.

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MCLEAN

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"I had an old coach tell me one time to get to the finals in Ohio you've got to have talent, talent and more talent," McLean explained. "He wasn't lying. It was a tough pre-season this year. A year ago, we were kinda under the radar. As coaches, we knew we had some special talent. They just had to mature and grow and they did. I think the whole group handled the expectations really well."

Indeed.

Everything went so

well for McLean, he still doesn't want it to come to an end.

"I don't ever want to close the chapter on this season," he said. "I hope it instills a lot in our programs at St. Clairsville. It makes our kids hungry to want to continue to be successful. We'll never forget this group, we'll never forget this season. It was that kinda special year that probably one day we'll talk about them as the glory days. We just want to soak up the moment and enjoy it."

● OVAC

Continued from Page C1

Wrestling Tournament and dethroned Parkersburg South for the overall title.

Big Red finished the OVAC Tournament with 267.5 points. Big Red was fueled to the championship by four individual champions.

Steubenville also claimed the OVAC 4A title in the dual tournament for the second straight season. They advanced to the inaugural Ohio State Duals regional final before falling to eventual dual runner-up Claymont in the title match.

Big Red finished 11th in the Division II state tournament. They were sectional champions at Buckeye Local and second to Claymont in the district.

KIM CLIFFORD, St. Clairsville boys basketball – The Red Devils had yet another season to remember as this veteran coach completed his 21st season on the St. C. bench.

This marks the second straight season that Clifford is a finalist for the Coach of the Year honor. He earned his way back to the final five after leading the Red Devils to an impressive 22-3 record and second straight trip to the Ohio Division II regional in Athens.

Clifford, who has been a head basketball coach for 27 years, owns a 305-184 mark at St. Clairsville. Of those, he's racked up 45 of those victories in the past two seasons.

En route to claiming the school's second ever district title, the Red Devils captured their second straight OVAC 4A title, fighting off Steubenville for the crown. St. C. was undefeated against OVAC competition this past season. It's only losses came at the hands of Columbus Africentric, Cleveland St. Ignatius and then New Philadelphia in the regional semifinal by a 65-50 count.

Clifford also guided the Red Devils to their fourth straight Buckeye 8 crown.

DAN LIEDTKE, Fort Frye girls basketball – This long-time basketball mentor is making his third appearance as a finalist for the top award.

Liedtke completed his 30th year of coaching and fourth as girls' head coach with a trip to the Ohio Division III State Tournament. The Lady Cadets finished the season with a 25-4 record after they fell in the state semifinals to Columbus Africentric, 43-40.

Along the way, Liedtke's squad captured its third OVAC title in four seasons, fourth straight sectional title, fourth straight Pioneer Valley Conference title and reached the district final for the third straight year.

This was Liedtke's first season of coaching just the girls. When he first accepted the post as Lady Cadets' coach, he also continued to guide the boys' program as well. His career girls' record is now 84-17.

All told, Liedtke owns a career head coaching record of 517-189. He guided Fort Frye to nine OVAC titles and 21 PVC crowns.

BRETT McLEAN, St. Clairsville football – It was a season that'll never be forgotten within the Red Devils' program and this veteran head coach steered the ship throughout.

Entering the season with extremely high expectations, the Red Devils didn't disappoint. Outside of trailing at the half in the first week of the season against Wheeling Park, they were never challenged en route to a perfect 10-0 regular season, which included the school's sixth OVAC title, but first under McLean and first since 1990.

The Red Devils featured a potent offense that scored nearly 40 points game. They earned the top seed in Division IV, Region 15 and took care of Harrison Central and Piketon with relative ease before pulling out a 37-29 victory against Johnstown-Monroe to win the regional title.

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In the title game, the Red Devils fell dropped a 46-36 decision to Clarksville Clinton-Massie, finishing with a 14-1 record.

ED WEST, John Marshall softball – The run that the Lady Monarchs' softball team went on last season will be tough to be duplicated, ever.

A season after guiding the Lady Monarchs to the Class AAA state runner-up trophy, West and the Lady Monarchs were able to finish the job in 2012 with only one senior on the roster. The title was the second in the school's history, but first since 1988.

The Lady Monarchs defeated Parkersburg South, 11-5, in the championship game. The championship game victory marked West's 100th career victory. All told, the Lady Monarchs finished with a 35-4 record. The total number of victories was a school record.

During the course of the season, the Lady Monarchs won 29 straight games, including the OVAC Class 5A title.

Just last week, West was recognized as the National High School Coaches Association Coach of the Year for 2012.

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SPORTS

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OVAC Coach of the Year Finalists Identified

Winner to be announced during Monday's Banquet of Champions

By **SETH STASKEY**
For the News-Register

The Ohio Valley Athletic Conference is the largest high school sports conference in the United States.

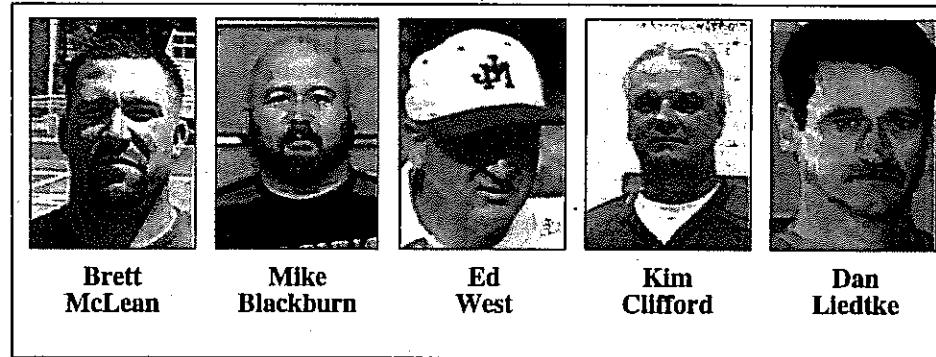
So, narrowing down more than 600 coaches to five and then to one to determine who will be named the Bill Van Horne OVAC Coach of the Year is a daunting task.

Ohio Valley media made its nominations and then last month the committee sat down to try to deter-

mine who would receive the 45th annual award during Monday's 28th annual OVAC Banquet of Champions at WesBanco Arena.

The winner will join an illustrious group of 37 different coaches who've received the award in the past. Wheeling Central football coach Mike Young won the award last year.

The award, which will be presented by retired Intelligencer Sports Editor Doug Huff, includes coaches from the spring of 2012



Brett McLean

Mike Blackburn

Ed West

Kim Clifford

Dan Liedtke

and the fall and winter of this school year.

The OVAC Coach of the Year Committee consists of Tom Rataiczak, Bob Koch, Ron Mauck, Don Zinni, Shawn Rine, John Howell,

Rob Metzger, Bubba Kapral, Jeff Harrison, Seth Staskey and Huff.

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

■ Mike Blackburn,

Steubenville Wrestling — The Big Red wrestling program has developed into one of the state of Ohio's most respected under the leadership of this coach.

For the second straight

year, Blackburn is a coach of the year finalist after guiding Steubenville to a most memorable season.

Steubenville finally got over the hump in the Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament and dethroned Parkersburg South for the overall title.

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Steubenville also claimed the OVAC 4A title in the dual tournament for the second straight season.

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Last week, West was

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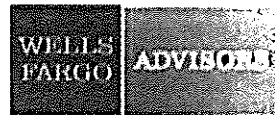
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