



T-L Photos/MICHAEL HARVILLA

LEFT: Toronto's Billy Williams fires a pitch to the plate during Monday night's OVAC All-Star game at Steubenville's Vaccaro Field.

BOTTOM: Steubenville's Justin Banks dives back into first base ahead of a pick off attempt during Monday night's game.



Ohio all stars hold off West Virginia, 8-6

By **RICH GIBSON**
Times-Leader Sports Editor

The annual OVAC All-Star Baseball Classic is always a showcase for the valley's premier baseball talent. Not to mention the coaches.

"I'm not so sure (we) don't have as much fun as the players," smiled Barnesville's Brad Wilson, one of four Ohio mentors working Monday night's game at Steubenville's Vaccaro Field.

"We have a good time exchanging ideas and talking strategy about different kids," Wilson continued. "And there's always a player or two who may not be so well-known by some of the coaches and fans. All in all, it's really a great experience."

The 2002 edition was no different in a contest featuring both clutch hitting and pitching.

In the end, Ohio withstood a late West Virginia comeback bid to score an 8-6 victory on an overcast evening.

One player in particular Wilson pointed to was Cambridge pitcher Adam Menzie who worked the last two innings.

The righthander struck out five but had to overcome a damaging line drive hit by Wheeling Central's Justin Edwards in the top of the ninth.

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"I don't see how Adam was able to continue. That ball really nailed him," Wilson advised.

Out to protect an 8-6 lead, Menzie yielded a leadoff infield single to Magnolia's Brett Ripley.

After Wheeling Park's J.J. Newman struck out, Edwards jumped on a Menzie fast ball, lining the pitch directly off the Bobcat hurler's right leg for another infield hit.

In obvious pain, Menzie shook off the injury to strike out Brooke's Art Scherich on three pitches.

Steubenville Central catcher Ryan Cummings then sealed the deal, throwing out Ripley attempting to steal third base for the game's final out. It was the third Mountaineer baserunner cut down by the Crusaders' talented backstop.

West Virginia outhit Ohio, 10-9, but the Mountain State stars were guilty of five fielding errors.

Edwards and Tyler's Adam Hartley hammered first inning RBI hits for a 2-0 West Virginia lead.

But Ohio retaliated. Toronto's J.D. Hannan drew a base on balls and St. John's Mark Hartlieb singled to center prior to a game-tying two-run hit off the bat of Steubenville's Justin Banks.

Ohio went ahead in the second. Shadyside's Serge Gentile reached on an error and later scored when an Edwards' offering got past Linsly catcher R.J. Zitzelsberger.

In the Buckeye third, Banks blasted a solo homer off Weir High's Shawn Meador and it was 4-2.

Ohio made it 6-2 in the fifth. Martins Ferry's J.R. Anderson reached on an error and Beallsville's Aaron Boughner singled, Anderson racing home on another Mountaineer miscue.

When Meadowbrook's Kyle Rankin hit into a fielder's choice, Boughner scored.

West Virginia got two runs back in dramatic fashion in the top of the sixth.

Wheeling Park's Robbie Downer drilled a line drive to centerfield that a diving Chad Mieczkowski of Indian Creek just missed pulling in.

When the ball rolled to the fence, Downer circled the bases for an inside the park home run.

John Marshall's Brian White later singled and scored when Monarch teammate Rocky Dobbs reached on an Ohio error.

Again, the Buckeyes responded. Cummings was hit by a pitch, igniting a two-run rally.

With Cummings at third base, Toronto's Matt Ludwig reached on an infield hit with Cummings scoring.

After two outs, Ferry's Anderson hit a fly ball to left that was lost in the lights. The play went for a run-scoring double and an 8-4 reading.

West Virginia plated two additional runs in the eighth before Menzie finished strong.

The Buckeye mound corps, featuring Billy Williams (Toronto), Brett Hambleton (Wellsville), Boughner, Ludwig, Mike DiAngelo (Steubenville) and Menzie teamed for 12 Ks and five walks.

