

SPORTS

Friday,
May 29, 2020



TORONTO HEAD baseball coach Brian Perkins (right) accepts the OVAC Bill Van Horne Coach of the Year plaque from OVAC Executive Director Dirk DeCoy. Perkins becomes the second Toronto head coach to win the award after he guided the Red Knights to the Division IV state baseball championship in 2019.

T-L Photo/SETH STASKEY

COVID-19 could sack Davis for summer

• Standout QB vows to play somewhere

By **KIM NORTH**
Times Leader Sports Writer

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — The global COVID-19 pandemic could possibly do something that not many defensive players have done in Nate Davis's football career. For nearly a decade, Davis, a former 5th round draft pick of the San Francisco 49ers after a standout career at Ball State University, has quarterbacked a team somewhere indoors. However, that streak is in jeopardy at the present.

After seven years with the Amarillo Venom in several different leagues, the latest being the Champions Indoor Football in 2019, the strong-armed Davis took his talents to Duke City, which had left the CIF for the Indoor American Football League (IFL) this season. The IFL was formed in 2008 in a merger between the Intense and United football leagues.



Due to the concerns surrounding the pandemic, the 13-team league ceased operations for the 2020 season on April 13, leaving a multitude of talented players like Davis with not many options.

Davis was the CIF Most Valuable Player and Offensive Player of the Year last season when he passed for a CIF-leading 3,238 yards and an eye-popping 73 touchdowns (2nd was 54) while completing nearly 65 percent (63.9) of his passes (292-457) in 12 games. He also led the league in yards passing per game with 269.8 (2nd was 227.4).

"I'm going to play somewhere. Be it in Wheeling with the (West Virginia) Roughriders or back in the CIF (with Amarillo)," he said over the Memorial Day weekend while visiting family and friends in the Ohio Valley. "There are plenty of teams that want me to play for them."

Although Davis has not had any talks with the Roughriders, he said he would welcome the opportunity.

See, **DAVIS**, Page B2

Toronto's Perkins named OVAC Coach of the Year

• Guided Red Knights to 2019 Ohio D-4 baseball championship

By **SETH STASKEY**
Times Leader Sports Editor

TORONTO — Brian Perkins etched his name into illustrious company last June when he led the Toronto baseball team to the Division IV state baseball championship.

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"If it wasn't for our players, coaches, support of the administration at Toronto City Schools and the community, I wouldn't be standing here," Perkins said. "I accept this on behalf of all of them. What an honor! I really appreciate it."

Perkins joins Rich Wilinski, who was the 1975 winner, as the only Toronto head coaches to receive the award and becomes just the fourth baseball coach in OVAC history to receive the accolade. He's the first since Harrison Central's Justin Clifford in 2014.

The state championship was the first for Toronto since 1998. Now, almost a full year removed from receiving the trophy, Perkins called it a "unique" year.

Much of that stems from the fact that the Red Knights will have to wait until

2021 to get a chance to defend their title after this year's season was canceled due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

"We've had a lot of great memories to look back on," Perkins said. "It was a special group of players and coaches that made this quite a memory for us."

The Red Knights, who finished 28-5 last season climbed to the top of the state's baseball mountain by virtue of a 3-1 victory against Hillsdale in the state championship game. That came a day after they blanked Antwerp, 8-0, in the semifinals.

Impressive wins over Strasburg (district championship), Chillicothe Huntington (regional semifinal) and Newark Catholic (regional championship) earned Toronto the right to play at Akron's Canal Park.

See, **OVAC**, Page B2

Browns stay interested in Clowney while building solid line

CLEVELAND (AP) — Myles Garrett on one end. Jadeveon Clowney on the other.

Just the thought of it elicited a quick smile from new Browns coordinator Joe Woods, who oversaw a star-studded defensive front in San Francisco and could have a similar one in Cleveland.

The Browns remain interested in Clowney, the talented defensive end — and the No. 1 overall draft pick in 2014 — who remains unsigned and the top current target on the free agent market.

During a Zoom meeting with reporters on Thursday, Woods praised Clowney but deferred any questions about the Browns' pursuit of the speedy edge rusher to general manager Andrew Berry.

"Obviously, he has been a really good player in this league, a great pass rusher when he was in Houston, in Seattle," Woods said.

"Just really affects the game. To be honest with you, that is really a question you have to ask Andrew. I read the articles, too. I see him linked to us, Tennessee and see all these teams.

"Really, right now, I am really focused on coaching the guys we have."

Clowney spent last year with Seattle, which ac-

the season. It's possible the 27-year-old, who had a career-high 9 1/2 sacks with the Texans in 2017, could stay in the Pacific Northwest and re-sign with the Seahawks.

However, the possibility of him as a bookend on a Cleveland line opposite Garrett, the No. 1 overall pick in 2017, has caused some of the Browns' barking fans to salivate.

Berry has been consistent in saying he'll stay aggressive to bolster Cleveland's roster.

It's just fantasy football at this point. But until Clowney, who reportedly turned down an offer from the Browns already, decides what he wants to do, it's still in play.

Woods knows something about dominant defensive lines. The 49ers had one of the league's best last season as Nick Bosa, DeForest Buckner, Arik Armstead, Solomon Thomas and Co. wreaked havoc on opposing lines and quarterbacks. The group had 48 sacks.

