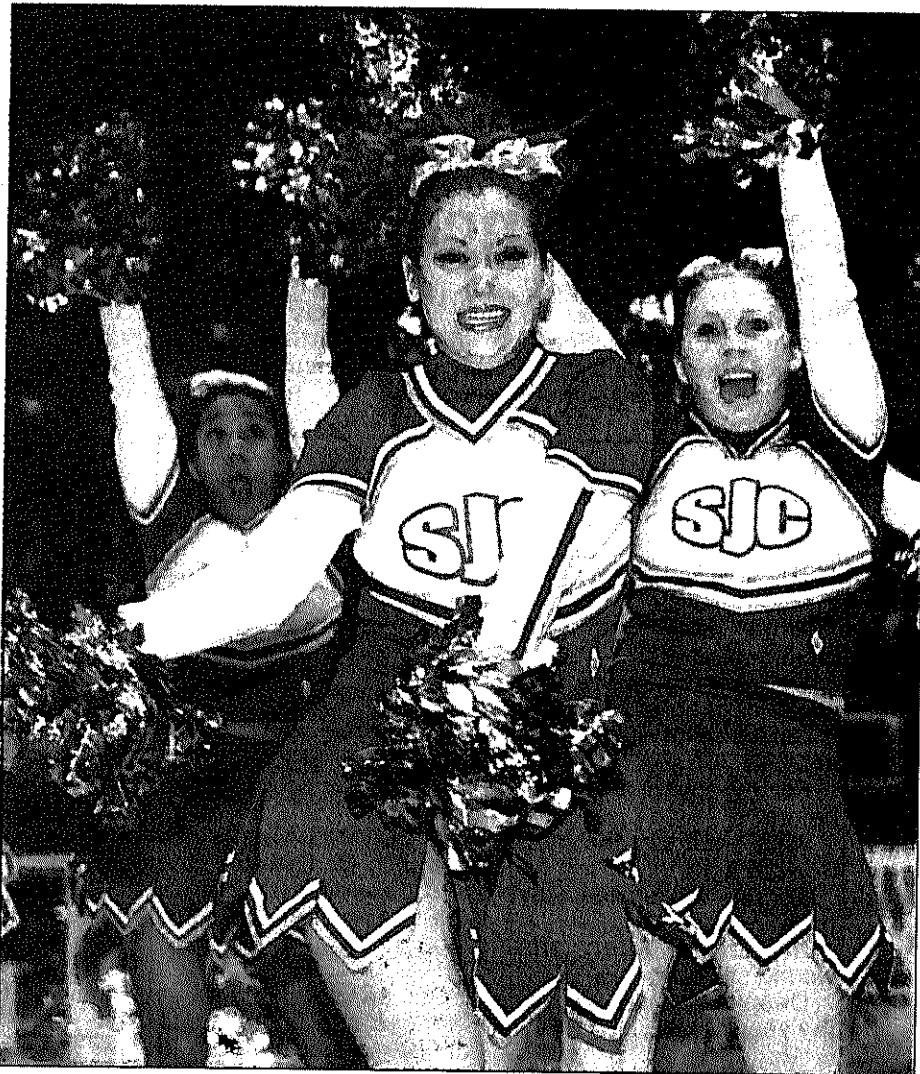


THE MARTINS Ferry Purple Riders perform one of their routines at Saturday's OVAC cheering competition at WesBanco Arena in Wheeling. T-L Photos/JOEL JOSEPH

Center stage

• OVAC cheering competition held at WesBanco Arena



ST. JOHN Central cheerleaders perform a routine at Saturday's OVAC competition.

