

tourney test with Bluefield

By **BUBBA KAPRAL**
For The Times Leader

CHARLESTON - Wheeling Central is headed to the WVSSAC Class AA State Basketball Tournament on a roll.

The young, nary a senior on the roster, but upstart Maroon Knights are playing their best ball of the campaign. It comes at the perfect time.

Coach Mel Stephens' charges takes on second-seeded Bluefield today at 1 p.m. in the quarterfinals. Central enters the tourney as the No. 7 seed. The winner will take on the survivor of the Chapmanville-Ravenswood contest on Friday at 7:15 p.m.

Bluefield fell to Poca in last year's Class AA championship game. Central, meanwhile, competed in Class AAA, losing to Shady Spring, 59-49, in the state semifinal.

"Charleston and making the state tournament is always one of our goals, along with playing for an OVAC title," Stephens said. "This year is really special for a couple of reasons.

"First is that we played a really demanding schedule. And you don't know how a young team like ours would hold up against such a schedule," he added. "And the bigger thing is we lost Eli Sancomb to a severe knee injury in football season. Eli was going to be one of our best players without a doubt. To his credit, he has never missed a practice even though he is hurt. So, I am proud of how our young guys have dealt with adversity."

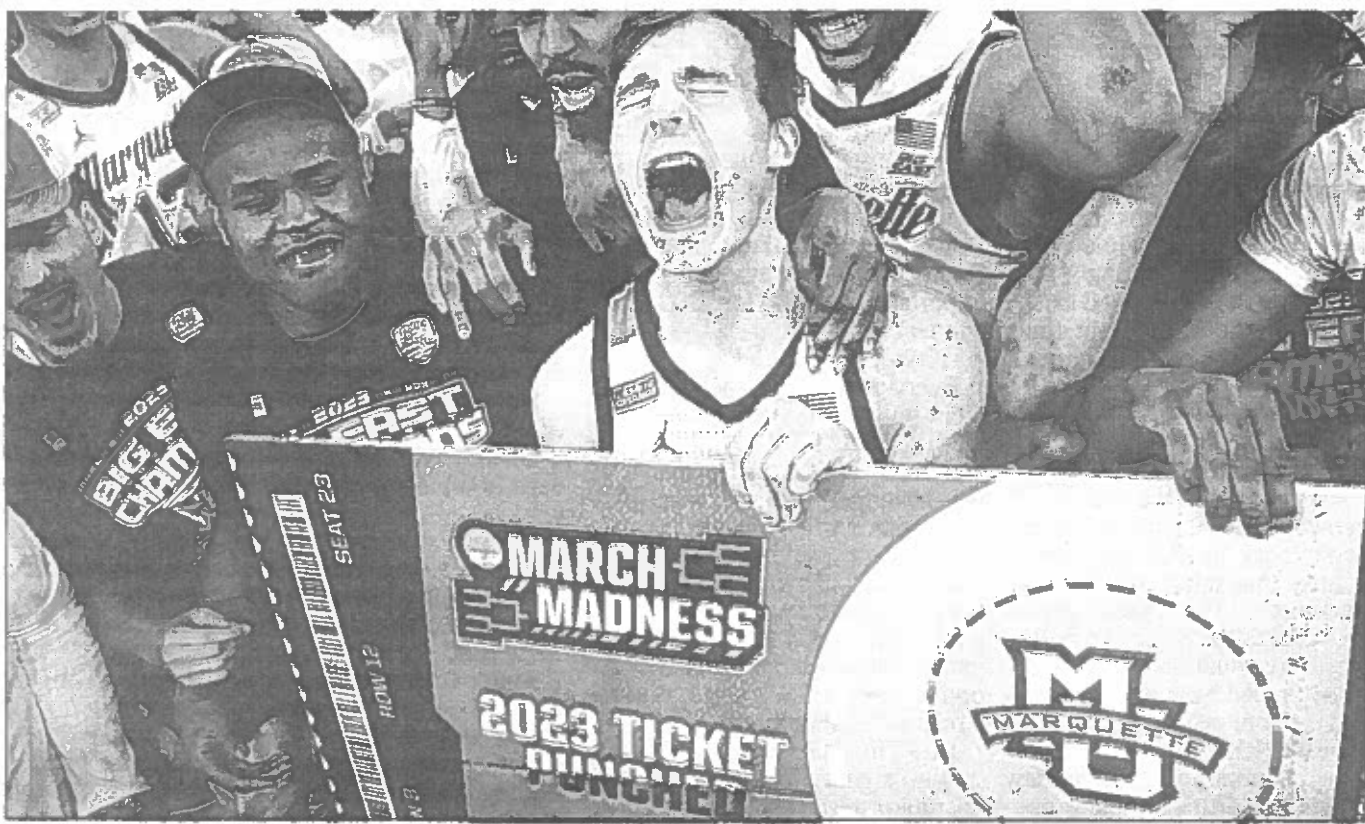
The state tournament and Stephens are quite familiar with each other.

The affable hoop coach has guided the Maroon Knights for 20 campaigns, 17 of which his charges have advanced to the state tournament. Along the way, Stephens owns an amazing six state championships.

