

# Linsly Girls Claim 11th Straight OVAC Tennis Title

Ekanem's singles title gives Cadets tiebreaker over OG

By **CODY NESPOR**  
Sports Writer

WHEELING — It came down to the final matches of the day, but the result was still what everyone has come to expect. Playing in the indoor tennis bubble at Wheeling Park due to the weather Tuesday, the Linsly girls tennis team took home the OVAC 1A-4A team championship for the 11th year in a row.

"I've been very blessed with some great players," said Linsly coach Dave Riethmiller. "It's been quite a run."

Out of all 11 titles, Tuesday's win may have been the most dramatic one of all.

Entering the final round of championship matches, Oak Glen led Linsly by a single point, 15-14, in the team standings. Each team had one player in the final round, giving host to a number of possible outcomes depending on who won which match.

Linsly had Rachel Ekanem in No. 1 singles and OG had Kittawana McKinley in No. 3, both were playing girls from Class 5A champion University.

Ekanem, Linsly's senior captain, was able to claim an 8-6 victory over University's Lyla Byers, who was the top seed in the bracket and had beaten Ekanem earlier this season.

"I've played her multiple times and it's always kind of been like this," Ekanem said. "I knew that it would be a tough match but I planned and I'm glad that I was able to pull it through in the end."

In defeating Byers, Ekanem claimed her second consecutive individual OVAC championship and pulled the Cadets into a 15-15 tie with the Golden Bears in the team standings.

"It was just completely overwhelming how I felt because that was my very last high school single



Photo by Cody Nespor  
Linsly's Rachel Ekanem prepares to return volley against University's Lyla Byers in the OVAC No. 1 singles championship match Tuesday.

match that I will ever play," Ekanem said. "I was just overwhelmed with such joy and satisfaction. It was such a wonderful match and I enjoyed every minute of it, the good and the bad."

The Cadets then gathered as a team to watch how McKinley's match would conclude. McKinley fell 8-0 to University's Emma Rusiecki, keeping the team scores tied at 15-15. The tiebreaker was the number of individual championships, meaning that Ekanem's win tipped the scales for the Cadets to claim the trophy.

"I really thought (Oak Glen) was going to take it this year," Riethmiller said. "It was sweet, especial-

ly for it to come down to a match like that where our captain, Rachel, pulled it out for us. That meant a whole lot for her."

For Oak Glen coach Ken Keller, the feeling was very familiar.

"This is the second time we've tied and the second time that they won because they had more champions than us," he said. "We thought we had them this year, but Linsly's tough."

Even after 11 straight championships, Riethmiller said the excitement of winning never gets old.

"This was really fun, really exciting," he said.

Please see **LINSLY**, Page 12



Photo by Kim North  
Linsly's Haley Heitz, right, chases after Martins Ferry's Kelsie Gillespie in a rundown between third base and home plate during Tuesday's OVAC semifinal.

# Purple Riders Hold Off Cadets In 3A Semifinal

By **KIM NORTH**  
For The Intelligencer

ELM GROVE — When you're the defending champion, the top seed and undefeated, you get everybody's best shot.

That's what Martins Ferry received Tuesday from fourth-seeded Linsly in an Ohio Valley Athletic Conference Tom Bechtel Softball Championships Class 3A semifinal. However, the battle-tested Purple Riders (11-0) were able to stave off the Cadets (8-7) by a 5-3 count on Lisa's Field at the J.B. Chambers I-470 Complex.

The win allows the Purple a chance at defending their title against No. 2 Shenandoah on Friday. The field and time were not yet confirmed late Tuesday.

"It's never easy. Let me tell you. That's a very good team," veteran Martins Ferry head coach Jerry Magistro said of the Cadets. "They've got a lot of speed, a lot of talent and a lot of athletes. We beat them three times last year and we've played them

twice already this year. It's hard to beat a team five times like that."

Linsly took a 1-0 lead when Lexi Finley led off the top of the second by crushing a 1-0 pitch well over the fence in left field.

Martins Ferry took advantage of two Linsly errors in the bottom of the third in taking a 3-1 lead it would not relinquish.

Hunter Pollock's rocket up the middle scored Eve Agnew to tie things at 1. After a fielder's choice, Maria Clark singled to right-center as Pollock and Danielle Lude circled the bases for a 3-1 reading.

"That was a huge hit," Magistro said of Clark's clutch hit.

Lude doubled leading off the fifth and scored on Taylor Bell's fielder's choice. Bell went to third on a sacrifice fly off the bat of winning pitcher Lauren McFarland and came home on Nevaeh Hall sent a two-out single to right-center.