Woods said it took time for the unit to jell. But once the players figured out they were better collectively, egos were put aside and they never looked back.



IN THIS Nov. 11, 2019, file photo, Seattle Seahawks defensive end Jadeveon Clowney (90) applies pressure to San Francisco 49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo (10) during a game in Santa Clara, Calif. Cleveland is interested in Clowney.

Boras to clients in memo: Don't bail out MLB owners

NEW YORK (AP) — Agent Scott Boras recommends his clients refuse Major League Baseball's attempt to cut salaries during negotiations with the players' association, claiming team financial issues caused by the coronavirus pandemic have their origin in management debt financing.

In an email obtained by The Associated Press, Boras wrote that players should not alter terms of the March 26 agreement between MLB and the union that called for players to reduce their salaries to a prorated rate based on a shortened season. MLB on Tuesday proposed a series of tiered reductions that would cause top stars to receive the biggest cuts.

"Remember, games cannot be played without you," Boras wrote. "Players should not agree to further pay cuts to bail out the owners. Let owners take some of their record revenues and profits from the past several years and pay you the prorated salaries you agreed to accept or let them borrow against the asset values they created from the use of those profits players generated."

Boras is baseball's best-known agent and represented 71 players on active rosters and injured lists as of Aug. 31, the most among player representative firms. His Newport Beach, California-based company negotiated more than \$1.2 billion in contracts during the offseason.

Salaries were set to range from \$563,500 for players at the major league minimum to \$36 million for Mike Trout and Gerrit Cole,

the latter a Boras client. Under the March agreement, the range would be cut to roughly \$285,000 to \$18 million for the 82-game regular season MLB has proposed. Under the economic proposal made by MLB this week, the range would be reduced to about \$262,000 to \$8 million, including shares of a bonus all players would receive if the postseason is played.

"Owners are asking for more salary cuts to bail them out of the investment decisions they have made," Boras said. "If this was just about baseball, playing games would give the owners enough money to pay the players their full prorated salaries and run the baseball organization. The owners' current problem is a result of the money they borrowed when they purchased their franchises, renovated their stadiums or developed land around their ballparks. This type of financing is allowed and encouraged by MLB because it has resulted in significant franchise valuations."

"Owners now want players to take additional pay cuts to help them pay these loans. They want a bailout," he added.

"They are not offering players a share of the stadiums, ballpark villages or the club itself, even though salary reductions would help owners pay for these valuable franchise assets."

"These billionaires want the money for free. No bank would do that. Banks demand loans be repaid with interest. Players should be entitled to the same respect."

• Browns

Continued from Page B1

"You have a bunch of alpha dogs out there and they all want to be the guy," Woods said.

"What they learned in San Francisco, and I think the guys here will learn, is that if you all work together, everybody is going to eat. That is what you want. You do not want anybody going hungry, right? You want everybody to eat."

Cleveland's defensive front under-performed last season, and that was even before Garrett was suspended for the final six games for his helmet-swinging attack on Steelers quarterback Mason Rudolph.

Berry addressed the line

in free agency by signing former Bengals tackle Andrew Billings and ex-Falcons end Adrian Clayborn. In the draft, Cleveland added Missouri standout Jordan Elliott, who will provide some needed inside depth.

If the Browns sign Clowney, it could mean they'd move on from Olivier Vernon, a Pro Bowler in 2018 with the Giants whose first season with Cleveland was slowed by a knee injury. Vernon seemed to be settling in when he got hurt, and now the Browns have to gauge his long-term value with the 29-year-old scheduled to make \$15 million this season.

His future has been a constant source of speculation this offseason, but Woods said he's been impressed by Vernon's dedication.

"All of my conversations have been good with him," Woods said. "I get on the phone and talk to him personally. He is ready to go. We just had an honest conversation, and he has been great. He is 100 percent attendance; in all the meetings, he has been there and he is speaking up. I just think for him, he really wants to just come back this year, play healthy and just show everybody what he is capable of doing. So far, he has been great."

• NHL

Continued from Page B1

The Canucks are in the same boat as the NHL, which is in no rush to choose among the 10 finalists: Las Vegas, Columbus, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Dallas, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Los Angeles, Toronto, Vancouver and Edmonton. It will in the next few weeks select two or three to host Eastern and Western Conference brackets and then the Stanley Cup Final by factoring in government regulations, the frequency of COVID-19 in the community and availability of testing.

The league told GMs on Tuesday to plan for a roster of 28 skaters and unlimited goaltenders for training camps that won't begin before early July and games without fans several weeks later. Each team will have a personnel cap of 50 in the city where games are played, though the Montreal Canadiens could be without one of their top players.

Before the NHL commits to where games could be held, officials are planning for multiple scenarios. Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly is engaged in regular dialogue with the U.S. and Canadian governments and medical experts to determine what the health and safety landscape might look like this summer.

Beyond the abundance of hotels and sparkling new rink the Las Vegas Strip can

offer, the arena district in Columbus could serve as an effective bubble for the NHL.