Central, with a 14-10 mark against its meat-grinder of a schedule, has played superbly in the postseason. The Maroon Knights dispatched Magnolia and St. Marys in the sectional before ousting a quality Ritchie squad in the regionals.

"I think we are playing our best ball of the season," Stephens said. "But we need to keep getting better because Bluefield is a formidable opponent. They were ranked No. 1 for a good while this year and have not lost to any slouches."

See, **CENTRAL**, Page B2



AP PHOTO

MARQUETTE'S TYLER Kolek, tournament MVP, center, celebrates with his teammates after winning their NCAA college basketball game against Xavier for the championship of the Big East men's tournament, Saturday, in New York.

March Madness: Set your brackets!

NEW YORK (AP) -- March Madness is here! Here is what to know, including the favorites and underdogs as well as key games and how to watch the NCAA Tournament. Oh, and how to fill out your brackets!

TOP SEEDS

The top four seeds in the tournament are Alabama, Houston, Kansas, and Purdue. Each is in a region, some tougher than others (on paper), and each has had its share of headaches to set up what could be a chaotic tournament. We break them down for you:

EAST REGION: The Boilermakers

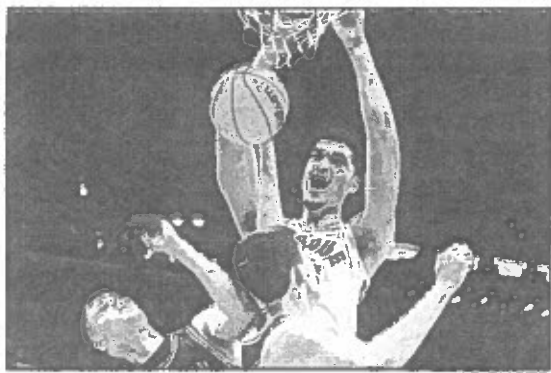
got a No. 1 seed for the fourth time after edging Penn State 67-65 in the Big Ten championship game, but they face potential hurdles in Memphis and surging Duke. Memphis (26-8) is fresh from a big upset of top-ranked Houston and led by Kendrick Davis. Duke (26-8) shut down Virginia in a 59-49 ACC title game win.

SOUTH REGION: Alabama, led by coach Nate Oats in a challenging season, is a No. 1 seed for the first time after sweeping the Southeastern Conference regular season and tournament titles behind league player of the year

Brandon Miller, capped by an 82-63 romp over Texas A&M. They will open the tourney not far from home, in Birmingham, Alabama. Potential hurdles for the Crimson Tide could include Baylor, Arizona. There's an intriguing early matchup between No. 5 seed San Diego State and No. 12 Charleston, which has 31 wins. Furman is making its first tourney appearance since 1980.

MIDWEST REGION: Houston (31-3) got a top seed despite stumbling

See, **MARCH**, Page B2



AP PHOTO

PURDUE CENTER Zach Edey (15) gets a dunk over Davidson forward David Skogman, left, and forward Sean Logan in December.

Edey headlines AP All-America Team

By **AARON BEARD**
AP Basketball Writer

Purdue's Zach Edey and Indiana's Trayce Jackson-Davis have given the Big Ten Conference a third straight year with multiple first-team Associated Press All-America picks, while Kansas had a second straight first-teamer in Jalen Wilson.

The 7-foot-4, 305-pound Edey appeared on all 58 ballots as a first-team selection from AP Top

25 voters as the lone unanimous pick in results released Tuesday.

The selections of the Boilermakers' Edey and the Hoosiers' Jackson-Davis came a year after the Big Ten had three first-team picks. And it gave the league seven through the last three seasons: no other league has more than three.

The Big Ten has had at least one first-teamer for five straight years and eight of the last nine.

Houston's Marcus Sasser and

See, **EDEY**, Page B2

Cavs defeat sloppy Hornets again without Mitchell, Allen

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) - Evan Mobley had 26 points and the Cleveland Cavaliers scored 35 points off Charlotte turnovers to beat the Hornets for the second time in three days, 120-104 on Tuesday night.

Cedi Osman scored 24 points off the bench and Caris LeVert added 22 points and seven assists for the Cavaliers, who played without All-Star guard Donovan Mitchell (sprained finger) and center Jarrett Allen (eye contusion).

Darius Garland chipped in 19 points for the Cavaliers, who entered the game in fourth place in the Eastern Conference, 3 1/2 games behind the Philadelphia 76ers. The Cavs have won five of their last six games.

Kelly Oubre Jr. had 28 points and Terry Rozier added 22 points and 10 assists for the Hornets, who have lost three straight and fell to 11-27 at home.

The Hornets never looked in sync offensively. Charlotte turned the ball over 22 times in all - many of those self-inflicted - while Cleveland had just nine turnovers leading to six points for the Hornets.