Please see **SEMIFINAL**, Page 12

# Nailers Bring 2-0 Series Lead Back to Wheeling

By **CODY TOMER**  
Sports Writer

WHEELING — The Wheeling Nailers flipped home ice advantage after taking Game One in the opening round of the 2022 Kelly Cup Playoffs at Fort Wayne on Friday night.

They flipped the entire series when they took Game Two the following night to sweep the first two games on the road and return to WesBanco Arena with a 2-0 series lead after not winning a game in Fort Wayne all season.

"They are incredibly well-coached and they are the former champions," Nailers' coach Derek Army said. "They were on a run down the stretch and it's a hard building for us to play in. That's not something we can control. The only thing we can control is our mentality and how we play so for us it was, 'Just go in and take it one game, one shift and one period at a time and see what happens.' It's nice to have a lead but I expect a heavy push from them."

In the opening game, Wheeling's leader

in goals, assists and points netted the lone goal of the game as Patrick Watling lit the lamp with 5 seconds to play in the first period.

That was all the Nailers needed as Louis-Philip Guindon slammed the door the rest of the way as he collected 34 saves in the shutout.

"LP has been great," Army said. "We also defended well and were able to keep them out of our net."

After taking the opener, Army believes the team felt loose and hungry going into Game 2, which became a 4-2 Wheeling triumph.

"I'm sure we were a little bit looser," Army said. "Any road team in any playoff feels that you try to win one game on the road and go from there. We more or less caught some bounces in Game One and LP stood on his head. We were able to come out with the result and in Game Two we were feeling confident and were able to get some more bounces."

Two key moments for Wheeling in Game Two came from a game-tying goal

by Dylan MacPherson and a go-ahead netter by Jared Cockrell in the first and second periods, respectively.

"We just started chipping away and playing our game," MacPherson said. "That first goal was huge for us."

Cockrell added, "We were just trying to stay calm and dialed into the moment and didn't get ahead of ourselves."

That continues to be the mindset for Wheeling as it prepares to host Games Three, Four and Five (if needed), even though it can be easy to get excited about a 2-0 lead in the postseason.

"That's the hard part of the playoffs and the hard part about having a young team in general," Army said. "We don't have a lot of guys who have been in a best-of-7 series. People can get carried away and say, 'We're going to win the series,' but we have to bring ourselves back to earth. They are a well-coached team, they are big, they are experienced and they are the defending champions. If you think Games Three, Four and Five are going to be easy you're crazy. Part of that I think was our

fault in 2016. We looked ahead and you can't do that. They're going to be coming hard."

Game Three is tonight inside of WesBanco Arena, with Games Four and Five taking place Friday and Saturday (if needed). All three games begin at 7:10 p.m.

"Hopefully we get a big crowd Wednesday," Cockrell said. "It'd be nice to get the city buzzing a little bit and make some noise around here."

After missing out on the playoffs every year dating back to Army's run as a key player on the 2016 team, Cockrell believes the team's youth, energy and passion for the game creates the perfect recipe for success.

"This team is so young," Cockrell said. "We have a lot of energy and will to get things done. We're ready to play. The hard work we put in early in the year gives us the opportunity that we have now."

"At the end of the day, it's more about what we are doing and trusting our process. We're staying more disciplined and everyone is buying into the process."

pitch. The loss spoiled sharp pitching effort from Park's Nick Taurus. He stymied the hosts for the first five innings, allowing just one hit over that span. Taurus ended with a three-hitter while walking just two.

"I am happy with the win and I am happy for Mason Myers." St. Clairsville Hall of Fame coach Tom Sliva offered. "Mason had great control tonight and he also came through with the big hit when we needed it."

"We made the plays behind him. Our defense was solid," he added. "I commend their pitcher. He did a great job, also."

St. Clairsville is now 7-5 and will visit Oak Glen this afternoon.

Wheeling Park dropped to 8-4. The Patriots will travel to Bridgeport (WV) Thursday before heading to Edison High Friday to face Morgantown in the OVAC 5A championship game in a 5:30 p.m. start.

"I thought it was a well-played game. Both pitchers were really good," Park head coach Steve Myers said. "They got the key hit when they needed to."

"St. Clairsville has a quality program. We have a lot of respect for them," he added. "We had some opportunities but could not take advantage of them."

Park's best scoring opportunity came in the fourth inning.

Senior catcher Luke Marsh opened the frame with a single. After a fielder's choice, a Red Devils' error placed runners on first and third. Myers, however, induced a groundout and routine flyball to end the threat.