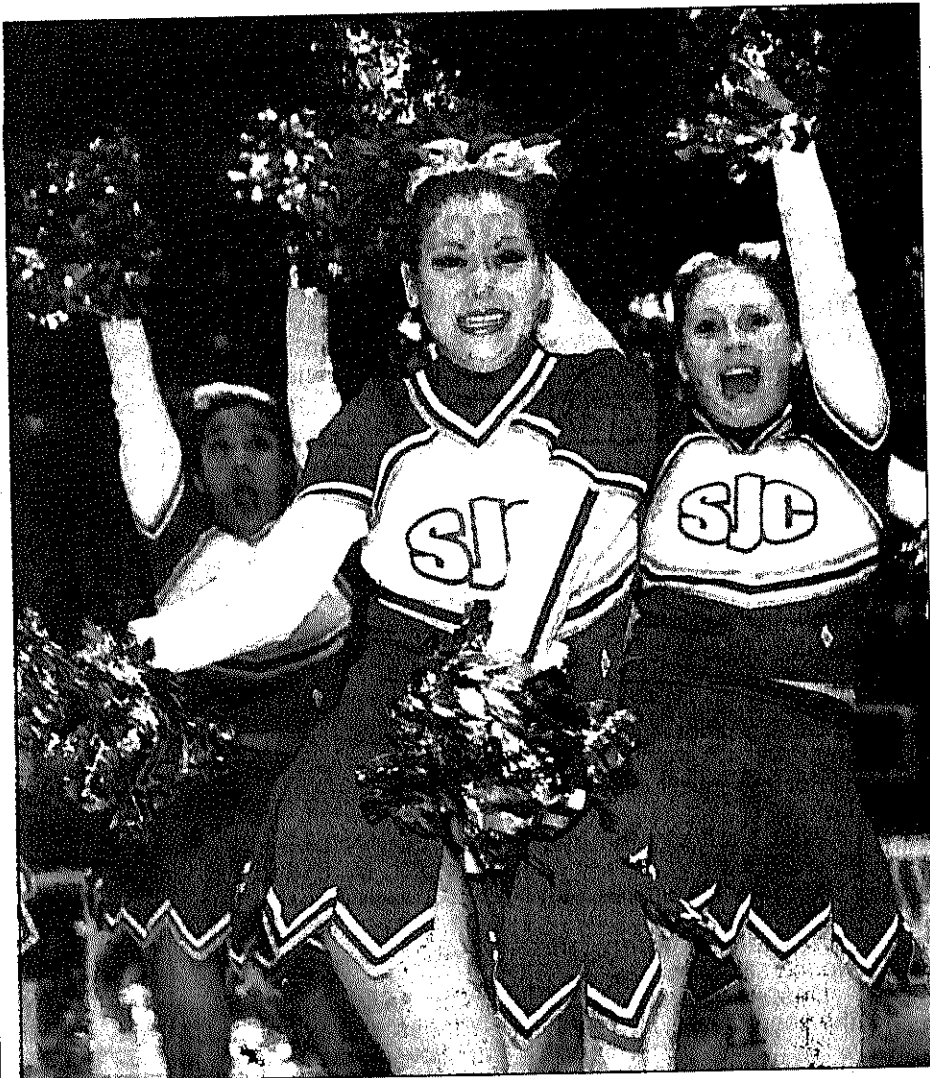


GIVING THE Barnesville cheering team a boost during Saturday's OVAC competition was 3-year-old Madison Detling.



Center stage

• OVAC cheering competition held at WesBanco Arena



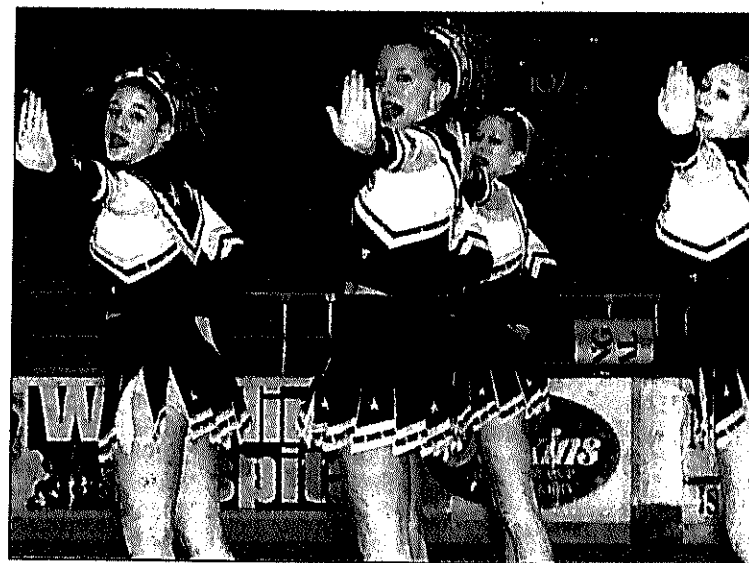
ST. JOHN Central cheerleaders perform a routine at Saturday's OVAC competition.