"Whether it's from the building or the facilities surrounding the building to accommodate hotel rooms, meals — whatever it needs to be, we've covered it," Blue Jackets GM Jarmo Kekalainen said. "Also the state of Ohio is in pretty good shape as far as flattening the curve and providing a safe environment that way. The transportation is easy if needed between facilities in Columbus, and we have a lot of rink facilities that we can use for the amount of teams that would be in the tournament."

There wouldn't be much of a home-ice advantage without fans, and the league is considering moving the "home" team to the other city. But that isn't stopping NHL executives from pitching the ability to host playoff games.

"We have a state of the art facility in Cranberry, the Lemieux Center, and the medical center attached and we have plenty of hotels and everything like that," Pittsburgh Penguins GM Jim Rutherford said. "We meet the criteria but we understand there's other cities that do, also."

The two biggest surprises on the NHL's list were Chicago and Los Angeles.

• Davis

Continued from Page B1

"Who wouldn't want to play, basically, in their hometown?" the Bellaire native said.

According to the National Arena League (NAL) website, a mid-June date for re-starting the league has been looked at. However, nothing has been made official.

Davis was excited to have a chance to play with the Gladiators, who had won back-to-back CIF championships before leaving for the IFL.

"With everything was go-

ing on around the country I knew we weren't going to play this summer," he said of the IFL's announcement. "But it's life. You've got to live life to the fullest and work through adversity."

In addition to Duke City, other teams comprising the IFL were the Arizona Rattlers; Oakland (Cal.) Panthers; Bismarck (N.D.) Bucks; Quad City (Moline, Ill.) Steamwheelers; Cedar Rapids (Iowa) River Kings; the San Diego Strike Force; the defending champion Sioux Falls (S.D.) Storm;

the Frisco (Tx.) Fighters; Spokane (Wash.) Shock; Green Bay (Wis.) Blizzard; Tucson (Az.) Sugar Skulls; and Iowa (Des Moines) Barnstormers.

The IFL will add a 14th team next summer when Columbus (Oh.) fields a team. Former Ohio State University wide receiver Bobby Olive was named the head coach.

The team, whose nickname has not been announced, will play its home games inside Nationwide Arena.

• OVAC

Continued from Page B1

Toronto also claimed its ninth OVAC title with a 4-0 victory over Wheeling Central. The championship is the sixth under Perkins' watch.

With their rings officially received during a banquet in late fall and now this award, Perkins officially sets his sights on the 2021 campaign.

"I told the guys that after Christmas break (2019), we were focusing on 2020 and what we accomplished in 2019 was in the past," Perkins said. "Unfortunately, the COVID-19 happened and now we'll offi-

cially close it and begin working on 2021."

In his 16 seasons at the helm, Perkins has amassed a 329-86-1 record. He also led the Red Knights to the 'Final Four' in 2017.

Perkins also pointed out the support of his family, including wife Jamie, son Zach (19) and daughter, Camryn (13).

Other finalists for the award were Oak Glen football coach Ted Arneault Jr., Oak Glen volleyball coach Morgan Polling, Fort Frye girls basketball coach Dan Liedtke and Meadowbrook boys basketball coach Lou "Scooter" Tolzda.



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Perkins Selected OVAC Coach of the Year

By SETH STASKEY
 For The Intelligencer

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(Please see PERKINS, Page 12)



Photo by Seth Staskey

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AP File Photo

In this April 15, 2019 file photo, the elite men break from the start of the 123rd Boston Marathon in Hopkinton, Mass. The 2020 Boston Marathon, which was rescheduled to run on Sept. 14th, was canceled Thursday for the first time in its 124-year history due to the COVID-19 virus outbreak.

Boston Marathon Canceled For 1st time in 124-Year History

By JIMMY GOLEN
 AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Organizers canceled the Boston Marathon on Thursday for the first time in its history, bowing to the social distancing requirements of the coronavirus outbreak and ending a 124-year run that had persisted through two World Wars, a volcanic eruption and even another pandemic.

The race, which draws a field of 30,000 and already had been postponed from April 20 to Sept. 14, will be replaced by a virtual event in which participants who verify that they ran 26.2 miles on their own will receive their finisher's medal.

"It became clear as this crisis developed that Sept. 14 was less and less plausible," Mayor Marty Walsh said at

a news conference outside City Hall, where runners traditionally gather for a pre-race pasta dinner.

"This is a challenge, but meeting tough challenges is what the Boston Marathon is all about," Walsh said, invoking the response to the finish line bombings seven years ago.

(Please see BOSTON, Page 12)

NFL Coaches Could Return To Team Facilities Next Week

By BARRY WILNER
 AP Pro Football Writer

(AP) — NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell is hopeful that coaches will be able to return to their team facilities by next week.

Goodell said Thursday following an owners conference call that the virtual offseason is being extended for two more weeks. In

a memo sent to the 32 teams and obtained by The Associated Press, he outlined the next phase of reopening of club facilities, which can begin Monday.



GOODELL

"We expect that next week clubs will be permitted to include members of their coaching staffs among the employees permitted to resume work in the club facility," Goodell wrote. "We are actively working with governors and other state and local authorities in those states that have not yet announced definitive plans and will confirm the precise date on which coaches can return to the facility as soon as possible."

Ticket offices, retail shops and other "customer-facing facilities" that comply with state and local regulation can open, with employees counting in the current maximum number of employees (no more than 50 percent of staff not to exceed 75 persons) allowed.