Junior Quinn Jamison was the lone Patriot to collect two hits. The Patriots stranded eight runners.

St. Clairsville's third hit came from senior Logan Shields.

"It's a nice win against a very good program. Park is good

Tuesday.

Colton Cisar picked up the mound win with a complete-game effort. He fanned six and issued nary a walk, while allowing just a single. He also drove in a run with a single.

Peyton Blue had a single and two RBI, while Elijah Wayt had two RBI. Finn Bowers had a double and a single.

**Martins Ferry 9 East Liverpool 3**

MARTINS FERRY - The Purple Riders picked up their 10th win in 13 tries, Tuesday, toppling the invading Potters.

Ayden Ludolph worked into the seventh to earn the mound win. He also had a single, double and three RBI.

Senior Colby Shriver had two singles and two RBI, while Baron Lucey posted two singles and a RBI.

**SOFTBALL**

**Shadyside 9, River 8**

SHADYSIDE - The Tigers bounced back from a tough loss in the OVAC semifinals on Monday to edge rival River, 9-8.

Taylor Fulton picked up the win in the circle, working into the seventh. She had 11 strikeouts.

Offensively, junior standout Gentry Brown slugged a home run, two singles and drove in three. Rylee Fulton had four singles and a RBI. Abby Gorrell had a double, single and two RBI.

River was led by Kelsey Harlan who had a home run and two RBI. Rylee Knight had a triple and two RBI. Hannah Raper had two singles.

**St. Clairsville 12 East Liverpool 5**

EAST LIVERPOOL - The Red Devils went on the road and picked up their second win of the season.

Junior Abby Salisbury was the winner in the circle with five strikeouts and a like number of walks. She also had two singles.

in the sixth.

Emmy Kellaway singled three times, tripled and drove in two runs for the winners. Torre Kildow singled twice, doubled and also plated two runs. Abi Marinelli drove in a run with a home run. She also singled.

For the Panthers, Morgan Richardson, Josey Meddles and Alexa Williams all singled twice, with Williams recording an RBI. Madison Roset had a two-run single.

In the nightcap, the hosts led 6-5 before plating half-a-dozen runs in the bottom of the fourth.

Williams knocked in four runs to lead the victors with a pair of doubles. Richardson singled in two, as did Alli Trekal.

Ava Lucas laced a trio of singles for Union Local to account for an RBI. Marinelli singled twice and had a run batted in, while Hannah Merritt doubled twice.

**Brooke 15, Toronto 3**

WELLSBURG - The Brooke softball team's offensive surge continued against Toronto.

The Bruins scored 12 runs in the bottom of the third inning en route to a 15-3 victory on a chilly Tuesday evening at home on Senior Day.

Landry Bone started and recorded the win. She struck out two and walked six in four innings of work.

Bone helped her own cause with three singles, a double and two RBI. Ang Lippoli tallied a single, two doubles and three RBI and Madison Brown delivered a double and two RBI. Also, Baylei Jones ended up with two singles and three RBI, while Emilee Knorr and Emilee McKinney each collected two singles and two RBI.

Michelle Anderson and Ashton Thomas both doubled for the Red Knights, Calle Anderson singled home a run and Laney Danko delivered a single.

**LINSLY**

(Continued from Page 11)

"We were behind the whole time. I really thought that Oak Glen was going to edge us out. They've been our competition pretty much the whole (11 years). They've got a great program and a great coach."

Along with Ekanem, Olivia Rosenthal and Kate Bondarchuk each advanced to the semifinals in the No. 3 and No. 4 brackets, respectively, and Ava Bartlett won a match in the No. 2 bracket as well.

For Oak Glen, Lyndsay Reynolds and Gabie Pasco advanced to the semifinals in No. 1 and No. 3 singles, respectively, and Katie Zoellers won a match in No. 2.

University won the 5A team title 24-16 over Morgantown, claiming championships in No. 2 singles, No. 3 singles, No. 1 doubles and No. 3 doubles along the way. Morgantown won in No. 4 singles and No. 2 doubles.

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ery run counts. It was 5-1 and you think you need a lot, but if we would've gotten one here and one there, a couple of runs might have been all we would've needed.

"We're still young. We're still learning, but we're getting better and better every time we take the field," Recrosio continued. "I'm proud of how hard the girls have worked. They never gave up today."

Brooke Edge drove in two runs in the seventh with a two-out triple that ended McFarland's day inside the circle. Kelsie Gillespie needed just one pitch to induce a comebacker and earn the save. McFarland struck out three, walked a pair and scattered 10 hits. She threw 112 pitches (67 strikes).

