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OVAC BANQUET OF CHAMPIONS



STEUBENVILLE HEAD football coach Reno Saccoccia was named the OVAC/Bill Van Horne Coach of the Year during Monday night's OVAC Banquet inside WesBanco Arena in downtown Wheeling. He is pictured with his wife, Patty. T-L Photo/SETH STASKE

Steubenville's Saccoccia voted OVAC Coach of Year



T-L Photo/SETH STASKEY

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Steubenville's Saccoccia voted OVAC Coach of Year

By **BUBBA KAPRAL**
Executive Sports Editor

WHEELING - He is the Godfather of Ohio Valley football.

Reno Saccoccia is also the latest recipient of the OVAC/Bill Van Horne Coach of the Year Award. The venerable grid guru was bestowed that prestigious honor at Monday night's OVAC Banquet of Champions at WesBanco Arena.

It marks the fourth time Saccoccia has pocketed the illustrious award. It comes on the heels of the 68-year-old leading Steubenville High to its fourth state championship under his tutelage.

The Big Red finished with a 15-0 mark. The championship season was capped with a 50-36 triumph over Clinton-Massie in the Division IV title tilt.

Saccoccia was one of five finalists for the award. The remaining quartet included Scooter Tolzda (boys' basket-

"THERE'S NO to thank my parents for raising me with discipline so I can help instill that discipline in our players. I also want to thank my wife. We will be married 48 years in June. If I could change one thing it would be marrying her in seventh grade when I met her."

- Reno Saccoccia

ball) of Meadowbrook, Penn Kurtz (girls' basketball) and Mike Young (football), both of Wheeling Central, and Shaun Smith (wrestling) of Parkersburg South.

Smith was not in attendance at the banquet.

"I want to thank my administration for having faith in me, my coaches and players," Saccoccia said. "I want to thank my coaches and our players for having the trust in what we are doing. I also want to thank our parents for trusting us."

"I want to thank my parents for raising me with discipline so I can help instill that discipline in our players," he added. "I also want to thank my wife. We will be married 48 years in June. If I could change one thing it would be marrying her in the seventh grade when I met her."

Saccoccia graduated from Steubenville Catholic Central High School before playing football at the University of Akron. He gained his collegiate degree in 1971 and subsequently landed his first coaching job as an assistant at United Local High School, coached by Sam Fornsglio, another Steubenville Central product.

See, **SACCOCCIA**, Page B2

BOHREN'S STEUBENVILLE BIG
Red staff in 1977. In 1981,
Bob Hedmond took the Big
Red reins and named Sac-
coccia his defensive coordi-
nator.

Hedmond stepped down
after leading Steubenville
into its initial OHSAA
playoff foray. With the Big
Red football program head-
ing in the right direction
when Hedmond resigned it
opened the door for Saccoc-
cia to become the leader of
the Big Red.

In his first year as head
coach in 1983, Big Red
finished 10-0 and made
another trip to the playoffs,
which ended in a 13-0 first-
round loss to Youngstown
Ursuline. In 1984, howev-
er, the Big Red made their
mark in the Ohio playoffs
by winning the Division II
state championship via a
12-9 overtime victory over
Columbus Whitehall.

"I am more appreciative of

ing. It is very humbling and
a great honor," Saccoccia
said. "When you win an
award like this many people
are responsible. When you
consider how many coaches
there are in the OVAC it is
really special to receive this
award."

Steubenville has also cap-
tured state grid champi-
onships in 2005 and 2006
with Saccoccia at the helm.
His overall coaching record
with the Big Red is an
amazing 371-68 with 28
playoff appearances. In
addition to four state
crowns, he has guided Big
Red to 18 regional titles to
go with five state runner-up
trophies.

Saccoccia ranks 16th in
career wins among active
U.S. coaches and 32nd all-
time.

Reno is married to the for-
mer Patty McGinnis of
Steubenville. They have
three children.

SPORTS

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Sunday,
May 13, 2018

OVAC COY finalists named

• Winner will be named during Monday's Banquet of Champions

By **SETH STASKEY**
Times Leader Sports Editor

WHEELING — The number of impressive coaching jobs put forth during the course of the school year in the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference is far greater than the number of spots on the OVAC Coach of the Year finalist listing.