(Please see NFL, Page 12)

Boras to Clients in Memo:



PERKINS

(Continued from Page 11)

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BOSTON

(Continued from Page 11)

"It's a symbol of our city's and our commonwealth's resilience. So it's incumbent upon all of us to dig deep, like a marathon runner, like we did in 2013, and keep that spirit alive."

Although the title of Boston Marathon champion is contested by a few dozen elite athletes, the field includes more than 30,000 recreational and charity runners, with as many as 1 million people lined up along the course trek from Hopkinton to Boston's Back Bay. That presented organizers with a social distancing problem that won't be solved by the fall.

"There's no way to hold this usual race format without bringing large numbers of people into close proximity," Walsh said. "While our goal and our hope was to make progress in containing the virus and recovering our economy, this kind of event would not be responsible or realistic on Sept. 14 or any time this year."

The longest-running annual marathon in the world, the Boston Marathon began in 1897 when 15 men drew a starting line in the dirt in Ashland and headed for the city to commemorate the first modern Olympic Games the previous year. In 1918,

the format was modified to a relay due to World War I; the 2013 race was stopped when two bombs exploded at the finish line, several hours after the winners had finished but while many recreational runners were still on the course.

Boston Athletic Association CEO Tom Grilk said the race also had to adjust when temperatures along the course approached 90 degrees Fahrenheit in 2012; ten years ago, ash from a volcanic eruption in Iceland grounded air travel and prevented many European runners from coming to Boston.

"There is a pretty rich history of accommodation and addressing reality. This is this year's reality," Grilk said.

"The spirit of Boston and the spirit of the Boston Marathon is to be strong and to be smart. When necessity drives you in a direction you might not have liked, you need to have the strength, the wisdom and the guidance from public officials to do what's right."

The race was scheduled in April on the state holiday to commemorate the battles in Lexington and Concord that marked the start of the Revolutionary War. Traditionally, the Red Sox have

scheduled their first pitch for that morning so baseball fans could wander over to Kenmore Square after the game to see the runners pass by with one mile to go.

In announcing postponement in March, Walsh cited the desire to salvage the estimated \$211 million pumped into the city's economy each year. The B.A.A. and marathon runners also raise about \$40 million for charity.

The B.A.A. said those who paid the entry fee for this year's race can get their money back. They will also have a chance to participate in the virtual marathon, which they can run between Sept. 7-14. A downloadable "virtual toolkit" will include a printable finish line and winner's tape.

Those who provide proof of a finish in less than 6 hours will receive a program, T-shirt, medal and runner's bib.

The Sept. 12 B.A.A. 5K also was canceled.

Qualifying times for this year's race will be eligible for the 2021 Boston Marathon, which is scheduled for April 19.

The 125th anniversary edition is scheduled for April 18, 2022.

NFL

(Continued from Page 11)

As for allowing players to return other than those undergoing rehab who currently are allowed at team complexes, Goodell added: "We are also continuing to work with the NFLPA on developing protocols that will allow at least some players to return to your facilities on a limited basis prior to the conclusion of the off-season program."

NFL owners tabled a proposal that would have offered a fourth-and-15 play as an alternative to the onside kick. They approved testing expanded use of video replay in the preseason to aid in officiating.

Atlanta Falcons President Rich McKay said there were more clubs receptive to the onside kick alternative than in the past and it will be further explored.

"There were lots of really good questions about the impact and nuances" such a change would involve, McKay said. "This was the longest discussion, I imagine 20 to 30 minutes on that. We ended up tabling it after taking a pulse where teams stood on it. We'll bring it back at some point."

The 32 owners also increased the number of players who may be designated for return from

the injured list during a season from two to three.

Also passed was making permanent the expansion of automatic replay reviews to include scoring plays and turnovers negated by a foul, and any successful or unsuccessful extra points.

The competition committee's recommendation to expand defenseless player protection to a kickoff or punt returner who is in possession of the ball but has not had time to avoid or ward off contact of an opponent also was approved. McKay said such incidents on punt returns were rare but "there were enough that

gave us concern."

Another approved recommendation stops teams from manipulating the game clock by committing multiple dead-ball fouls while the clock is running - an issue that came up several times in 2019, including during the postseason. Using video replay for pass interference calls was dropped after a one-year experiment that led to more uncertainty than clarity.

Tabled was a proposal to have a booth judge serve as an eighth official on each crew and call for reviews on certain plays. The league will experiment with additional

review options during the preseason as requested by the referee to the replay assistant.

"What we thought we could do in the preseason, this test allows for the ref to have communication with the replay assistant," McKay explained. "We have always allowed that communication, and now there are more areas given them to seek consultation. We always liked that idea."

The preseason is scheduled to begin on Aug. 6 with the Pro Football Hall of Fame game between Pittsburgh and Dallas. It's an uncertainty because of the pandemic.

BORAS

(Continued from Page 1.)

"The owners' current problem is a result of the money they borrowed when they purchased their franchises, renovated their stadiums or developed land around their ballparks.

"This type of financing is allowed and encouraged by MLB because it has resulted in significant franchise valuations."

