

# stuns Fort Frye

By KIM NORTH  
Staff Writer

CADIZ — It's been said time and time before, offense puts points on the scoreboard, but defense wins championships.

Such was the case Saturday morning at Harrison Central High School where the top-seeded Purple Riders (14-4) put up just enough points to take down No. 2 Fort Frye, 37-33, in the OVAC WVU Medicine Class 3A Girls Basketball championship game.

The title was the third for Martins Ferry in program history. The others came in 2009 and 2020.

"We got all we wanted from them," Martins Ferry head coach Dave Reasbeck said. "That is one great basketball team."

Reasbeck said back in November that his team expected to be playing in the championship game.

"This is where we wanted to be, but it wasn't an easy path," he added. "To be able to beat a team (Union Local) coached by Scooter Tolzda in the semifinals and then beat Fort Frye coached by Dan Liedtke in the finals is quite an accomplishment. Fort Frye might be the best team in the Eastern District."

The Purple Riders were very patient on offense.

"If you would've told me we'd score 37 points and win against that team, I'm not sure I would've believed you."

Game MVP Lindsey Best



Photo by KIM NORTH

**MARTINS FERRY** head coach Dave Reasbeck looks at his championship medal Saturday while senior Danielle Lude carries the OVAC WVU Medicine Class 3A championship trophy after the Purple Riders defeated Fort Frye at Harrison Central High School.

was just that ... at her best. The returning all-Ohioan junior scored a game-high 19 points, grabbed five rebounds and knocked down five of six free throws down the stretch.

"Lindsey was tremendous," Reasbeck allowed. "But it just wasn't her. Everyone played well. We had to against a team like that. It's not supposed to be easy when you're playing for a championship."

Martins Ferry led 11-7 after the first quarter but watched the Cadets battle back to draw even as Ava Huffman hit a layup just before the halftime buzzer for a 16-all deadlock.

Each team tallied nine points in a back-and-forth third quarter and were tied at 31 midway through the fourth quarter before Best delivered a three-pointer from

the top of the key for a 34-31 lead her team would never relinquish.

"That was a huge shot," Reasbeck said.

Following turnovers by each team, Reasbeck called time with 21.2 seconds remaining. The Purple Riders would run a minute off the clock but missed a layup and Fort Frye called timeout with 63 ticks left.

Ella Dowler brought the Cadets to within one, 33-32, and Liedtke called time with 50.4 showing.

Best was fouled with 27 seconds on the clock and hit the first for a 35-33 lead. She missed the second and Fort Frye brought the ball up court.

However, a timeout was called before Emma Duskey let a three-ball go that splashed the net with 18.9

left. Fort Frye worked the ball around but dribbled it out of bounds with 9.7 remaining. Best was fouled again and knocked down both as the clock read 7.7.

Although two of the five Martins Ferry starters didn't score, freshman Giana Chirpas added nine points and senior Danielle Lude had even.

None of Fort Frye's starting five cracked double figures as Duskey and Dowler each had eight. Huffman added seven.

The Purple Riders shot 12 for 26 (46.1 percent), grabbed 17 rebounds and charted 13 turnovers. The Cadets were 14 of 43 (32.5), had 23 boards and were guilty of just nine turnovers.

Martins Ferry returns to action Wednesday at Monroe Central.

# girls pairings

By MARK DIERKES  
For The Times Leader

COLUMBUS — The OHSAA determined its statewide girls tournament pairings Sunday and several local schools found themselves seeded high for sectional action in Divisions II, III and IV.

OVAC 2-A champion River and runnerup Monroe Central were seeded 2-3 in D-IV behind Union Local and Bellaire 3rd and 4th in D-III, while OVAC titleists Indian Creek (4-A) and Martins Ferry (3-A) were 2-3 in D-II.

Overall top seeds are West Muskingum (II), Fort Frye (III) and Hiland (IV). Seeding is determined by the MaxPreps RPI formula developed by the coaches association and adopted by the OHSAA.

Opening round action begins with a pair of pigtail games Monday, Feb. 19. River's Lady Pilots host #18 Newcomerstown in the lower bracket, while #8 Steubenville Central opposes #12 Bishop Rosecrans in the upper bracket. All tournament weeknight games tipoff at 7. Saturday starts are at 1.