Pollock singled twice and drove in a run, while Gillespie had a pair of base raps.

"We hit the ball really well. We hit it hard," Magistro acknowledged. "But their outfielders, especially that left fielder (Addie Strauss), made a couple of outstanding catches."

Baeleigh Burwell was the tough-luck loser with two punchouts, a walk, a hit batter and seven hits allowed. She needed 93 pitches (66 strikes).

Martins Ferry returns to action today against Union Local.

**Shenandoah 8 Barnesville 1**

ELM GROVE - Shenandoah's Mya Leach overcame a shaky top of the first and the Zeps scored five unearned runs in an 8-1 decision over the third-seeded Shamrocks in an Ohio Valley Athletic Conference Tom Bechtel Softball Championships Class 3A semifinal Tuesday night on Lisa's Field at the J.B. Chambers I-470 Complex.

Leach yielded a lead-off triple to deep center by Maddy Shaffer to start the game. Shaffer raced home when Jayln Skinner reached on an error for a 1-0 lead. Ellie Thompson walked on a full-count and both runners advanced a base on a wild pitch. With one out, Lilly Welch walked to load the bases, but Leach bore down and got back-to-back swing-

in the bottom of the fifth and cleared them with a base hit, sparking a six-run outburst that carried Oak Glen to a 7-2 victory over No. 4 seed Indian Creek.

McKay's shot was followed up by a Sarah Brown RBI double and Lizzie Kell put another ball into the outfield that went in and out of the outfielder's glove to bring two more runs across before Creek could get out of the inning.

Those runs came after Indian Creek used some two-out magic to take the lead in the top half of the fifth.

Carley Jo Penner legged out a two-out, infield single to extend the inning and Abby Starkey doubled in next at bat to even the score at 1-1. Trinity Taylor put the ball in the play in the next at bat and an error allowed Starkey to cross, making it 2-1 IC.

McKay, the Toledo commit who a day earlier earned the 50th win of her high school career, made it 5-1 by going the distance and striking out seven without issuing a walk.

**Weir 3**

**Harrison Central 1**

ELM GROVE - When the chips are down, any coach wants to be able to rely on their seniors.

Weir High head coach John Leary had that luxury on Tuesday night as two of his 12th graders led his Red Riders to a 3-1 OVAC 4A semifinal victory over Harrison Central at the I-470 Complex.

Mallory Rosnick provided all of No. 2 seed Weir High's offense with a pair of homers and Madison Angus tossed a complete game, while holding the third-seeded Huskies to just four hits.

After the Huskies took a 1-0 lead with a Sarah Touville RBI double in the top of the first inning, Rosnick tucked a deep shot just inside the left field foul post for a solo shot with two outs to even the score.

After a scoreless second by both sides, she again came up with two outs, this time with a runner on after Sophia Aperfine had singled, and crushed another shot over the fence in left to make it 3-1 Red Riders.

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# Steelers Select Pickett as New QB

## Pitt quarterback staying in town

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Kenny Pickett stayed in school at Pittsburgh an extra year just so he could move next door.

Now all the Pittsburgh Steelers' newest quarterback has to do is replace a future Hall of Famer, beat out two veterans for the starting job and do it all while trying to maintain the perpetually high standard of a franchise that hasn't endured a losing season since he was in kindergarten.

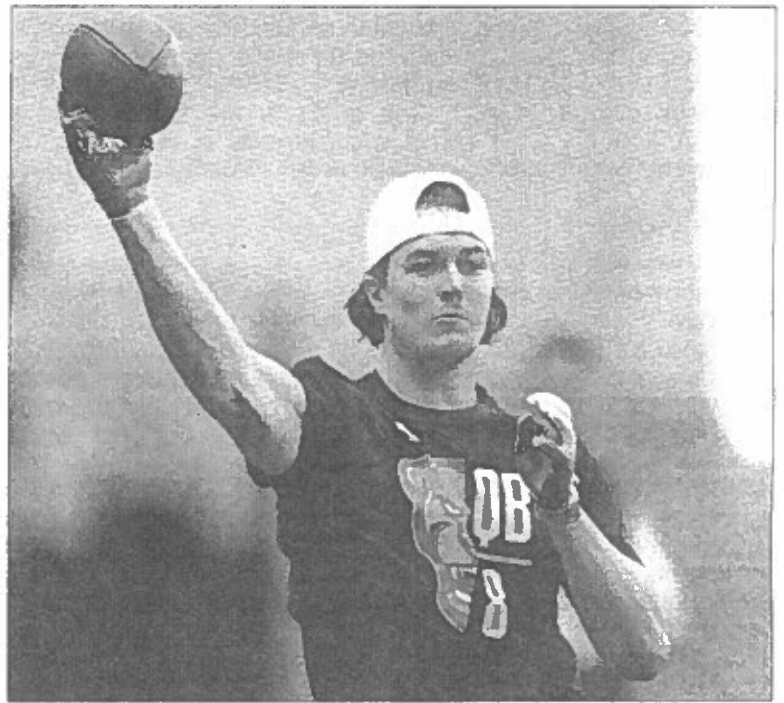
"There's no panic in him," Pittsburgh general manager Kevin Colbert said after the Steelers grabbed Pickett with the 20th overall pick in the first round of the NFL draft on Thursday night.