"Owners now want players to take additional pay cuts to help them pay these loans. They want a bailout," he added.

"They are not offering players a share of the stadiums, ballpark villages or the club itself, even though salary reductions would help owners pay for these valuable franchise assets. These billionaires want the money for free. No bank would do that. Banks demand loans be repaid with interest. Players should be entitled to the same respect."

Commissioner Rob Manfred has said 40% of MLB's revenue is related to the gate.

Teams told the union on May 12 that MLB would lose \$640,000 for each game played in empty ballparks without fans. Major League Baseball claimed that playing with prorated salaries in empty ballparks would cause a \$4 billion loss and give major league players 89% of revenue.

Washington pitcher Max Scherzer, among three Boras clients on the union's eight-man executive subcommittee, issued a statement late Wednesday night saying "there's no need to engage with MLB in any further compensation reductions."

PLANS

(Continued from Page 11)

The clubs agreed Thursday that the competition should resume with a Wednesday night doubleheader featuring Manchester City playing

Arsenal and Aston Villa hosting Sheffield United - two games that were postponed during earlier rounds. However, the league still needs formal

approval from the government as lockdown measures are eased.

"This date cannot be confirmed until we have met all the safety require-

ments needed," Premier League chief executive Richard Masters said, "as the health and welfare of all participants and supporters is our priority."

After those makeup games are played, the 30th round will start on Friday, June 19 at 8 p.m. - if authorities approve

safety plans. The government has been keen on bringing back sports, this week approving contact training between large groups of players.

"Positive to see further steps on the return of the football today," Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden tweeted.

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MILLER'S TIN SHOP

SPORTS

Sunday,
May 24, 2020



Bubba Kapral
Executive Sports Editor

Baseball talent sparkled on prep diamonds

WHEELING - A week ago we showcased many of the best prep baseball teams in the Ohio Valley.

Now the spotlight shines on the premier diamond players as submitted by our readers. Just as with the teams, unfortunately some prep standouts may fall through the cracks while others have been chronicled as members of the best teams.

The best-player nominations dwarfed those in the team category. With that said, we could not go into much detail on the respective players.

Here we go, school by school, in no specific order.

BROOKE: The Bruins' 1973 state title team featured two stalwarts in Joe Pettini and Mark Schwertfeger. Pettini went on to star at Mercer before being drafted by the Montreal Expos. He was traded to San Francisco, where he played four years. Schwertfeger was simply dominant on the mound. Larry Gryskevich, a 1984 grad, set a state record as a senior with 14 homers. He was drafted by the Pirates after high school while also receiving a D-I scholarship to Oral Roberts. Bill Billick was another Bruin nominated from their 1980s.

PADEN CITY: Todd Neff was a former state player of year who went on to play at WVU.

BRIDGEPORT: The Bulldogs have some no-brainers with the Niekro Brothers. Phil and Joe own the record for most Major League Baseball pitching wins by a set of brothers. The Dogs' diamond talent doesn't stop there as John Blatnik and Stan Goletz were great players. Gary Knight Sr., Jim Tomolonis, David Stazenski and Dave Mroczkowski were four more Bridgeport all-staters.

ST. JOHN CENTRAL - The Fighting Irish baseball luminaries start with Joe Yazombek. The talented catcher starred at Marietta College where he was named MVP in the Division III College World Series. Other Green diamond gems included Pat Staley, Mike Kolvek, Bob Voytecek, Tim Misencik, Billy Timko, basketball star Dick Reasbeck, Eric Petho and Will Souillard.

MEADOWBROOK: Troy Aleshire. **MINGO:** OVAC Hall of Famer Ron Sismondo pitched in College World Series for Arizona before embarking on a pro career.

SHENANDOAH: Jed Stephen starred for Ohio State and is an OVAC Hall of Famer.

WOODSFIELD: "Sad" Sam Jones scripted a sparkling Major League Baseball career, pitching for seven teams, starting with the Indians. He recorded more than 100 mound wins while leading the National League in wins on two occasions and strikeouts three times. While with the Cubs, he spun a no-hitter against the Pirates in 1955.

MARTINS FERRY: Doug Swearingen and Keith Vrotsos were lone Purple Riders brought to the table. Swearingen, a talented southpaw, enjoyed a stellar career on the Ohio State mound before pitching professionally. Vrotsos, meanwhile, went on to star at Ohio University. Both are OVAC Hall of Famers.

SKYVUE: Another no-brainer. Mitch Hannahs is a Golden Hawks' legend who went onto star at Indiana State where he now serves as head coach. Hannahs is an OVAC and Indiana State Hall of Famer.

EAST LIVERPOOL - Bernie Allen tops all Potter players. He enjoyed a successful 12-year major league career, mainly with the Senators and Twins.

BUCKEYE TRAIL - Chris Starr starred on the mound for the Warriors, landing him a scholarship to the University of Michigan. He is an OVAC Hall of Famer.

RIVER: Three Pilots were nominated, highlighted by the Rose brothers. Kyle hit .500 as a senior before heading off to Mercer. Younger brother, Casey, hit at a .450 clip as a senior. Marty Ramsay hit .460 as a senior.

OVAC Coach of the year finalists set

By **SETH STASKEY**
Times Leader Sports Editor

And then there were five.