The remainder of the schools debut on the Wednesday, Feb. 21 with the higher seeded schools hosting. Sectional finals are slated for the 24th, while District play begins Feb. 28. Regional play is at Zanesville (II), Logan (III) and Pickerington (IV).

## DIVISION II EAST-1 UPPER BRACKET

Martins Ferry's Lady Riders debut Saturday Feb. 24th versus the #14 Beaver Local/#7 Steubenville winner: Indian Creek hosts #19 Cambridge (winner faces #20 River View).

## DIVISION II EAST-1 LOWER BRACKET

Maysville, 16-seed, faces #4 Carrollton/#18 New Philadelphia winner: #12 Indian Valley vs. #6 John Glenn.

## DIVISION II EAST-2 UPPER BRACKET

Coshocton, seeded 21st, faces West Muskingum/#17 Zanesville winner; #9 East Liverpool vs. #10 Philo.

#5 West Holmes/#15 Minerva winner faces #13 Morgan; Harrison Central's Lady Huskies, seeded 11th, meets #8 Dover on the 24th.

See PAIRING, Page B2

# Barnesville cheerleaders win OVAC 3A championship

By NICK HENTHORN  
Sports Editor

WHEELING — Cheer teams from across the OVAC converged on WesBanco Arena to compete for the conference championships Saturday - and for some OVAC teams, the competition amounted to their final stop for the season.

In a five-tiered affair starting bright and early Saturday morning, the Madonna Blue Dons took the crown at 1A, the Toronto Red Knights won in 2A, the Barnesville Shamrocks came out atop 3A, the St. Clairsville Red Devils were first in 4A, and the Wheeling Park Patriots were champs in 5A.

More teams competed in 2023 than in years prior, and - with the event involving cheer squads from both West Virginia and Ohio - the scoring system was a hybrid of requirements from both states.

The unorthodox nature of the competition had

teams preparing new routines just for the event.

Wheeling Park was able to rise to the top under the OVAC conditions to end their season with a 5A conference title.

"It means a lot," Wheeling Park head coach Shawna Shepherd said. "It's a long season. We officially start in August, so to keep kids healthy and motivated through three different routines - because this routine is very different from our regional and state routine, there are no stunts - it's sometimes hard."

"But this is a great group, it's probably one of the best groups I've ever coached, and they're just a family. They love each other, they work hard and they push each other. We had a lot of injuries and illnesses all this week, and we pushed through. I'm very happy with the outcome. It wasn't our best performance, but I'll take it."

See BARNESVILLE, Page B2



Photo Provided

**THE BARNESVILLE** Shamrocks, pictured with their OVAC 3A Championship on Saturday inside WesBanco Arena.





Photo by Kim North  
Cameron's Ashlynn Van Tassel drives the baseline during Saturday's OVAC WVU Medicine Class 1A championship game against Trinity at Harrison Central High School. Van Tassel scored 38 points, pulled down 20 rebounds and blocked five shots as the Dragons won their fourth title in a row, 86-60, over the Warriors.

■ CLASS 1A

# Cameron Wins Unprecedented 4th Title In Row

By KIM NORTH  
Staff Writer

CADIZ — The seniors on the Cameron girls' basketball team continue to etch their names in the record books.

Following Saturday's 86-60 rout of No. 2 Trinity (13-5) in the OVAC WVU Medicine Class 1A championship game inside Harrison Central High School, the Dragons (13-5) became the first team - male or female - to win four consecutive titles, having already prevailed in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

"I think this one is really special because it is our fourth in a row," Cameron Head Coach Holly Pettit said. "That says something about the seniors on my team who have been a part of that success. I can't say enough about them and what they have done for this program."

As has been the norm for the last three-and-a-half seasons, Cameron was led by Youngstown State University recruit Ashlynn Van Tassel.

Please see CAMERON, Page 11



Photo by Kim North  
Members of the Wheeling Park girls' basketball team gather around junior Alexis Bordas, holding the OVAC WVU Medicine Class 5A championship trophy, following the Patriots' 68-53 victory over Morgantown at Harrison Central High School on Saturday. The win was the 15th overall title, tying St. John Central for the most in OVAC girls basketball history.