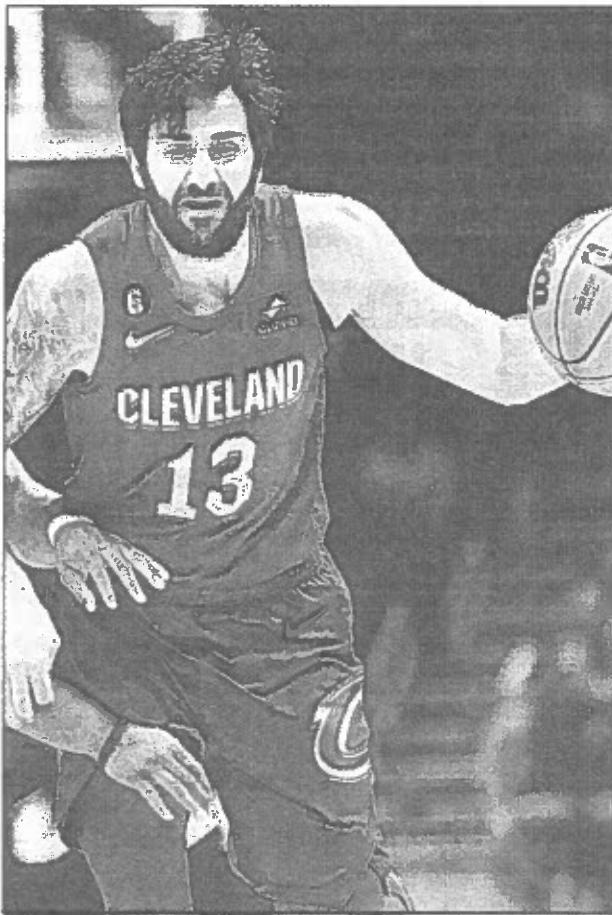
The Cavaliers needed to erase a 16-point second-half deficit on Sunday to beat the Hornets 114-108, getting 28 points from Garland.

They didn't need a comeback Tuesday.

The Cavaliers jumped out to a 63-48 lead at half-time after scoring 25 points on 15 Charlotte turnovers, while only turning the ball over once themselves. The Cavs stretched the lead to 22 late in the third quarter, and at one point had outscored the Hornets 31-0 off turnovers.

Charlotte never challenged in the second half and

See, **CAVS**, Page B2



AP PHOTO

CLEVELAND CAVALIERS guard Ricky Rubio (13) brings the ball up court against Charlotte Hornets guard Dennis Smith Jr. during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Charlotte, N.C., Tuesday. Cleveland won 120-104.

OVAC vs. MAC wrestling tonight

MIDLAND, Pa. - The 26th annual "Clash of Champions" is set for tonight at Lincoln Park High School as the OVAC All-Stars will meet the MAC All-Stars in a dual meet. The first match of 11 begins at 7.

The OVAC roster is comprised of John Marshall's Ethan Cook (126); Magnolia's Lucas Zombotti (132); Wheeling Park's Bradyn Lucas (138); Dover's Egidio DeFazio (144); Indian Creek's CJ Spencer (150) and Dom Patera (157); Edison's Ethan Waggoner (165); Martins Ferry's Jonathan McFarland (165) and Alexander Finsley (190); Wheeling Park's Erick Brothers Jr. (215); and Indian Creek's Elijah Llewellyn (285).

Cook was an OVAC champ and placed fourth in W.Va. Lucas was a W.Va. state champion this year at 144 and an OVAC runner up. DeFazio was an OVAC champ, as was Llewellyn, who was also an Ohio D-II runner up. Patera was a D-II state and OVAC runner up, while Spencer was an OVAC runner up and placed fourth in D-II in the state. Finsley finished sixth in Ohio in D-III, and Brothers Jr. was third in the OVAC and W.Va. after winning three W.Va. state titles. He is a WVU signee.

THE MAC all-Stars include Chartiers Valley's Brady Joling (126); Quaker Valley's Brandon Krul (132); Montour's Peter Chacon (138); West Allegheny's Nico Taddy (144); Quaker Valley's Logan Richey (150); West Allegheny's Ty Watters (157); Chartiers Valley's Dylan Evans (165); Carlynton's Chase Brandebura (165); Laurel's Chase Tintzman

See, **WRESTLING**, Page B2

• March

Continued from Page B1

75-65 against unranked Memphis in the American Athletic Conference title game, minus league player of the year Marcus Sasser (strained groin).

They will open against Northern Kentucky (22-12). Potential hurdles could include Penn State, which took Purdue down to the wire in the Big Ten, and SEC Tournament runner-up Texas A&M.

WEST REGION: The Jayhawks fell 76-56 to Texas in the Big 12 championship game and they wound up with the top seed in a stacked region. They will open against Howard (22-12), making its first NCAA Tournament appearance since 1992. Potential hurdles include No. 6 TCU (21-12), which beat Kansas at Allen Field House 83-60 on Jan. 21, and Arkansas (20-13).

GAMES TO WATCH

No. 7 Texas A&M (25-9) vs. No. 10 Penn State (22-13), Thursday, 9:55 p.m. ET (TBS) The Aggies, who felt snubbed last season, are making their first NCAA Tournament appearance since 2018, and the Nittany Lions' drought dated to 2011.

Both flirted with league tournament titles and have been hot. Texas A&M went 19-4 after a loss to Wofford and Penn State has won eight of 10.