That is all that remains in the quest to be named the 2020 OVAC Coach of the Year, which will be presented Thursday as part of the virtual OVAC Banquet of Champions.

The Coach of the Year Award, which has been given annually since 1969, recognizes the fall and winter seasons from the 2019-20 school year and the spring of 2019.

The finalists for the award are Oak Glen football coach Ted Arneault Jr., Fort Frye girls basketball coach Dan Liedtke, Toronto baseball coach Brian Perkins, Oak Glen volleyball coach Morgan Poling and Meadowbrook boys basketball coach Lou "Scooter" Tolzda.



ARNEAULT



LIEDTKE



PERKINS



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The Golden Bears began to turn heads when they hit the mid-way point of the season at 5-0. It was the first time they'd ever

See, OVAC, Page D2



Photo Provided

PLAYERS FROM the St. Clairsville American Legion Post 159 baseball team have been honoring veterans in Belmont County for the past 5-plus years by placing American flags on their graves. Pictured from left are, Dakota Hess, Mason VanNest, Drake Dobson, Will Balgo, Jake Probst and Colby Shriver, who spent some time recently placing flags at Belmont Memorial Park.

Post 159 baseball pays respect

By **KIM NORTH**
Times Leader Sports Writer

ST. CLAIRSVILLE - Memorial Day is all about remembering those that gave their lives so that we can have our freedom.

Even though St. Clairsville Post 159 won't be playing American Legion baseball this summer due to the lasting concerns surrounding the global COVID-19 pandemic, members of the would-be Post 159 team spent the some time recently placing flags at the final resting spots of Belmont County veterans at Belmont Memorial Park on County Road 214 at the top of Blaine Hill.

"For the past five-plus years the team and coaches have carried on this tradition," St. Clairsville manager Mike Muklewicz

"... WE may be piecing together an unofficial season, we will always officially support the veterans of Post 159 and beyond (on) Memorial Day."

- Mike Muklewicz
St. Clairsville Post 159 Baseball Head Coach

said. "While we may be piecing together an unofficial season, we will always officially support the veterans of Post 159 and beyond (on) Memorial Day. I have always felt this is an important thing to do with the kids and I hope seeing me right out there with them placing these flags sets the right example for how much we should appreciate the sacrifice of our veterans.

"These are the guys that American Legion Baseball represents and it adds a spe-

cial element to a game we all love."

In addition to Muklewicz, the players participating were Dakota Hess, Mason VanNest, Drake Dobson, Will Balgo, Jake Probst and Colby Shriver.

"I made a joke to the kids while we were there about the biggest things they have to worry about right now is being stuck in the house or Xbox Live going down," he joked. "These guys (the veterans) were being put on planes and boats to go engage in combat. It really puts things in perspective when you think about it that way. Everything we enjoy has been fought for and protected by these guys - this is our way of thanking them on Memorial Day each year."

MARTINS FERRY running back Trevor Hanson looks to break a tackle of a Linsly defender during last season's game at Purple Rider Stadium. The Riders missed the playoffs last season, finishing ninth, but the OHSAA has announced its plan to expand the football tournament field in 2021 to include the top 12 finishers in each region.



Steubenville Legion to play independently this summer

By **KIM NORTH**
Times Leader Sports Writer

STEUBENVILLE - Although American Legion baseball has been sidelined for the summer, on both the national and state levels due to the global COVID-19 epidemic, there will be 'independent' baseball played in Jefferson County in 2020.

NBA says it is talking with Disney about resuming season

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

The NBA is in talks with The Walt Disney Company on a single-site scenario for a resumption of play in Central Florida in late July, the clearest sign yet that the league believes the season can continue amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The National Basketball Players Association is also part of the talks with Disney. Games would be held at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex, a massive cam-

pus on the Disney property near Orlando.

NBA spokesman Mike Bass said the conversations were still "exploratory," and that the site would be used not only for games but for practices and housing as well.

"Our priority continues to be the health and safety of all involved, and we are working with public health experts and government officials on a comprehensive set of guidelines to ensure that appropriate medical protocols and protections are in place," Bass said.

The ESPN Wide World of Sports Com-

plex is a 255-acre campus with multiple arenas that could host games simultaneously and has been home to, among other things, the Jr. NBA World Championship in recent years. ESPN is primarily owned by Disney, one of the NBA's broadcast partners.

Space won't be an issue, even if Major League Soccer — which is also in talks to resume its season at Disney — is there at the same time as the NBA.

The entire Disney complex is roughly 40 square miles, with nearly 24,000 hotel

rooms owned or operated by Disney within the campus.

The NBA suspended its season March 11, becoming the first of the U.S. major pro leagues to do so after it became known that All-Star center Rudy Gobert of the Utah Jazz tested positive for COVID-19. The list of NBA players who were known to test positive eventually grew to 10 — not all were identified — and Commissioner Adam Silver said last month that the actual total was even higher.

• Steubenville

Continued from Page D1

have really stepped up to the plate and helped us out tremendously," he acknowledged. "Without their support, we would not be able to do this."

Uniforms will not have any affiliation with legion baseball.

Pierro said the 19U and 18U teams will probably get a few more games this summer than the 16U just because of the amount of kids.