GIVING THE Barnesville cheering team a boost during Saturday's OVAC competition was 3-year-old Madison Detling.



THE BUCKEYE Local cheerleading squad participates Saturday in the OVAC competition held at WesBanco Arena in Wheeling.



At left, members of the Wheeling Park perform during Saturday's OVAC Cheering Championships at Wesbanco Arena. Top right, members of the Weir High School team perform. Bottom right, Buckeye Local's squad performs its routine. Photos by Alex Kuzlowski

Reason to Cheer

Wheeling Park regains crown; Maroon Knights claim 10th straight title

By JOSH STROPE
Staff Writer

After years of frustration, winning can cure everything.

For the past two years, the Wheeling Park cheerleaders have watched Brooke High win the W.Va. Class AAA state championship and OVAC Class 4-A crown with ease.

Not this year.

The Patriots were the final team to participate at the 15th Annual OVAC Cheerleading Competition and saved the best for last as they won their first OVAC championship since 2002 and 12th overall Saturday at WesBanco Arena.

"This is so exciting, words can't describe how amazing this feeling is," Wheeling Park co-head coach Shawna Shepherd said. "All the hard work these girls put in, they truly deserved this."

Wheeling Park saw its run of 11 consecutive championships end in 2003 to Weir, before falling the following two years to the Bruins.

A new crop of Patriot cheerleaders featuring

six freshmen and one sophomore didn't know the heartbreak of past failures but two seniors did — Allie Crutchfield and Brittany Vincent.

"I was there at the first one when we lost, and we haven't one since so this is so important to have won," Crutchfield said.

"When you beat a rival like Brooke, it makes it that much sweeter."

"We knew what we had to do when we were out there and it's so amazing to have won," Vincent said.

The Bruins entered the Class 4-A portion of the tournament first, looking to defend their crown.

After a stunning performance, the wait was on.

The other five remaining teams put on a great show, including third place finisher Edison, but the buzz centered around Brooke and Wheeling Park.

"You never know until it's over," Shepherd said.

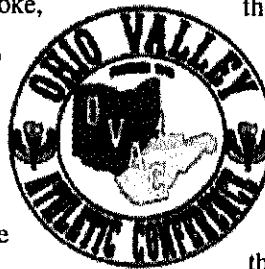
"It's a matter of what judges are looking for and you have to hope you impressed them in that," Wheeling Park co-head coach Audrey Abraham.

"There is such good competition in the OVAC and to be able to beat some of these great teams, especially one as talented as Brooke, is an emotional high."

Park and Brooke fans cheered back and forth as all the teams made their way to the floor for the final announcement.

Wheeling Park was named the winners, sending the happy group into a hugging frenzy and sending the seniors out with a piece of history. "There was no better way to end our time here than this," Crutchfield said.

As for the advantage of coming on last, the coaches felt it was to their benefit.



See, Cheer, Page B2

CHEER

Continued from page B1

Of course, the cheerleaders didn't feel the same way.

"We didn't watch any of the performances because we wanted to be focused on what we had to do," Vincent said.

And as for their performance? "We don't remember one bit of it," Crutchfield said. "It was all a blur of smiling. We were just told to smile until it hurts."

The Patriots weren't the only team Saturday to regain their title.