No. 8 Arkansas (20-13) vs. No. 9 Illinois (20-12), Thursday, 4:30 p.m. ET (TBS). The Razorbacks have made back-to-back trips to the Elite Eight. Top prospect and potential top NBA draft pick Nick Smith Jr. has only played in 14 games because of knee issues, but has scored 20-plus in half of the team's last six. Illinois won the Big Ten season title before being ousted by Penn State in the first round of the league tournament. Illinois is led by transfers Terrence Shannon Jr. (Texas Tech) and Matthew Mayer, who helped lead Baylor to the 2021 national championship.

No. 5 Miami (25-7) vs. Drake (27-7), Friday, 7:35 p.m. ET

(TBS). The game features two conference players of the year, Miami's Isaiah Wong in the ACC for the regular-season co-champions, and Drake's Tucker DeVries from the Missouri Valley Conference tournament champs. DeVries is averaging 19 points while Wong leads the team in scoring (16.2 points per game), assists and steals. Drake made the Elite Eight three years running, though it has been a while (1969-71).

No. 6 Kentucky (21-11) vs. No. 11 Providence (21-11), Friday, 7:10 p.m. ET. (CBS). Led by last year's AP player of the year Oscar Tshiebwe, the Wildcats are trying to avoid back-to-back first-round exits after that infamous defeat to Saint Peter's. The Friars, meanwhile, went to the Sweet 16 before losing to eventual champion Kansas. They're led by Kentucky transfer Bryce Hopkins.

GO FIGURE

Texas Southern and Kennesaw State are in. North Carolina is not.

The Tar Heels are the first team since the bracket expanded to 64 teams in 1985 to start the season ranked No. 1 in The Associated Press Top 25 poll and finish it with an NCAA tourney airball.

Kennesaw State, three years removed from a 1-28 season, made the field. So did Southwestern Athletic Conference Tournament champion Texas Southern, which is 14-20. Southern Conference champ Furman is dancing for the first time since 1980 and MEAC winner Howard makes its first appearance since 1992.

GO DEEPER

Gun violence has cost lives and disrupted college sports all season, touching some of the top programs in college basketball, including Alabama.

Coaches have been thrust into uncertain and unwelcome roles in trying to navigate the topic — as well as the fallout from the Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe vs. Wade.

PLAYERS TO WATCH

The NCAA Tournament is filled with great players and the AP All-America team is a good place to get familiar with the names. It's also an event where guys you've never heard of — no offense, Drake — can take a star turn. Guard play is always going to be important (see: Baylor, 2021 title winner).

HOW TO WATCH

Every game of the men's tournament will be aired somewhere, either on CBS, TBS, TNT or TruTV and their digital platforms. CBS will have the Final Four semifinals and national title game this year.

There are multiple sites listing game times, channel and announcing team, including the NCAA and CBS. The NCAA will again stream games via its March Madness Live option and CBS games will be streamed on Paramount+.

BETTING GUIDE

Who's going to win the national championship? The betting favorites this week to reach the Final Four are Houston, Alabama, Purdue and either Kansas or UCLA, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

MARCH MADNESS CALENDAR

Selection Sunday set the bracket matchups for the First Four and first- and second-round games that stretch from Florida to California. Sweet 16 weekend will see games in New York City (East Region), Las Vegas (West), Kansas City, Missouri (Midwest), and Louisville, Kentucky (South).

Where is the Final Four? In Houston, on April 1, with the championship game on April 3. Basketball aficionados, take note: The women's NCAA Tournament will hold its Final Four in Dallas, a four-hour drive up the road from Houston.

Can't get enough March Madness? Well, there is talk about expanding the tournament despite a host of challenges. Enjoy the 68-team version for now!

Bluefield (18-7) indeed poses a major handful for Central. Four of the Beavers' losses have come at the hands of two of the state's No. 1-rated teams (two to James Monroe (Class A) and two to Shady Springs (Class AAA).

Buster Large has coached Bluefield for 16 years, amassing a sparkling 287-98 mark. He directed the Beavers to state championships in 2013 and 2014.

Bluefield, which beat Liberty 54-46 in its regional test, boasts good height and quality offensive balance. The Beavers feature four players averaging double figures.

Will Looney, a 6-6 senior, and R.J. Hairston, a 6-4 junior, provide a tall and talented tandem for Bluefield. Will Fuller is a 6-3 sharpshooting wing while 6-0 junior Kamron Gore is a capable scorer.

Holding it all together is 5-8 junior point guard Sincere Fields.

Central will counter its height disadvantage with deft shooting, excellent athleticism and priceless team work.

Quinton Burlenski is the Knights' catalyst. The 6-2 junior is a multi-tool player who cracked the 1,000-point mark in the win over Ritchie. He is a force, be it offensively, rebounder or on-ball defender. He is no one-man show, however.

Junior Jeremy Ratcliffe is the Maroon Knight glue. The 6-2 forward is a tenacious rebounder, solid defender and double-digit scorer.

Savvy sophomore Troy Anthony is the team's third leading scorer. The 6-2 guard has deadly outside range to go with pesky defensive skills.

Max Olejasz will be a key factor matching up against Bluefield's size. The rising frosh has shown the ability to be a force at both ends of the floor. He is a defensive menace thanks to his 6-5 athletic frame while also blossoming into an offensive threat. He poured in 18 points in the regional triumph.

Isaac Schmitt rounds out the starting five and is solid in all aspects. The 6-2 junior does much of the defensive and board dirty work while also delivering some offensive punch.