Considering the spring of 2017 and fall and winter of the current school year, the OVAC Coach of the Year committee was faced with a difficult task of whittling down the candidates to five finalists.

The annual OVAC Bill Van Horne Coach of the Year award is the crown jewel of individual accolades a coach can earn in the Ohio Valley.

The winner of the award will be announced Monday evening at the annual OVAC Banquet of Champions at West-Banco Arena.

The five finalists for the award are Penn Kurtz (Wheeling Central girls basketball), Reno Saccoccia (Steubenville football), Shaun Smith (South wrestling), Lou "Scooter" Tolzda (Meadowbrook basketball) and Mike Young (Wheeling Central football).



PENN
KURTZ



RENO
SACCOCCIA



SHAUN
SMITH



LOU
TOLZDA



MIKE
YOUNG

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

PENN KURTZ, Wheeling Central — Wheeling Central has long been considered one of the perennial powers of West Virginia small-school basketball.

This veteran head coach and his team totally re-affirmed the notion this winter when they won the Class A title and finished with an impressive 26-2 record.

It wasn't the fact that Central won the title, per se. Who it went through to claim the crown was what really turned some heads. In the state championship game, the Maroon Knights took down powerful Huntington St. Joseph, which had won

eight of the last nine crowns and hadn't lost to a team from the Mountain State all season.

For Kurtz, it was his third state title and 10th trip to the title game in his 25-year career at the helm.

Prior to the West Virginia postseason the Maroon Knights knocked off For Frye and top-seeded Bellaire to win the OVAC Class 3A title.

RENO SACCOCCIA, Steubenville — For most schools, winning an Ohio state championship is like an impossible dream. Steubenville's football program isn't like most schools.

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• OVAC

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This veteran head coach, who has won this award three times previously, guided Big Red to their third consecutive Division IV state title game, but this time Steubenville brought it home. Big Red completed its third 15-0 season when they knocked off Clarksville Clinton-Massie, 50-36, in the title game at Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium in Canton.

For Steubenville, that was its ninth trip to the title game in Saccoccia's 34 seasons. Big Red knocked off Salem, Youngstown Cardinal Mooney, Perry and Shelby.

Saccoccia was the Eastern District Division IV Coach of the Year.

SHAUN SMITH, Parkersburg South -- The Patriots' wrestling juggernaut kept rolling this season and this third-year head coach was at the controls as South claimed its 22nd West Virginia State AAA Wrestling Championship.

The Patriots, who finished nationally ranked, produced six individual state champions en route to their third consecutive title and also established a new record for team points with 288 points. Prior to the state tournament, South won the regional title.

Smith guided South to yet another overall title at the Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament and also the conference championship in the Bill Hinegardner OVAC Dual Tournament. At the tournament in January, South produced five individual champions.

South also finished 11th in the nationally recognized Ironman Tournament and produced two nationally ranked individuals in Braxton Amos and Josh Humphreys.

LOU "Scooter" TOZDA, Meadowbrook -- It was quite the season for the

Colts basketball team and this second-year coach was crucial in the team's success.

Tolzda surpassed the the 400-career win mark during the course of the season, but it was the team accomplishments that made him really happy. Meadowbrook finished 22-7 and advanced to the Division II State Tournament for the first time in school history.

There, it lost to Trotwood-Madison. En route to Columbus, the Colts knocked off powerful Zanesville, which they had lost two during the course of the season.

Despite losing four starters to graduation in 2017, this was the second straight season that Meadowbrook advanced to the regional tournament in Athens. The Colts began their late-season charge by winning the OVAC Class 4A title for the third straight year.

MIKE YOUNG, Wheeling Central -- It was quite the roller coaster ride for this veteran head coach and his Maroon Knights, but the ride finished on top of the West Virginia Class A mountain.

Just months after being -- in essence -- fired from his position as head coach and then re-hired after a public outcry, Young was back on the sidelines. He then watched his team limp out of the gate at 0-2.

However, the season was by no means over. Central finished the regular season with a 6-4 record, but that was good enough to qualify for the postseason as a 10th seed.

Central opened with a playoff victory at Cameron and basically never looked back. It rolled to the Super Six at Wheeling Island Stadium where it hammered St. Marys, 40-21, for the 10th football crown in school history.