In Class AAA, St. Clairsville convinced Shawn Tomlan to come out of retirement to lead the Red Devils back to the

championship.

St. Clairsville won the OVAC Cheerleading Competition in 2004 before losing last season to Martins Ferry.

The Purple Riders put on another strong performance en route to a second-place finish, but it was the Red Devils who came out the winners of this year's competition.

"It feels good, but they have been practicing five days a week and working hard to get this," Tomlan said. "To beat someone like Martins Ferry, that was a biggie."

"Losing last year gave them

something to come out and strive for this season and this is something for them to always remember."

In Class AA, it was business as usual for Wheeling Central.

The Maroon Knights won their 10th straight OVAC cheerleading title, outlasting Barnesville and Toronto.

Weirton Madonna started off the event by winning the Class A crown, taking its fourth championship and first since 2003.

Coming in second was nine-time champion Paden City. Last year's winner, Bellaire St.

John, came in sixth place.
The 15 Annual OVAC Cheering Competition (at WesBanco Arena)

- Class A
1. Weirton Madonna
 2. Paden City
 3. Linsly
 4. Shadyside
 5. Bridgeport
 6. Bellaire St. John
 7. Bishop Donahue

- Class AA
1. Wheeling Central
 2. Barnesville
 3. Toronto

- Class AAA
1. St. Clairsville
 2. Martins Ferry
 3. Magnolia
 4. Indian Creek
 5. Union Local

- Class AAAA
1. Wheeling Park
 2. Brooke
 3. Edison

Red Devils take top honors



CELEBRATING THEIR victory in the OVAC Class AAA cheerleading competition Saturday at WesBanco Arena are the St. Clairsville Red Devils. Members of the team include Jayme Burghy, Megan Campbell, Emilee Carlton, Mary Cash, Mallory Cooper, Lauren DeFilippo, MacKenzie Earlwine, Brooke Hays, Brittany Humphreys, Alexandra Mitchell, Lindsey Neavin, Jessica Shanks, Cheryl Vicker and Kelsey Vincent. They are coached by Shawn Tomlan. See related photos on page B1.

T-L Photos/JOEL JOSEPH



ST. CLAIRSVILLE cheerleaders, left photo, perform one of their routines during Saturday's OVAC cheerleading event held at WesBanco Arena in Wheeling. Red Devil fans, right photo, cheer on their team to victory.

Cheerleaders Set for OVAC

Central, Brooke eye continued dominance

By JOSH STROPE
Staff Writer

The 15th annual OVAC Cheering Competition kicks off Saturday at WesBanco Arena with 35 school competing for the championship in all four classes.

"We have a lot more squads and the crowds are getting bigger and bigger every year," Tournament Director Libby Shepherd said. "There's a lot of enthusiasm in all the girls for this event."

The competition starts off with the Bellaire St. John looking to defend its title in Class A.

The Fighting Irish won their first OVAC title last year and will go on second in this tournament.

Each team draws a number to see which goes in what order. The Fighting Irish will follow Linsly to start off the day.

For the past decade, Class AA has belonged to Wheeling Central.

The Maroon Knights have captured nine straight titles and 12 of the last 13.

Runners-up in W.Va. Class A earlier this school year, Wheeling Central would look to keep its impressive run going.

Martins Ferry ended a 10-year drought last year as Cathie Jones led the Purple Riders to the Class AAA crown.

"We have the same team back as last year and we are really excited about defending our crown," Jones said. "The OVAC Tournament is really a big deal for our girls."

The Purple Riders have been working since last June for this very moment, and Jones is confident in the abilities of her squad.

Martins Ferry has now become the team that everyone is looking to top.

"We try to just focus on ourselves and not look at everyone else," Jones said. "We've had hours and hours and hours of practice and getting our repeti-

tions down.

"Everyone here is friends and we are the true definition of a team."

The Purple Riders look to get strong competition from past champions St. Clairsville and Tyler Consolidated.

Much like Wheeling Central, Brooke has been the dominant cheering squad in W.Va.'s largest class and the OVAC Tournament hasn't been much different.