Stephens really likes his bench, and with good reason. He can go several players deep when the need arises with no drop-off.

Eli Dean, a 6-0 junior, Braxton Billick, a 5-10 sophomore, and Tyler Dean, a 5-10 sophomore, all bring spark and energy off the pine. The varsity squad also features capable sophomores 6-1 Von Crall and 5-10 Dominic Gianangeli.

Stephens' coaching staff is nothing short of superb. He is assisted by Tyler Morando, Lance Bibey and Boyd Bibey.

"We will have to work hard to stop Hairston. But they have several other weapons in addition to him," Stephens said. "But I like some of our matchups and I have a lot of confidence in our bench. We have been practicing with great focus. These kids don't want the season to end."

• Cavs

Continued from Page B1

coach Steve Clifford subbed out his starters with four minutes to play and his team down by 19.

ALLEN SITS OUT AGAIN

Allen missed his second straight game with a right eye contusion he sustained in Friday night's loss to Miami, and the Cavaliers are taking things day to day.

The 2022 NBA All-Star is in the midst of another strong season averaging 14.4 points, 9.8 rebounds, 1.7 assists and 1.2 blocks per game while shooting 64.9% from the field.

TIP INS

Cavaliers: Signed guard Sam Merrill to a multi-year contract on Tuesday. The 6-foot-4, 197-pound Merrill signed a 10-day contract with the team on March 3 and appeared in one game for the Cavaliers.

Hornets: Dennis Smith Jr. had a flying one-handed dunk over Dean Wade off a baseline drive late in the third quarter. ... Center Mark Williams missed his fourth straight game with a sprained thumb.

UP NEXT

Cavaliers: Host Philadelphia on Wednesday night. Hornets: Host Philadelphia on Friday night.

• WLU

Continued from Page B1

The Hilltoppers deep rotation netted 20 points off the bench and held the Crimson Hawks' reserves to zero points.

WLU won the turnover battle, while outscoring IUP, which committed 15 miscues, 12-5 in points off turnovers and 11-4 on the fast break.

The eight remaining teams in the NCAA Division II Tournament will be reseeded for the Elite Eight.

• Wrestling

Continued from Page B1

(190); Butler's Landond Christie (215) and Laurel's Coltin Hill (285).

Watters and Evans were recently crowned PIAA Class AAA state champs at 152 and 160, respectively. Joling was third in AAA at 121 and Taddy seventh at 145.

Despite dropping a 26-25 reversal last year at West Liberty University, the OVAC leads the all-time series, 17-8.

VERA BRADLEY OUTLET SALE
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Motor coach to Fort Wayne, Indiana and shop 'til you drop at the Vera Bradley Annual Outlet Sale.
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in conjunction with Muddy Waters Outdoors
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Sunday March 19: 8:30 am - 2:00 pm
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SPORTS ON TV

Wednesday, March 15
AHL HOCKEY
7 p.m.
NHLN - Hershey at Lehigh
ATHLETES UNLIMITED
BASKETBALL (WOMEN'S)
7 p.m.
CBSN - Week 4: Team Bell vs. Team Smith, Dallas
10 p.m.
CBSN - Week 4: Team Sims vs. Team Hillman, Dallas
BASEBALL
6 a.m.
FS2 - World Baseball Classic: Australia vs. Cuba, Quarterfinal, Tokyo
12 p.m.
FS2 - World Baseball Classic Pool Play: Venezuela vs. Israel, Pool D, Miami
3 p.m.
FS2 - World Baseball Classic Pool Play: Mexico vs. Canada, Pool C, Phoenix
7 p.m.
FS1 - World Baseball Classic Pool Play: Puerto Rico vs. Dominican Republic, Pool D, Miami
10 p.m.
FS1 - World Baseball Classic Pool Play: U.S. vs. Colombia, Pool C, Phoenix
6 a.m. (Thursday)
FS2 - World Baseball Classic: Italy vs. Japan, Quarterfinal, Tokyo
BASKETBALL AFRICA LEAGUE
12 p.m.
NBATV - US Monastir vs. Kwara, Senegal
COLLEGE BASKETBALL (MEN'S)
6:40 p.m.
TRUTV - NCAA Tournament: Fairleigh Dickinson vs. Texas Southern, First-Four, Dayton, Ohio
7 p.m.
ESPN2 - NIT Tournament: UCF at Florida, First Round
9 p.m.
ESPN2 - NIT Tournament: Virginia Tech at Cincinnati, First Round
9:10 p.m.
TRUTV - NCAA Tournament: Nevada vs. Arizona St., First-Four, Dayton, Ohio
11 p.m.
ESPN2 - NIT Tournament: UC Irvine at Oregon, First Round
COLLEGE BASKETBALL (WOMEN'S)
7 p.m.
ESPNU - NCAA Tournament: Mississippi St. vs. Illinois, First-Four, South Bend, Ind.
9 p.m.
ESPNU - NCAA Tournament: Sacred Heart vs. Southern U., First-Four, Stanford, Calif.
COLLEGE SOFTBALL
7 p.m.
ACCN - Charlotte at Clemson
GOLF
1 a.m. (Thursday)
GOLF - Ladies European Tour: The Aramo Team Series, First Round, Laguna National Golf Resort Club, Singapore
MLB BASEBALL
3 a.m.
MLBN - Spring Training: Minnesota (Split Squad) at Tampa Bay (Taped)
6 a.m.
MLBN - Spring Training: Baltimore vs. Pittsburgh (Split Squad), Bradenton, Fla. (Taped)
1 p.m.
MLBN - Spring Training: Philadelphia vs. NY Yankees, Tampa, Fla.
4 p.m.
MLBN - Spring Training: St. Louis vs. NY Mets, Port St. Lucie, Fla. (Taped)
7 p.m.
MLBN - Spring Training: Pittsburgh vs. Toronto, Dunedin, Fla. (Taped)
10 p.m.
MLBN - Spring Training: Tampa Bay vs. Boston, Fort Myers, Fla. (Taped)
1 a.m. (Thursday)
MLBN - Spring Training: Chicago Cubs vs. Cincinnati, Goodyear, Ariz. (Taped)
3 a.m. (Thursday)
MLBN - Spring Training: Colorado vs. LA Dodgers, Phoenix (Taped)
6 a.m. (Thursday)
MLBN - Spring Training: Milwaukee vs. Arizona (Split Squad), Scottsdale, Ariz. (Taped)
NBA BASKETBALL
7:45 p.m.
ESPN - Philadelphia at Cleveland
10:05 p.m.
ESPN - Golden State at LA Clippers
NHL HOCKEY
7 p.m.
TNT - Colorado at Toronto
9:30 p.m.
TNT - Minnesota at St. Louis
SOCCER (MEN'S)
3:30 p.m.
USA - Premier League: Brentford at Southampton
TENNIS
1 p.m.
TENNIS - BNP Paribas Open-ATP/WTA Quarterfinals

