

OVAC Banquet of Champions set May 24th

The fourth annual Ohio Valley Athletic Conference-Kroger Banquet of Champions has been scheduled for Wednesday night, May 24, at the Wheeling Civic Center.

Doors open at 5:30 p.m., with the buffet-style dinner to be served beginning at 6:30.

Honored guests will be the coaches and athletes from the 45 championships teams in the 15 sports sponsored each year by the bi-state league.

Dave Stucky of Josten's will again serve as master of ceremonies. Identity of the featured speaker will be revealed shortly and the evening will also include the presentation of special awards and scholarships.

Concluding the evening, as usual, will be the presentation of the annual *News-Register Award* that goes to the person selected by area media as OVAC "Coach of the Year."

Other special awards include the Dave Bierkortte Award, given to the most outstanding wrestler in the conference tournament and the Cal Giffen Award, given to a person who has made outstanding contributions in the sport of track and field. The Bierkortte Award, presented by the Wheeling Central Catholic High School Boosters Association, will go this year to Mark Emmerling of East Liverpool, first four-time OVAC wrestling champion since U.S. Olympian Bobby Douglas.

The George Kovalick and Dan Burke Memorial Scholarship awards, will be presented along with scholarships donated by Wheeling National Bank, Pepsi-Cola, McDonald's, Kroger's, the Ohio Valley Board of Approved Football Officials and the OVAC Baseball Coaches.

Individual tickets are priced at \$10 per person. Tables of eight may be reserved in advance at a cost of \$80. Reservations can be made by calling OVAC executive secretary Sam Mumley at (614) 695-5168; Jerry Vinci, banquet chairman at (614) 859-6307, and Rudy Mumley at (304) 277-2683.

DeFruscio To Be Guest Speaker At OVAC Banquet Of Champions

By NICK BEDWAY

Associate Sports Editor

DeFruscio, who coached Wheeling Jesuit College's men's basketball team to the greatest season in school's history, will be the guest speaker at this year's OVAC-Kroger Banquet of Champions.

The dinner, which honors the athletes and coaches of the many Ohio Valley Athletic Conference championship teams determined during the current school year, is scheduled for 7 p.m., Wednesday, May 24, at the Wheeling Civic Center.

"We are highly excited about having Coach DeFruscio as our guest speaker," said Jerry Vinci, banquet chairman. "He relates very well with young people. Fact that he is a successful local coach makes it all the more attractive for us to have him at this time."

At 28 years of age, DeFruscio is the youngest head coach and athletic director in the West Virginia Conference. In just his second year as boss of the Cardinals, he directed Wheeling Jesuit to a school-best 31-4 record.

Highlights included Wheeling's best ever West Virginia Conference regular season and NAIA District 28 championships and victories over Concord (N.C.), 82-74, and Drury (Mo.) by 99-72 before bowing to Central Washington in the quarterfinal of the NAIA tournament played at Kansas City's Kemper Arena.

The Cardinals, who began the campaign with a school-record 22 straight victories, clinched the regular season with nearly two weeks to go. They were upset by Concord in the quarterfinals but then defeated the Mountain Lions in the best-of-three District 28 playoff to earn an initial national tournament bid.

Overall, Wheeling Jesuit established 16 school records during the



Coach Jay DeFruscio

most WVC wins, season (21); best road record, season (12-1); fewest losses, season (4); most total points scored, season (3,263); highest scoring average, season (93.2 ppg); most points, single-game (125 vs. Davis & Elkins); most points, half (78 vs. Davis & Elkins); most free throws made, season (759); most free throws attempted, season (1,021).

Wheeling also achieved its first-ever national ranking, finishing No. 8 after having been ranked as high as No. 4.

In his two years at the helm, DeFruscio guided the Birdies to a combined 47-17 record giving him a career winning percentage of .734 as a head coach — tops among active college mentors in the WVC.

The native of Drexel Hill, Pa., starred at Monsignor Bonner High in the Philadelphia Catholic League. He

was a man at Ursinus College in Collegeville, Pa. The Bears won 64 games during his four years and qualified for the NCAA Division III tournament the last three seasons.

As a junior, DeFruscio was the sixth man on a team that set a school record with 23 wins and advanced to the final four before falling to eventual national champion Potsdam State, 63-61. Ursinus defeated Otterbein 82-79 in the third-place game.

As a senior, DeFruscio captained a team that won 19 games and reached the quarterfinals before falling again to Potsdam 62-44. He earned All-Mid-Atlantic Conference first-team honors and was voted most inspirational player by his teammates.

He stayed on at Ursinus as a basketball assistant for two years following his 1982 graduation with a B.A. in Economics and Business Administration. He earned his M.S. in Business Administration from Wheeling Jesuit in 1986.

DeFruscio joined then-head coach Jim O'Brien as a basketball assistant at WJC in the fall of 1984. He also was named as assistant AD and sports information director at the school.

Working under O'Brien for three years, he headed the team's recruiting efforts and was largely responsi-

ble for putting Cardinal uniforms on the nucleus of what was to become the school's best-ever team.

O'Brien left for the NBA in the summer of 1987 and DeFruscio — just 26 years of age at the time — was quickly elevated to the position of head coach and athletic director.

His first Cardinal squad put together a modest 16-13 record but impressed league coaches so much that two of them made Wheeling Jesuit the pre-season pick for the 1989 WVC crown.

Jay agreed with that estimation of the Cardinals' strength and set his team's goals for the season as winning the conference title and going on to play in Kansas City.

Presentation of several special awards; announcement of scholarship winners and the OVAC's "Coach of the Year" will also be made during the dinner. Individual tickets are priced at \$10 per person. Tables of eight may be reserved in advance at a cost of \$80.

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