West Virginia's seven-man staff totaled 13 strikeouts and four walks.

Hambleton drilled a double for the winners while Barnesville's Boomer Reed also rapped a base hit.

Downer, Edwards and Ripley produced two hits apiece for West Virginia.

In addition to Barnesville's Wilson, the Ohio staff included Tom Sliva (St. John's), Fred Heatherington (Steubenville) and Matt Morrison (Toronto).

Coaching on the West Virginia side were Magnolia's Dave Cisar, Wheeling Central's Terry Edwards and Linsly's Gary Sprague. Linescore:

West Virginia 200 002 020 -- 6 10 5
Ohio 211 022 00x -- 8 9 2

BATTERIES: Edwards, Meador (3), Blatt (4), Dobbs (5), Hartzell (6), Sleime (7), Wise (8) and Zitzelsberger, White (4), Blatt (7); Williams, Hambleton (2), Boughner (4), Ludwig (6), DiAngelo (7), Menzie (8) and Cummings.

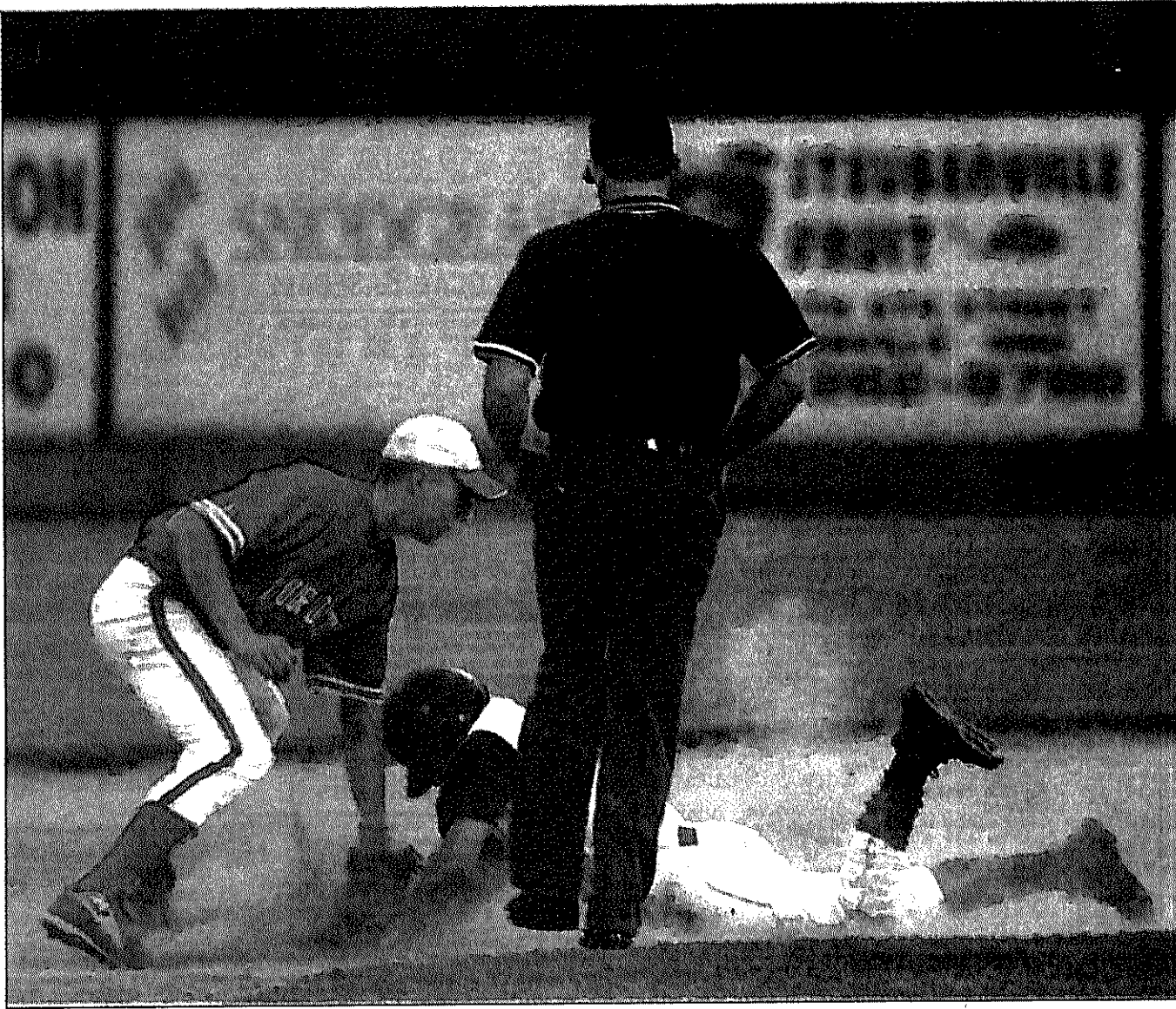


Photo by Alex Kozlowski

Ohio shortstop Billy Williams of Toronto tags out West Virginia's Josh Sleime of Wheeling Central during the fourth inning of Monday's OVAC all-star baseball game. The Buckeyes edged the Mountaineers, 8-6.

Banks Leads Buckeyes

By **MIKE HUGHES**
Staff Writer

Justin Banks drove home three runs and Ohio took advantage of six West Virginia errors as the Buckeyes downed the Mountaineers 8-6 in the annual OVAC All-Star Baseball game at Vaccaro Field in Steubenville Monday night.

Banks only played in the first-three innings, recording two at-bats, but that was more than enough time for the Steubenville third-baseman to make his presence felt.

With his team trailing 2-0 after a half inning of play, Banks ripped a two-run single to left center off of West Virginia starter Justin Edwards to knot the game at two.

In the third inning, with his team ahead 3-2, Banks took Sean Meador's first offering deep over the fence in left center for a solo shot.

Banks, who has been slumping offensively lately, was more than happy with his performance.