Pickett will need to rely on that composure while he grapples with the enviable yet mammoth task of taking over for Ben Roethlisberger, who retired in January following 18 seasons that included two Super Bowl wins, an appearance in another and a reputation as one of the best clutch performers in league history.

Coach Mike Tomlin said Pickett will "certainly" be given the opportunity to start right away. Pickett joins a quarterback room that includes former No. 2 overall pick Mitch Trubisky — signed to a two-year deal in March — and Mason Rudolph.

"I'm pretty familiar with competing," Pickett said. "I've been doing it my whole life."

Pickett made a splash as a freshman at Pitt in 2017 when he engineered an upset against then-unbeaten and second-ranked Miami in the regular-season finale. The legend of "Kenny Perfect" was born, though his production was only so-so over 2018-20 while playing for middling Pitt



AP Photo  
Quarterback Kenny Pickett (8) goes through passing drills during Pittsburgh's football pro day in Pittsburgh.

## NFL DRAFT FIRST ROUND

Thursday, April 28  
FIRST ROUND

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Jacksonville, Travon Walker, de, Georgia.  | 17. L.A. Chargers, Zion Johnson, g, Boston College.                                 |
| 2. Detroit, Aidan Hutchinson, de, Michigan.   | 18. Tennessee (from New Orleans through Philadelphia), Treyton Burks, wr, Arkansas. |
| 3. Houston, Derek Stingley Jr., cb, LSU.  | 19. New Orleans (from Philadelphia), Trevor Penning, ot, Northern Iowa.             |
| 4. N.Y. Jets, Ahmad Gardner, cb, Cincinnati.  | 20. Pittsburgh, Kenny Pickett, qb, Pittsburgh.                                      |
| 5. N.Y. Giants, Kayvon Thibodeaux, de, Oregon.                                      | 21. Kansas City (from New England), Trent McDuffie, cb, Washington.                 |
| 6. Carolina, Ikem Ekwonu, ot, North Carolina State.                                 | 22. Green Bay (from Las Vegas), Quay Walker, lb, Georgia.                           |
| 7. N.Y. Giants (from Chicago), Evan Neal, ot, Alabama.                              | 23. Buffalo (from Arizona through Baltimore), Kaiir Elam, cb, Florida.              |
| 8. Atlanta, Drake London, wr, Southern Cal.   | 24. Dallas, Tyler Smith, ot, Tulsa.   |
| 9. Seattle (from Denver), Charles Cross, ot, Mississippi State.                     | 25. Baltimore (from Buffalo), Tyler Linderbaum, c, Iowa.                            |
| 10. N.Y. Jets (from Seattle), Garrett Wilson, wr, Ohio State.                       | 26. N.Y. Jets (from Tennessee), Jermaine Johnson II, de, Florida State.             |
| 11. New Orleans (from Washington), Chris Olave, wr, Ohio State.                     | 27. Jacksonville (from Tampa Bay), Devin Lloyd, lb, Utah.                           |
| 12. Detroit (from Minnesota), Jameson Williams, wr, Alabama.                        | 28. Green Bay, Devonte Wyatt, dt, Georgia.  |
| 13. Philadelphia (from Cleveland through Houston), Jordan Davis, dt, Georgia.       | 29. New England (from S.F. through Miami and K.C.), Cole Strange, g, Chattanooga.   |
| 14. Baltimore, Kyle Hamilton, s, Notre Dame.  | 30. Kansas City, George Karlaftis, de, Purdue.                                      |
| 15. Houston (from Miami through Philadelphia), Kenyon Green, g, Texas A&M.          | 31. Cincinnati, Daxton Hill, s, Michigan.   |
| 16. Washington (from Indpls. through Phil. and N.O.), Jahan Dotson, wr, Penn State. | 32. Minnesota (from L.A. Rams through Detroit), Lewis Cine, s, Georgia.             |



Photo by Cody Nespor

Linsly's Edoardo Ciato prepares to return a volley during singles play in the OVAC boys' tennis tournament at John Marshall High School Thursday.