"I think we've got about 30-40 games scheduled," he added. "That will vary with the weather and everything."

Pierro said the teams will abide by health and safety guidelines set forth by Gov. Mike DeWine.

"Our goal is the same as it has always been. We're trying to get the best options of playing as many games as

possible," he said. "We want to make kids better for college."

According to the manager, the 19U team has a good nucleus of talented players returning.

"We were looking for another good summer. We've got close to 10 kids returning that were at the college level last year."

He hopes to be playing by June 7.

• Football

Continued from Page D1

"This gives more kids the opportunity to play playoff football, and, at the end of the day, we have to do what's best for the kids. I think the OHSAA has done that."

The race to be in the top four will be important because should a team seeded five through 12 in a region advance to the state championship game, it would be playing in its 16th consecutive week, which not even NFL teams are asked to do.

One additional change to the current Ohio football format will involve the calendar. The season's starting week will be moved up a week because the state championship games will still be contested during the first weekend in December.

If this format had been in place for the 2019 campaign, seven more OVAC teams would have qualified. Included are Martins Ferry, River, Buckeye Trail, Frontier, Conotton Valley, Cambridge and Meadowbrook.

The Purple Riders were playing some of their best football at the end of the season, but finished ninth in the region despite a win against Bellaire in Week 10.

Ferry won its final three games of the season to finish 6-4, but were eight tenths of a point out of the postseason.

"I was originally against (expanding the playoffs)," Ferry head coach Chas Yoder said. "After thinking about it, I think it's a good thing because it gives more teams that previously would have been on the bubble an opportunity to make a run in the playoffs. It would have helped us last year. We struggled against some really good teams (early in the year), but in the second half of the season, I thought we were a playoff-caliber team."

River, meanwhile, found itself on the bubble for the second straight season, waiting for the final scores of Week's 10 Saturday schedule to trickle in before knowing its fate.

In the end, the Pilots finished 6-4 and finished ninth in the region.

"(The expansion) allows teams that play a competitive schedule throughout the season an opportunity to now make the playoffs," River head coach Mike Flannery said. "I know several coaches don't like the bye, but personally, I do. It rewards those top four teams and in small schools it helps with the injury protocol."

Buckeye Trail would have been an 11-seed in Division VI, Region 21 in 2019 after finishing with a 7-3 record. Two of the three Warriors' losses came to playoff opponents.

"I think the expansion takes a lot of pressure off the athletic directors because so many schools are driving two and three hours to avoid good teams 30 minutes down the road," Kerns said. "Now, you can lose a couple and still make the playoffs."

• OVAC

Continued from Page D1

posted such a mark. Thus, each win thereafter was a milestone.

In the playoffs, Oak Glen cruised past Wyoming East (55-13) and then fought off Poca for a 25-20 victory.

After back-to-back 2-8 campaigns, the Golden Bears posted a 5-5 season in 2018 and totally broke through last season, winning the OVAC Class 4A title for the first time since 1965.

DAN LIEDTKE — This veteran Fort Frye girls basketball mentor was left to wonder what might have been.

After the Cadets won their second regional title to earn a trip to the Division IV 'Final Four' the coronavirus pandemic struck, leading to the postponement and eventual cancellation of the OHSAA's girls basketball state tournament. Actually, the Cadets were in Columbus and preparing for their semifinal game against Minster when the decision was made to suspend the event.

Prior to that, however, Fort Frye proved itself time and time again. Rolling to a 26-2 record, the Cadets claimed the OVAC Class 3A title by subduing then undefeated Union Local. They won the district championship with a hard-earned win over Monroe Central.

The Cadets will enter the 2020-21 campaign riding a 17-game winning streak.

Liedtke has led the Cadets' girls

program to six OVAC title and is now a four-time finalist for the OVAC's Coach of the Year award.

BRIAN PERKINS — Though this Toronto Red Knight baseball coach didn't get to coach a game this season because of the coronavirus, he had plenty of memories from 2019 to continue to savor.

Perkins has been the Red Knights' skipper for 16 seasons and amassed a 329-86-1 record. That 329th victory will be no one ever soon forgets because it came on Ohio prep baseball's biggest stage — the Division IV state championship game.

For the second time in school history, Toronto claimed the state baseball title thanks to a 3-1 win over Hillsdale at Akron's Canal Park.

En route to the brass ring, the Red Knights took down Strasburg for their fourth straight district title, Newark Catholic for the regional crown, which was their first since 2017. In the state semifinals, Toronto upended Antwerp, 8-0.

Before beginning the post-season run, Toronto won its ninth OVAC title with a 4-0 win over Wheeling Central. The title is the sixth under Perkins.

MORGAN POLING — Just six years removed from high school, this Oak Glen coach led the Golden Bears back to the top of the West Virginia Class AA volleyball mountain in

2019.

Capping a brilliant 38-0 campaign, Oak Glen rallied from two sets down to take down Shady Spring and win the state championship in Poling's first season at the helm.

The Golden Bears hoisted the top trophy thanks to 15-25, 23-25, 25-23, 25-17, 15-5 win.

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LOU "Scooter" TOLZDA — This veteran basketball coach had his Meadowbrook Colts playing as well as anyone and on their way to the Division II regional tournament when the coronavirus pandemic hit.