NBA

Tuesday's Games
Washington 117, Detroit 97
Cleveland 120, Charlotte 104
Toronto 125, Denver 110
San Antonio 132, Orlando 114
L.A. Lakers 123, New Orleans 108
Oklahoma City 121, Brooklyn 107
Milwaukee at Phoenix, late
New York at Portland, late
Wednesday's Games
Memphis at Miami, 7:30 p.m.
Philadelphia at Cleveland, 7:30 p.m.
Boston at Minnesota, 8 p.m.
L.A. Lakers at Houston, 8 p.m.
Sacramento at Chicago, 8 p.m.
Dallas at San Antonio, 8:30 p.m.
Golden State at L.A. Clippers, 10

BOYS BOXSCORE

W.Va. Class A State Quarterfinal
(at Charleston Coliseum)
James Monroe 74, Cameron 32
CAMERON (32) -- Burkett 5-15 3-6
13; Debolt 1-6 0-0 2; Wichterman
3-13 0-0 7; Winters 0-4 1-2 1; Hart-
ley 2-9 1-4 5; McCauley 1-3 0-0 2;
Marling 0-4 0-0 0; Angel 0-0 0-0 0;
Frye 0-1 0-0 0; Scott 0-1 0-0 0; Mag-
gers 1-2 0-1 2; Totals: 13-58 5-13 32.
JAMES MONROE (74) -- Burks 4-12
0-0 10; Ridgeway 4-4 0-0 8; Allen
9-15 0-0 19; Fox 4-11 1-2 Hopkins
2-6 0-0 4; Dowdy 0-3 1-2 1; Mann
1-2-0-0 2; Charlton 0-0 0-0 0; Hunter
0-3 0-0 0; Boggs 0-1 0-0 0; Ganoce
2-3 0-0 5; Jackson 7-12 0-0 15; Bak-
er 0-2 0-0 0; Totals: 33-74 2-4 74

W.VA. BOYS

Class A schedule
Tuesday, March 14
Game 1 - No. 4 Clay-Battelle 60, No. 5
Webster County 52
Game 2 - No. 1 James Monroe 74,
No. 8 Cameron 32
Wednesday, March 15
Game 3 - No. 3 Tucker County vs. No.
6 East Hardy - 11:15 a.m.
Game 4 - No. 2 Tug Valley vs. No. 7
Wahama - 7:15 p.m.
Friday, March 17
Game 5 - Game 3 winner vs. Game 4
winner - 9:30 a.m.
Game 6 - Clay-Battelle vs. James
Monroe - 1 p.m.
Saturday, March 18
Game 7 - Championship - 12:30 p.m.
Class AA
Wednesday, March 15
Game 1 - No. 3 Chapmanville vs. No.
6 Ravenswood - 9:30 a.m.
Game 2 - No. 2 Bluefield vs. No. 7
Wheeling Central - 1 p.m.
Game 3 - No. 1 Williamstown vs. No.
8 Trinity - 5:30 p.m.
Game 4 - No. 4 Charleston Catholic
vs. No. 5 South Harrison - 9 p.m.
Friday, March 17
Game 5 - Game 3 winner vs. Game 4
winner - 11:15 a.m.
Game 6 - Game 1 winner vs. Game 2
winner - 7:15 p.m.
Saturday, March 18
Game 7 - Championship - 5 p.m.
Class AAA
Thursday, March 16
Game 1 - No. 3 Ripley vs. No. 6 Elkins
- 9:30 a.m.
Game 2 - No. 2 Fairmont Senior vs.
No. 7 North Marion - 1 p.m.
Game 3 - No. 1 Shady Spring vs. No.
8 Hampshire - 5:30 p.m.
Game 4 - No. 4 Herbert Hoover vs.
No. 5 Scott - 9 p.m.
Friday, March 17
Game 5 - Game 3 winner vs. Game 4
winner - 5:30 p.m.
Game 6 - Game 1 winner vs. Game 2
winner - 9 p.m.
Saturday, March 18
Game 7 - Championship, 7:30 p.m.
Class AAAA
Tuesday, March 14
Game 1 - No. 3 Parkersburg South
77, No. 6 Hedgesville 66
Game 2 - No. 7 Jefferson 52, No. 2
George Washington 47
Game 3 - No. 1 Morgantown 64, No.
8 Bridgeport 39
Game 4 - No. 4 Huntington vs. No. 5
South Charleston - late
Thursday, March 16
Game 5 - Parkersburg South vs. Jef-
ferson - 11:15 a.m.
Game 6 - Morgantown vs. Game 4
winner - 7:15 p.m.
Saturday, March 18
Game 7 - Championship, 10 a.m.