## Patriots Win Record-Tying 15th OVAC Championship

By KIM NORTH  
Staff Writer

CADIZ — With its workman-like 68-53 victory over top-seeded and rival Morgantown in the OVAC WVU Medicine Class 5A Girls Basketball Championship, No. 2 Wheeling Park tied the record for overall titles with St. John Central at 15.

"That's nice and everything," Wheeling Park head coach Ryan Young said. "It's good for the girls, but, honestly, we've got bigger goals ahead."

The title was the Patriots first since the COVID year of 2020.

### MORE INSIDE

• River, Indian Creek repeat as OVAC champions in 2A, 4A/10

They've also captured crowns in 1976, 1978, 1980, 1986, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2011, 2004, 2011, 2012 and 2017. Young is now 2-4 all-time.

"One of our keys coming in was to get off to a good start," Young said. "The last two years we've come into this game against Morgantown and didn't get off to good starts and that

can be attributed to us getting in a hole that we couldn't dig our way out of."

Such was not the case on Saturday.

An 8-0 run in the latter stages of the opening quarter rallied the Patriots from a 4-3 deficit to a 11-4 advantage and they were never seriously threatened by the Mohigans (12-5). It was 14-9 at the end of eight minutes before each team posted a dozen points in the second quarter for a 26-21 margin at the half.

Please see PARK, Page 10



Photo by Kim North  
Martins Ferry's Alivia Reese (15) scores two points against Fort Frye during Saturday's OVAC WVU Medicine Class 3A championship at Harrison Central High School.

■ CLASS 3A

# Ferry Edges Fort Frye For 3A Crown

By KIM NORTH  
Staff Writer

CADIZ — It's been said time and time before, offense puts points on the scoreboard, but defense wins championships.

Such was the case Saturday morning at Harrison Central High School where the top-seeded Purple Riders (14-4) put up just enough points to take down No. 2 Fort Frye, 37-33, in the OVAC WVU Medicine Class 3A Girls Basketball championship game.

The title was the third for Martins Ferry in program history. The others came in 2009 and 2020.

"We got all we wanted from them," Martins Ferry head coach Dave Reasbeck said. "That is one

great basketball team."

Reasbeck said back in November that his team expected to be playing in the championship game.

"This is where we wanted to be, but it wasn't an easy path," he added. "To be able to beat a team (Union Local) coached by Scooter Tolzda in the semifinals and then beat Fort Frye coached by Dan Liedtke in the finals is quite an accomplishment. Fort Frye might be the best team in the Eastern District."

The Purple Riders were very patient on offense.

"If you would've told me we'd score 37 points and win against that team, I'm not sure I would've believed you."

Game MVP Lindsey Best was just that ... at her best. The returning all-Ohioan junior scored a game-high 19 points, grabbed five rebounds and knocked down five of six free throws down the stretch.

"Lindsey was tremendous," Reasbeck said. "But it just wasn't her. Everyone played well. We had to against a team like that. It's not supposed to be easy when you're playing for a championship."

Martins Ferry led 11-7 after the first quarter but watched the Cadets battle back to draw even as Ava Huffman hit a layup just before the halftime buzzer for a 16-all deadlock.

Please see FERRY, Page 11

# Heilman, Parker, Humpe And Miller Capture Region 1 Titles

By JOHN McCABE

WELLSBURG — Area swimmers captured four individual titles and one relay crown during Saturday's West Virginia Secondary Schools Activities Commission Region 1 Swim Championships at Brooke High School.

Winning individual honors were Wheeling Park senior Abby Heilman in the 100 breast (1:13.33); Wheeling Park junior Levi Parker in the 200 freestyle (1:50.15); Wheeling Central senior JulieAnne Humpe in the 100 backstroke (1:02.96); and John Marshall junior sprinter Maitlyn Miller in the 100 freestyle (57.28). Brooke High School's 200 freestyle relay team of Ella Dietrich, Ella McCullough, Lyla Horvath and Faith Farrell also captured top honors in a time of 1:46.19.

Heilman, Parker and Miller also picked up runner-up honors in the 200 Individual Medley, the 100 backstroke and the 50 freestyle, respectively. Humpe finished third in the 200 IM.

For those finishes, Heilman, Parker, Miller and Humpe received All-Region recognition for points scored on Saturday.