"It is about time I broke out of my slump," said Banks, who will be headed to Youngstown State to play baseball in the fall. "This was a great way to end the season."

Wellsville ace Brett Hambleton entered the game in the second inning for Ohio, registering three strikeouts and retiring the side in order over the next two-innings.

Thanks to Banks' offensive production, Hambleton was able to earn the win in the nine-run ballgame, as the Ohio squad held a 4-2 advantage when Hambleton gave way to Beallsville's Aaron Boughner in the fifth.

Ohio led the rest of the way, but West Virginia was not without its moments, for despite playing through troublesome fielding miscues in the middle innings, the Mountaineers were able to keep it close.

Trailing 6-2 in the sixth, Wheeling Park's Robbie Downer led off the inning with a blast to deep center off of Toronto's Matt Ludewig.

Centerfielder Chad Mieczkowski

appeared in position to make the play, but was unable to come up with the catch. It allowed Downer, whose blazing speed allowed him to steal 35 bases during the W.Va. regular season, to motor around the bases for an inside-the-park homer. John Marshall's Brian White later scored on an error, cutting the Ohio lead to 6-4.

West Virginia had one more chance to even the score in the ninth when Justin Edwards reached first on an infield comebacker to pitcher Adam Menzie of Cambridge that ricocheted off Menzie's leg and left him limping slightly.

But with runners on first and second with one out, Menzie ignored the pain, kept his composure, and retired the last-two batters to earn the save.

Magnolia's Dave Cisar was named the OVAC Coach of the Year, and Mark Hartlieb of Bellaire St. John's (Class A), Billy Williams of Toronto (AA), Jed Stephen of Shenandoah (AAA) were named Players of the Year.

Banks was named Class AAAA Player of the Year.