MLB

Spring Training Glance
AMERICAN LEAGUE
Kansas City 14 3 .824
Los Angeles 11 5 .688
Boston 9 5 .643
Toronto 11 7 .611
Chicago 8 6 .571
Seattle 9 7 .563
Tampa Bay 9 7 .563
Detroit 11 9 .550
Houston 7 6 .538
New York 9 9 .500
Minnesota 8 8 .500
Baltimore 8 9 .471
Oakland 7 10 .412
Texas 7 11 .389
Cleveland 5 11 .313
NATIONAL LEAGUE
Los Angeles 10 4 .714
St. Louis 9 5 .643
Chicago 10 6 .625
Atlanta 8 7 .533
Philadelphia 8 8 .500
Washington 7 8 .467
Cincinnati 8 10 .444
San Diego 8 10 .444
Milwaukee 7 9 .438
New York 7 9 .438
Arizona 7 11 .389
San Francisco 7 11 .389
Colorado 6 10 .375
Miami 4 11 .267
Pittsburgh 4 11 .267

Tuesday's Games
Tampa Bay 7, Minnesota (ss) 4
Pittsburgh (ss) 2, Minnesota (ss) 2
St. Louis 3, Houston (ss) 3
Baltimore 7, Pittsburgh (ss) 6
Atlanta 15, Philadelphia 5
Detroit 6, Boston 2
Miami 1, Houston (ss) 0
Washington 5, N.Y. Mets 0
L.A. Angels 8, Cleveland 6
Chicago White Sox 5, Oakland 4
Seattle 8, Kansas City (ss) 6
San Francisco 7, Arizona 6
N.Y. Yankees 10, Toronto 3
Colorado vs. Chicago Cubs at
Mesa, Arizona, late
Cincinnati vs. Kansas City (ss) at
Surprise, Arizona, late
Wednesday's Games
Tampa Bay vs. Boston at Fort My-
ers, Florida, 1:05 p.m.
Houston vs. Atlanta at North Port,
Florida, 1:05 p.m.
Philadelphia vs. N.Y. Yankees at
Tampa, Florida, 1:05 p.m.
Pittsburgh vs. Toronto at Dunedin,
Florida, 1:07 p.m.
Washington vs. Miami at Sarasota,
Florida, 1:10 p.m.
St. Louis vs. N.Y. Mets at Port St