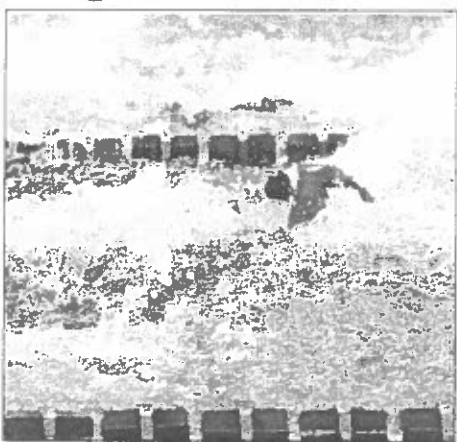


Photo by John McCabe  
Wheeling Park High School junior Levi Parker swims the 100 backstroke during Saturday's West Virginia Secondary Schools Activities Commission Region 1 Swim Championship at Brooke High School. Parker finished second in the event, breaking a Wheeling Park school record in the process.

Overall, Parkersburg South had a strong showing on both the boys and the girls side of the pool.

Please see REGION 1, Page 11



Photo Provided  
The Wheeling Park Patriots pose with their OVAC 5A Championship on Saturday inside WesBanco Arena.

# OVAC Cheering Champs Crowned

By NICK HENTHORN  
Sports Editor

WHEELING — Cheer teams from across the OVAC converged on WesBanco Arena to compete for the conference championships Saturday - and for some OVAC teams, the competition amounted to their final stop for the season.

In a five-tiered affair starting bright

and early Saturday morning, the Madonna Blue Dons took the crown at 1A, the Toronto Red Knights won in 2A, the Barnesville Shamrocks came out atop 3A, the St. Clairsville Red Devils were first in 4A, and the Wheeling Park Patriots were champs in 5A.

Please see CHEERING, Page 11

31 midway through the fourth quarter before Best delivered a three-pointer from the top of the key for a 34-31 lead her team would never relinquish.

"That was a huge shot," Reasbeck said.

Following turnovers by each team, Reasbeck called time with 21.2 seconds remaining. The Purple Riders would run a minute off the clock but missed a layup and Fort Frye called timeout with 63 ticks left.

Ella Dowler brought the Cadets to within one, 33-32, and Liedtke called time with 50.4 showing.

Best was fouled with 27 seconds on the clock and hit the first for a 35-33 lead. She missed the second and Fort Frye brought the ball up court. However, a timeout was called before Emma

Fort Frye worked the ball around but dribbled it out of bounds with 9.7 remaining. Best was fouled again and knocked down both as the clock read 7.7.

Although two of the five Martins Ferry starters didn't score, freshman Giana Chirpas added nine points and senior Danielle Lude had even.

None of Fort Frye's starting five cracked double figures as Duskey and Dowler each had eight. Huffman added seven.

The Purple Riders shot 12 for 26 (46.1 percent), grabbed 17 rebounds and charted 13 turnovers. The Cadets were 14 of 43 (32.5), had 23 boards and were guilty of just nine turnovers.

Martins Ferry returns to action Wednesday at Monroe Central.

or, and — with the event involving cheer squads from both West Virginia and Ohio — the scoring system was a hybrid of requirements from both states. The unorthodox nature of the competition had teams preparing new routines just for the event. Wheeling Park was able to rise to the top under the OVAC conditions to end their season with a 5A conference title.

"It means a lot," Wheeling Park head coach Shawna Shepherd said. "It's a long season. We officially start in August, so to keep kids healthy and motivated through three different routines — because this routine is very different from our regional and state routine, there are no stunts — it's sometimes hard."

"But this is a great group, it's probably one of the best groups I've ever coached, and they're just a family. They love each other, they work hard and they push each other. We had a lot of injuries and illnesses all this week, and we pushed through. I'm very happy with the outcome. It wasn't our best performance, but I'll take it."

In addition to the 3A title, Barnesville also finished with the overall high score Saturday. It was their third straight conference championship, something the Shamrocks took great pride in.

"Our team really went in wanting to land our third straight OVAC title in the 3A division," Barnesville head coach Abby McClelland said. "Not only did they do that, but they came out with the overall highest score of the competition. That really was the icing



The Barnesville Shamrocks pose with their OVAC 3A Championship trophy on Saturday inside WesBanco Arena.