# Linsly Boys Join Girls as Champs

By CODY NESPOR  
Sports Writer

WHEELING — After winning just one game in the OVAC boys' tennis tournament last year, the Linsly Cadets made a complete turnaround and claimed their first team title in over a decade Thursday night.

After a marathon day of tennis that started at John Marshall High School and ended several hours later inside the bubble at Wheeling Park, the Cadets stood on top of the OVAC Class 1A-4A team standings with a score of 10, edging out second-place Cambridge (eight) and third-place East Liverpool (five).

The boys' victory completed a sweep of the Class 1A-4A team titles for the Cadets, as the Linsly girls won their 11th straight OVAC championship in dramatic

ic fashion on Tuesday. "It feels really good," said Linsly coach Tyler Bickford. "Last year we won one game in OVACs so it's a big improvement this year. It was really an all-around effort, we were a very well-rounded team this year."

Bickford said his team was close to doing well last season, but an injury to their top player forced everyone to play up a position.

"Last year we had, I would say, almost a good team," Bickford allowed. "Who would've been my number one (player) slipped a disc right before the season started so everyone had to play up one position and it was just a bit rough. With everyone playing where they should be this year."

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Please see PICKETT, Page 12

# Nailers Look to Regroup Heading Into Game 4

By CODY TOMER  
Sports Writer

WHEELING — Wheeling Nailers' coach Derek Army knew it would be a tough task to sweep the defending Kelly Cup Champions in the opening round.

That's why he is not harping on Wednesday night's loss to Fort Wayne in Game 3 of the Central Division Semifinals and he is focused on Game 4 on Friday night inside WesBanco Arena with the Nailers still holding a 2-1 series upper hand.

"It's back to the drawing board," Army said. "Kuwi (assistant coach Ryan Kuwabara) and I will make some adjustments. There are some things I want to address but we have to turn the

page. You can't dwell on it. You have to move on and worry about Game 4. That game is done so we'll come in ready on Friday to win a hockey game. I wish I could snap my fingers and win two games like Thanos but we knew it was going to be a long series."

Despite allowing four goals in Game 3, Wheeling goalie Louis-Philip Guindon still managed to collect 46 saves.

"LP has been great for us," Army said. "I just think we got a little bit away from our game plan. I think every guy wanted to be the guy who scored three goals. I admire that quality but we have to do it as a team within our game."

The Nailers came into the se-

ries with much less postseason experience than the Komets but that didn't stop them from securing the first two games on the road. Now, can the youthful Nailers respond from their first playoff setback?

"The biggest thing is we are a young hockey team," Army said. "We had four guys who I think had a playoff game in professional hockey before this. We'll compose ourselves and just control what we can control."

Cam Hausinger of Wheeling leads the series to this point with a pair of goals and Patrick Watling, Wheeling's team leader in goals and points throughout the regular season, leads the series in points with three.



Photo by Joe Lovell

Wheeling's Sam Houde, right, takes a shot during Wednesday's home playoff game against the Fort Wayne Komets.

# McCutchen, Brewers Rally



# Middle School Baseball League Gets Underway

## PICKETT

(Continued from Page 11)

teams that essentially spun their wheels in the ACC.

He entertained the idea of entering the 2021 draft before ultimately deciding to return to the Panthers for a fifth season. It's a decision that changed the arc of his life and — now potentially — the arc of the storied franchise that the Panthers share a training facility with.

All Pickett did last fall was throw for 42 touchdowns, be named the ACC Player of the Year and finish third in the Heisman Trophy behind Alabama quarterback Bryce Young and Michigan defensive end Aidan Hutchinson. Oh, and he led the Panthers to an 11-2 regular season and the program's first ACC title.

The Steelers, who notori-

ously passed on former Pitt star and future Hall of Famer Dan Marino in the 1983 draft, watched Pickett's evolution in real time. Colbert and Tomlin were eventually won over by Pickett's maturity, accuracy and even his mobility.

While Pickett might not have the flash of Liberty's Malik Willis, he can more than handle his own when asked to make plays with his legs instead of his arm. Look no further than his 58-yard touchdown run against Wake Forest in the ACC championship game for proof, a sprint highlighted by a fake slide so good the NCAA outlawed the move almost immediately.

"I'm going to ask that he slide when he gets in certain circumstances," Tomlin said

with a laugh.