The winners of six consecutive W.Va. Class AAA championships have captured the OVAC Class AAAA title the past two years under head coach Chris Stucin.

The Bruins will start off the division with one their biggest challenges waiting until last.

Wheeling Park, winner of 11 titles, will look to capture its first OVAC Championship since 2002 and will be the final squad to compete.

While Brooke and Wheeling Central are used to being in the spotlight, Jones is hoping Martins Ferry can become just as successful.

"Being defending champions is an honor and a great motivator," she said.

"We want to be able to do just as well, if not better, than we did last year.

"This is a great tournament and there will be a lot of good teams giving their best effort."

Each routine will last no more than three minutes and will be judged on cheering, dancing, and overall performance.

Two cheerleaders participating in the event will be awarded scholarships in May, along with other criteria such as academics.

"This is a very laid back competition and its a fun type of tournament," Shepherd said.

"The important part is that the girls have fun."

The Class A competition begins at 9:30 a.m.
Doors open at 8:30 a.m.



CHEERLEADERS CAPTURE TITLE

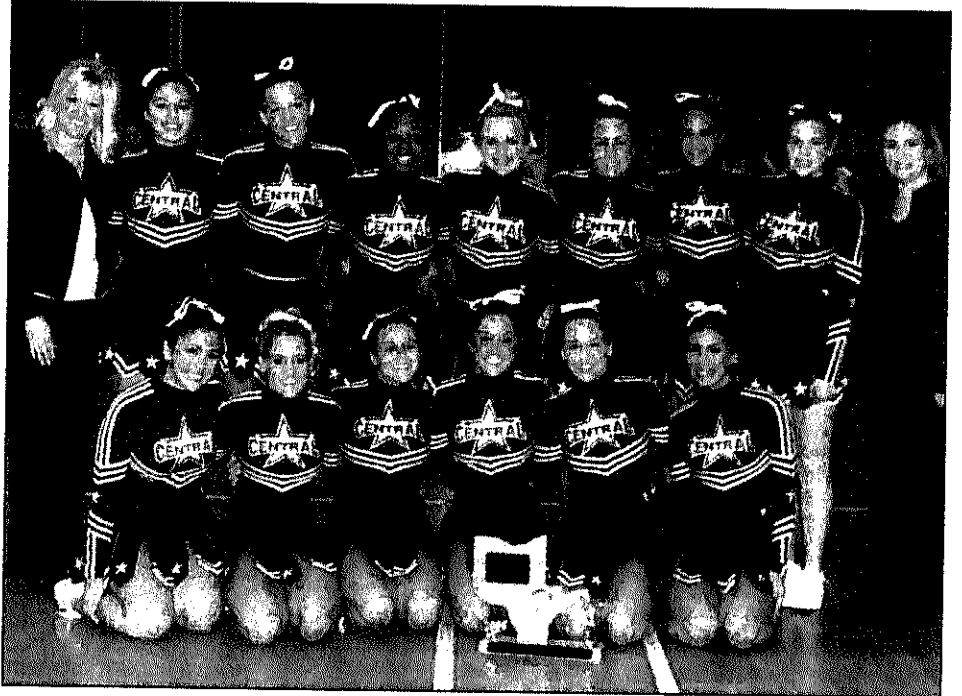


Photo provided
The Wheeling Central Catholic High School varsity cheerleaders captured the AA title and had the highest score of all four divisions in the 2006 Ohio Valley Athletic Conference Cheerleading Championship. Members of the squad are, kneeling from left, Jane Allen, Emily Leonard, Meghan DeLorenzo, Amanda Sleime, Caitlyn Kish and Shannon Selak. Standing, from left, are coach Arica Holt, Brittany Olejasz, Shalynn Marvin, Justina Martin, Timorie Underwood, Kelly Gaudet, Alyssa Grubler, Arica Cross and coach Corey Pietranton. The squad also captured runner-up honors in the 2005 West Virginia State Cheerleading championship.