Photo Provided

on the cake.

"I'm super proud of them and I think they did an amazing job yesterday. We really focused on all the little things to improve their performance competition after competition, and I think they really nailed it yesterday."

For Barnesville, the OVAC competition was one part of a busy weekend. On Sunday, the 'Rocks qualified for the OASSA Cheer & Dance state competition in March for both Game Day and Traditional. They are also leaving Friday to compete at ESPN Wide World of Sports' 2024 UCA National High School Cheerleading Championship at Disney World.

Even with more to come from Barnesville, their performances at OVAC will be a big part of this year's graduating class, seniors Belle Corder and Tate Spangenburg.

"They've gone undefeated in their career for OVAC titles," McClelland said. "I think that's really amazing for them to put on their record. Tate and Belle are amaz-

ing leaders and they really bring the team together. It was a great way for them to end their OVAC cheer career."

While teams on the Ohio side of the river will continue on, some West Virginia teams like Wheeling Park wrapped up their year Saturday.

For the Patriots, their win at WesBanco was the cap on what had been a successful season, and standout careers for seniors Adam Carman, AJ Walters and Civita Cooper.

"This is our last competition," Shepherd said. "We had regionals in November that we won, we competed in states and won runner-up."

"It's kind of bitter-sweet, especially for my three seniors who have been here four years, and they're great. I really wanted it for them."

River won first place at the competition's small school non-tumbling routine, while Edison won the large school counterpart. Wheeling Central was runner-up in 3A, and John Marshall was runner-up in 5A.

## REGION 1

(Continued from Page 9)

As a team, South broke four Region 1 meet records — two by Jordan Claypoole (50 free in 24.2 and the 100 butterfly in 56.58), one by Quade Harris in the 100 back (53.57), and the boys 200 medley relay team set a new mark at 1:41.55.

Parkersburg South captured the boys' overall title over Wheeling Park, while Morgantown High edged out Brooke by three points for the girls' crown.

Brooke head coach Kelsie Blumette said her girls gave it their all on Saturday.

"I'm extremely proud. Our girls worked so hard, and the results came through today. We have a number of girls that received automatic bids to state, and others that will get at-large bids. I couldn't have asked more from them; a lot of personal bests, a lot of great swims. Just a great day for Brooke," she said.

Wheeling Central head coach Jeanie Humpe also said her team gave its all. "Our swimmers are talented and they've really put in the work this year. I'm proud of all of them. The competition each year keeps getting better and better, and to see our swimmers continue to excel lets me know we're on the right path."

Her daughter also had a remarkable day in the pool after a season of adversity. "She's back in form," Humpe said. "Every time she swims, she's amazing. She's ready for states."

### GIRLS

Outside of strong swims from Heilman, Miller and Humpe, Wheeling Park sophomore Molly George had two solid swims. She qualified for states by finishing second in both the 100 fly (1:06.71) and the 100 back (1:04.17).

Brooke's Lyla Horvath put forth a stellar performance in the 200 freestyle where she finished second at 2:09.84, a drop of more than 4 seconds from her seed time. Wheeling Central freshman Ellie Manning placed fourth at 2:13.2.

In the 50 free, Brooke's Farrell finished third to earn an automatic bid to states, touching just behind Miller at 26.06. Brooke's McCullough finished third in the 100 freestyle at 57.68, just ahead of Farrell (57.96). Horvath placed fourth in



Photos by John McCabe

Wheeling Park High School senior Jackson Kiziminski performs the 100 breaststroke during Saturday's West Virginia Secondary Schools Activities Commission Region 1 Swim Championship at Brooke High School. BELOW: Wheeling Park High School senior Max Hill swims the fly portion of the 200 medley relay on Saturday.



the 500 free at 5:48.3.

Brooke's Kiersten Harvath finished third in the 100 back, while McCullough finished just behind Heilman in the 100 breast (1:14.79). Brooke 4X100 free relay squad finished second behind Morgantown.

### BOYS

Wheeling Park had a strong showing Saturday to finish second to Parkersburg South. Outside of Parker's first and second-place finishes, the team saw a number of strong swims.

Park's boys started strong with an opening second-place finish in the 200 medley relay. The team of Parker, Jackson Kiziminski, Max Hill and Nate LaMagna finished in 1:46.99.