Pickett was the first quarterback selected in what is widely considered an unimpressive class. The last time the first quarterback off the board was taken 20th or later was in 1997 when San Francisco went to San Francisco with the 26th pick.

Tabbed as a potential successor to future Hall of Famer Steve Young, Druckenmiller lasted just two seasons with the 49ers before being traded to Miami and never playing in the NFL again.

Fast forward a quarter-century and the pressure placed on rookie quarterbacks has only grown. That's fine by Pickett, who will turn 24 in June.

"I can't wait to get in the building and, you know, go chase championships with

those guys," he said.

Good thing, because it comes with the territory when you play in the side of the building where you walk past six Lombardi Trophies every day.

The Steelers knew they'd likely be in the market for a quarterback this time around, and Colbert and his staff dove head-first into the search. They saw some prospects play at least a half-dozen times and went through extensive interviews with seven of them.

While Colbert played coy during the run-up to his final draft with the team before retiring, the reality is the Steelers needed a quarterback the second Roethlisberger officially stepped away. Dwayne Haskins' tragic death on a Florida highway earlier this month

only heightened the urgency.

After the smoke cleared, Colbert settled on the prospect next door. One who already knows how to get to work. One plenty familiar with Steelers offensive coordinator Matt Canada, who was working in the same position at Pitt in 2016 when he recruited Pickett out of Ocean Township High in New Jersey.

Canada left for a job at LSU before Pickett arrived on campus. Now they are reunited in the pros and in some ways intrinsically tied to one another. Canada's job will be to bring Pickett up to speed as quickly as possible. Pickett's job will be to prove his breakout 2021 was a sign of things to come.

"I obsess over (getting better) and that's what I'm to continue to do," he said.

## LINSLEY

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it really showed how good we were."

Leading the charge for Linsley was senior Edoardo Ciato, who made it to the No. 1 singles championship match against Morgantown's Max Phillip-Hartley.

In an epic back-and-forth contest, Phillip-Hartley pulled out an impressive 8-6 victory.

"(Phillip-Hartley) got a break early and a lot of his service games were very close," Bickford said. "Edoardo came very close to breaking (his serve) and when he finally did, Max broke right back and just held serve."

Ciato defeated Brooke's Nick Pollock in the No. 1 semifinals 8-4.

This was Ciato's first time playing in the OVAC tournament as it's his first year in the states, coming over from Italy.

In No. 2 singles, Linsley's Wesley Palmer scored several key points by advancing to the semifinals, where he fell 8-3 to Morgantown's

Bennett Hall.

"We had a mishap with our three and four players where they just had an off day (Thursday) and got knocked out early. I expected them both to go to the semifinals or finals so we lost a lot of points there. But, we had a decent day (Wednesday) in doubles and both Wesley and Edoardo made up the difference for us."

Other than Ciato, every singles championship was made up of players from Morgantown and Dover. Unsurprisingly, Morgantown and Dover finished first in second in the Class 5A team standings.

Brooke's Pollock made it to the No. 1 semifinals with an exciting 9-7 victory over St. Clairsville's Jabez Chavez in the quarterfinal round. Teammate Kenrick Fish made it to the semifinals in the No. 4 bracket. Aiden Warrick also won a match in the No. 3 bracket.

Wheeling Central's Elijah Kuhl and Carson Kuhn each also won a

match in No. 1 and No. 3, respectively.

Wheeling Park had victories from Nick Trischler in No. 3 singles and Wyatt Andrews in No. 2.

In doubles play Wednesday, Ciato and Palmer made it to the No. 1 championship, where they fell to a pair from Morgantown. In the No. 2 bracket, Brooke's Fish and Tyler VanCamp made it to the finals, falling to a duo from Dover.

Weir's Justin Velegol and Nike Dimitrou won a doubles match in the No. 1 bracket and Ty Lyon and Michael Little won a match in No. 2.

In the No. 3 doubles bracket, Brooke's Landon Morris and Samuel Mockbee and Park's Evan Stingle and Charlie Desaia both won a match.

"Since I've been here, boys' tennis just hasn't really been a big thing," Bickford said. "It's really nice to see the sport in the area having a little bit of life."

## PIRATES

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"It was a good game to show up. A good day to sleep in my own bed and to be able to get that 'W.'"

Christian Yelich started the Brewers' rally with a one-out, pinch-hit bunt single against closer Chris Stratton (0-1). Kolten Wong and Omar Narvaez followed with singles to load the bases for McCutchen. The 35-year-old's liner seemed to graze the outstretched glove of second baseman Josh VanMeter before rolling into right field, allowing Yelich and Wong to score.