Suddenly, Tolzda and the Colts, who were just minutes from departing for Athens, found themselves sitting at 23-3 overall and riding a 15-game winning streak entering a 'Sweet 16' game with Logan Elm.

Tolzda, who was a finalist for this award in 2018 after guiding the Colts to the 'Final Four,' watched his team cruise past Tri-Valley for the district title.

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Because caring for mental health care needs is never cancelled.

During the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine, caring for the mental health needs of our community is more important than ever.

That's why The Village Network team continues to provide hope and healing for youth and families in crisis, and they are dedicated to caring for your mental health needs with an expanded telehealth counseling program.

**They've got your back.
And that's why we've got theirs.**

From competitive wages and benefits to safety precautions

SPORTS

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Sunday News-Register

MAY 24, 2020

Baseball Talent Sparkled On Prep Diamonds

WHEELING — A week ago we showcased many of the best prep baseball teams in the Ohio Valley.

Now the spotlight shines on the premier diamond players as submitted by our readers. Just as with the teams, unfortunately some prep standouts may fall through the cracks while others have been chronicled as members of the best teams.

The best-player nominations dwarfed those in the team category. With that said, we could not go into much detail on the respective players.

Here we go, school by school, in no specific order.



BUBBA KAPRAL

EXECUTIVE
SPORTS EDITOR

BROOKE: The Bruins' 1973 state title team featured two stalwarts in Joe Pettini and Mark Schwertfeger. Pettini went on to star at Mercer before being drafted by the Montreal Expos. He was traded to San Francisco, where he

played four years. Schwertfeger was simply dominant on the mound. Larry Gryskevich, a 1984 grad, set a state record as a senior with 14 homers. He was drafted by the Pirates after high school while also receiving a D-I scholarship to Oral Roberts. Bill Billick was another Bruin nominated from they 1980s.

PADEN CITY: Todd Neff was a former state player of year who went on to play at WVU.

BRIDGEPORT: The Bulldogs have some no-brainers with the Niekro Brothers. Phil and Joe own the record for most Major League Baseball pitching wins by a set of brothers. The Dogs' diamond talent doesn't stop there as John Blatnik and Stan Goletz were great players. Gary Knight Sr., Jim Tomolonis, David Stazenski and Dave Mroczkowski were four more Bridgeport all-staters.

ST. JOHN CENTRAL - The Fighting Irish baseball luminaries start with Joe Yazombek. The talented catcher starred at Marietta College where he was named MVP in the Division III College World Series. Other Green diamond gems included Pat Staley, Mike Kolvek, Bob Voytecek, Tim Misencik, Billy Timko, basketball star Dick Reasbeck, Eric Petho and Will Souillard.

MEADOWBROOK: Troy Aleshire.

MINGO: OVAC Hall of Famer Ron Sismondo pitched in the College World Series for Arizona before embarking on a pro career.

SHENANDOAH: Jed Stephen starred for Ohio State and is an OVAC Hall of Famer.

WOODSFIELD: "Sad" Sam Jones scripted a sparkling Major League Baseball career, pitching for seven teams, starting with the Indians. He recorded more than 100 mound wins while leading the National League in wins on two occasions and strikeouts three times. While with the Cubs, he spun a no-hitter against the Pirates in 1955.

MARTINS FERRY: Doug Swearingen and Keith Vrotsos were lone Purple Riders brought to the table. Swearingen, a talented southpaw, enjoyed a stellar career on the Ohio State mound before pitching professionally. Vrotsos, meanwhile, went on to star at Ohio University. Both are OVAC Hall of Famers.

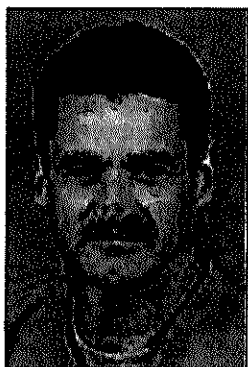
SKYVUE: Another no-brainer. Mitch Hannahs is a Golden Hawks' legend who went onto star at Indiana State where he now serves as head coach. Hannahs is an OVAC and Indiana State Hall of Famer.

EAST LIVERPOOL - Bernie Allen tops all Potter players. He enjoyed a successful 12-year major league career, mainly with the Senators and Twins.

BUCKEYE TRAIL - Chris Starr starred on the mound for the Warriors, landing him a scholarship to the University of Michigan. He is an OVAC Hall of Famer.



ARNEAULT



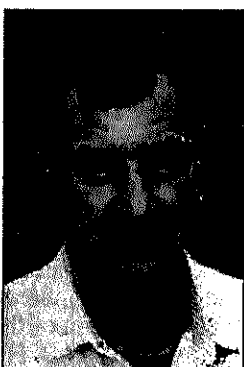
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Finalists Set for OVAC Coach of the Year

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

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Bolinger to Swim at Wheeling U.

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

MARTINS FERRY — To say Jarrett Bolinger put forth one of the most decorated swimming careers in Ohio Valley history might still be selling him short.

The Martins Ferry senior has a resume that includes three state meet appearances, eight individual OVAC titles, five sectional crowns and eight All-District performances.

Bolinger is now ready for his next challenge and it will occur at Wheeling University where he joins