Parker ran away from the competition in the 200 freestyle, posting a 1:50.15, .7 seconds faster than his seed time and more than 7 seconds faster than his nearest competitor. Wheeling Central's Alex Mihalovich earned an automatic bid to states by finishing third in the 200 freestyle at 1:59.3.

In the 200 IM, Kiziminski finished a strong third and earned

an automatic bid to states at 2:14.48, followed by John Marshall's Wyatt Jefferson in fourth at 2:19.08 and Brooke's Henry Anderson placing fifth at 2:22.76.

In the 50 freestyle, Park's Malachi Smith earned his bid to states with a 23.61, good for second. His teammate, Nathan LaMagna, finished third in the event at 23.69 and earns an automatic bid to Morgantown. Brooke's Dameon Rea finished a strong fourth at 23.9. Smith also finished fourth in the 100 freestyle at 53.33.

Kiziminski earned his second individual event bid to states in the 100 breast with a time of 1:06.33. John Marshall's Wyatt Jefferson finished second in the event at 1:04.79.

Wheeling Park head coach Michael Cook said his squad is now looking for strong swims at states, set for Feb. 15-16 in Morgantown. "We swam really well. Some things didn't pan out exactly as we expected them to, and we had a late injury, but overall we had a really good day with a couple exceptional individual swims," he said.

## CAMERON

(Continued from Page 9)

The 6-3 senior post had game-highs of 38 points, 20 rebounds and five blocked shots. For her efforts, she was voted the game MVP for the third straight year.

"It feels great," Van Tassell said of the fourth title. "The first three (titles) we played pretty good. Today we played a great team game. It's amazing that we can bring another title back to our small town."

The lop-sided victory also makes eight straight OVAC Tournament wins and the Dragons have won six consecutive W.Va. Class A state tournament contests. They lost to Beallsville in the 2020 OVAC title tilt when the seniors were in eighth grade.

"Hopefully we can extend the state tournament streak this season," Pettit said with a smile.

The Warriors, who had an 8-game win streak snapped, led 2-0 and 4-2 before the wheels fell off. They charted five turnovers in the first quarter and had a dozen at the half while finishing with 14.

With Van Tassell netting 10 of her points in the first quarter, Cameron ran out to a 24-14 lead and never looked in the rear view mirror. The 86 points were the Dragons' season-high and also an OVAC Tournament record. They held a 48-24 advantage at the half and widened the gap to 71-45 after three quarters.

"That performance is typical of how Ashlynn can play when we have a size advantage," Pettit praised. "She does really well getting open and Kenzie continues to feed her the ball. She is also there to clean up when we miss a shot from the outside. Of her 20 boards, 13 came off the offensive glass and many resulted in putbacks.

Another thing that pleased Pettit,

was all five starters reached double figures. Senior point guard Kenzie Clutter joined Van Tassell with a double-double that featured 10 points and 14 assists as she continues to add to her all-time school mark. Ashlee Dobbs chipped in 15 points, with nine coming on a trio of treys, while Maci Neely had 12 and Emilee Dobbs 11. Clutter also landed half-a-dozen rebounds as the Dragons, the two-time W.Va. Class A state champs who are currently ranked No. 1 in the latest state AP poll, enjoyed a 34-20 margin off the glass.

"That's great and it was a well-balanced effort," Pettit added. "The Dobbs twins shot the ball really well today and Maci Neely ran the floor like she always does."

Ashlee Dobbs was perfect on all six of her attempts from the floor, with half of them coming from downtown. Emilee was 5-for-8 as the Dragons shot a blistering 60 percent (39-65). Van Tassell was 16-for-26.

"That's a pretty good number," Pettit said of the marksmanship. "We are capable of shooting like that."

Trinity's Jenna Barnett torched the nets for 37 points, but only one other Warriors reached double digits — Ella Lynch had 11. Kaylin Kurilko had nine and Kate Williams had the final three as only four players cracked the scoring column.

The Warriors shot 44 percent from the field (24-55), had 20 rebounds and turned the ball over 14 times. They were 6-for-19 from beyond the bonus arc. Amelia Fisher had five rebounds off the bench.

"We'll enjoy this tonight, but the season isn't over yet. We have Wheeling Central coming to our place on Monday."