McCutchen attributed the last of his three hits to figuring out home plate umpire Vic Carapazza's strike zone. When Stratton's first pitch — a breaking ball below the knees — was called a strike, McCutchen figured Stratton would try for the same spot. When Stratton obliged, McCutchen was ready.

"I did what I needed to do and got the ball out there to the outfield," he said.

Hoby Milner (2-0) worked a perfect eighth to pick up the win. Devin Williams retired the Pirates in order in the ninth for his first save.

Pittsburgh rookie right fielder Jack Suwinski collected the first RBI of his career with an infield single in the seventh and Ben Gamel followed with a sacrifice fly off reliever Brad Boxberger as the Pirates turned a 1-0 deficit into a 2-1 lead.

David Bednar worked a scoreless eighth for the Pirates to set the stage for Stratton to set the stage for Stratton in his first full season at the back end of Pittsburgh's bullpen. He quickly put away Lorenzo Cain before Yelich's bunt started Milwaukee's surge.

## ASTROS 3, RANGERS 2

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Kyle Tucker hit a tiebreaking pinch-hit homer in the eighth inning and the Houston Astros beat the Texas Rangers in a series finale that began as an impressive duel between starting pitchers.

## YANKEES 10, ORIOLES 5

NEW YORK (AP) — Aaron Judge hit a long three-run homer moments after Baltimore committed its fifth error of the game, and surging New York beat the sloppy Orioles.

Judge hit his fifth homer two batters after shortstop Jorge Mateo committed his second error by misplaying DJ LeMahieu's grounder. After Tim Lincecum scored on a wild pitch by Paul Fry, Judge blasted a slider into the

## BASEBALL

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ball can do both. It allows some leeway."

There are 22 teams in the valley and each team will play roughly 14 or 15 games.

"The turnout was good," Cisar said. "It's a good experience and I think 22 teams will grow to over 30 next year. It also allows high school coaches to go watch and see who is coming up so they'll know what to expect. It will be very valuable in the future for us."

This is the first time

Schools have offered middle school baseball with Cameron and Sherrard Middle Schools facing off on Thursday.

Cameron coach and Dragon alum Logan Burkett loves the idea and wishes he had this opportunity when he was coming up through the ranks.

"This would have been sweet to play in," Burkett said. "I waited until June to play baseball besides travel ball. This is fun for the kids, it gives them reps before they go into

will help them out chemistry-wise, too."

Sherrard coach Dillon Mangino, a graduate of Wheeling Park, feels this is good for the future of high school baseball.

"We're really focused on the fundamentals and development of players," Mangino said. "We did not have middle school ball when I was in school but Coach Cisar really led this whole thing. This is almost like spring training for these guys."

"These are the guys who

left-center field seats.

## BLUE JAYS 1, RED SOX 0

TORONTO (AP) — Alek Manoah struck out seven and pitched three-hit ball over seven innings, and Toronto beat Boston.

## RAYS 2, MARINERS 1

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Brett Phillips bounced a tiebreaking single off pitcher Chris Flexen's leg in the seventh inning and Tampa Bay beat Seattle.

## PHILLIES 7, ROCKIES 1

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Zack Wheeler tossed one-hit ball over six shutout innings and Alec Bohm homered to help Philadelphia complete a four-game sweep of Colorado.

## TWINS 7, TIGERS 1

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Carlos Correa broke out of a slump with three hits and three RBIs and Minnesota completed a three-game sweep of Detroit.

## ANGELS 4, GUARDIANS 1

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Taylor Ward drove in two runs, Brandon Marsh had three hits and an RBI, and Los Angeles completed a four-game sweep of Cleveland, which has lost seven straight.

Ward drove in nine runs in the four-game series, an impressive RBI surge that's coincided with his move to the Angels' leadoff spot in place of AL MVP Shohei Ohtani, who got his first day off of the season after playing both ways Wednesday night.

Cal Quantrill (1-1) yielded four hits and one earned run over six solid innings for the Guardians, striking out four and walking three.

## PADRES 7, REDS 5

CINCINNATI (AP) — Ha-Seong Kim hit a tiebreaking, three-run double in the sixth inning and San Diego beat Cincinnati to complete a season sweep in the series.

## ROYALS 5, WHITE SOX 2, 10 INNINGS

CHICAGO (AP) — Rookie Kyle Isbel hit a two-run single in Kansas City's three-run 10th, and the Royals beat Chicago.

## MARLINS 3, NATIONALS 2

WASHINGTON (AP) — Trevor Rogers provided his longest outing of the season by allowing one run in six innings, and Miami stretched its winning streak to five games and completed a sweep of Washington.

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