NCAA MEN

FIRST FOUR
Wednesday, March 15
At UD Arena
Dayton, Ohio
Texas Southern (14-20) vs. Fair-
leigh Dickinson (19-15), TBA
Arizona St. (22-12) vs. Nevada
(22-10), TBA
Tuesday, March 14
At UD Arena
Dayton, Ohio
Texas A&M-CC 75, SE Missou-
ri 71
Mississippi St. (21-12) vs. Pitts-
burgh (22-11), late
EAST REGIONAL
First Round
Friday, March 17
At Nationwide Arena
Columbus, Ohio
Purdue (29-5) vs. Texas South-
ern-Fairleigh Dickinson winner,
TBA
Memphis (26-8) vs. FAU (31-3),
TBA
At Greensboro Coliseum
Greensboro, N.C.
Kentucky (21-11) vs. Provi-
dence (21-11), TBA
Kansas St. (23-9) vs. Montana
St. (25-9), TBA
At Nationwide Arena
Columbus, Ohio
Michigan St. (19-12) vs. South-
ern Cal (22-10), TBA
Marquette (28-6) vs. Vermont
(23-10), TBA
Thursday, March 16
At Amway Center
Orlando, Fla.
Duke (26-8) vs. Oral Roberts
(30-4), TBA
Tennessee (23-10) vs. Louisi-
ana-Lafayette (26-7), TBA
SOUTH REGIONAL
First Round
Thursday, March 16
At Legacy Arena at BJCC
Birmingham, Ala.
Alabama (29-5) vs. Texas A&M-
CC (24-10), TBA
Maryland (21-12) vs. West Vir-
ginia (19-14), TBA
At Amway Center
Orlando, Fla.
San Diego St. (27-6) vs. Coll. of
Charleston (31-3), TBA
Virginia (25-7) vs. Furman (27-
7), TBA
At Golden 1 Center
Sacramento, Calif.
Missouri (24-9) vs. Utah St. (26-
8), TBA
Arizona (28-6) vs. Princeton
(21-8), TBA
Friday, March 17
At Ball Arena
Denver
Creighton (21-12) vs. NC State
(23-10), TBA
Baylor (22-10) vs. UC Santa
Barbara (27-7), TBA
MIDWEST REGIONAL
First Round
Thursday, March 16
At Legacy Arena at BJCC
Birmingham, Ala.
Houston (31-3) vs. N. Kentucky
(22-12), TBA
Iowa (19-13) vs. Auburn (20-
12), TBA
At Wells Fargo Arena
Des Moines, Iowa
Texas A&M (25-9) vs. Penn St.
(22-13), TBA
Texas (26-8) vs. Colgate (26-8),
TBA
Friday, March 17
At MVP Arena
Albany, N.Y.
Miami (25-7) vs. Drake (27-7),
TBA
Indiana (22-11) vs. Kent St. (28-
6), TBA
At Greensboro Coliseum
Greensboro, N.C.
Iowa St. (19-13) vs. Mississippi
St.-Pittsburgh winner, TBA
Xavier (25-9) vs. Kennesaw St.
(26-8), TBA
WEST REGIONAL
First Round
Thursday, March 16
At Wells Fargo Arena
Des Moines, Iowa
Kansas (27-7) vs. Howard (22-
12), TBA
Arkansas (20-13) vs. Illinois (20-
12), TBA
At Golden 1 Center
Sacramento, Calif.
Northwestern (21-11) vs. Boise
St. (24-9), TBA
UCLA (29-5) vs. UNC-Asheville
(27-7), TBA
Friday, March 17
At MVP Arena
Albany, N.Y.
Saint Mary's (Cal.) (26-7) vs.
VCU (27-7), TBA
UConn (25-8) vs. Iona (27-7),
TBA
At Ball Arena
Denver
TCU (21-12) vs. Arizona St.-Ne-
vada winner, TBA
Gonzaga (28-5) vs. Grand Can-
yon (24-11), TBA

MEN'S NIT

Tuesday, March 14
At Jersey Mike's Arena
Piscataway, N.J.
Hofstra 88, Rutgers 86, OT
At Bartow Arena
Birmingham, Ala.
UAB 88, Southern Miss. 60
At Beasley Coliseum
Pullman, Wash.
Washington St. (17-16) vs. E.
Washington (22-10), late
At Memorial Gymnasium
Nashville, Tenn.
Vanderbilt (20-14) vs. Yale (21-8),
late
At Kohl Center
Madison, Wis.
Wisconsin (17-14) vs. Bradley (25-
9), late
At Crisler Center

NCAA WOMEN

FIRST FOUR
Thursday, March 16
At Value City Arena
Columbus, Ohio
Purdue (19-10) vs. St. John's (22-
8), 7 p.m.
At Assembly Hall
Bloomington, Ind.
Monmouth (NJ) (18-15) vs. Ten-
nessee Tech (22-9), 9 p.m.
Wednesday, March 15
At Purcell Pavilion
South Bend, Ind.
Illinois (22-9) vs. Mississippi St.
(20-10), 7 p.m.
At Maples Pavilion
Stanford, Calif.
Sacred Heart (18-13) vs. South-
ern U. (18-14), 9 p.m.
SEATTLE 4
First Round
Friday, March 17
At Maples Pavilion
Stanford, Calif.
Stanford (28-5) vs. Sacred
Heart-Southern U. winner, 7:30 p.m.
Mississippi (23-8) vs. Gonzaga
(28-4), 10 p.m.
At Carver-Hawkeye Arena
Iowa City, Iowa
Florida St. (23-9) vs. Georgia (21-
11), 1:30 p.m.
Iowa (26-6) vs. SE Louisiana (21-
9), 4 p.m.
Saturday, March 18
At Moody Center
Austin, Texas
Louisville (23-11) vs. Drake (22-
9), 7:30 p.m.
Texas (25-9) vs. East Carolina
(23-9), 10 p.m.
At Cameron Indoor Stadium
Durham, N.C.
Colorado (23-8) vs. Middle Ten-
nessee (28-4), 7 p.m.
Duke (26-6) vs. Iona (26-6), 9:30
p.m.
GREENVILLE 2
First Round
Saturday, March 18
At Assembly Hall
Bloomington, Ind.
Indiana (27-3) vs. Monmouth
(NJ)-Tennessee Tech winner, 11:30
a.m.
Oklahoma St. (21-11) vs. Miami
(19-12), 2 p.m.
At The William B. Finneran
Pavilion
Bryn Mawr, Pa.
Washington St. (23-10) vs. Flori-
da Gulf Coast (32-3), 1 p.m.
Villanova (28-6) vs. Cleveland St.
(30-4), 1 p.m.
Friday, March 17
At Pete Maravich Assembly
Center
Baton Rouge, La.
Michigan (22-9) vs. UNLV (31-2),
3 p.m.
LSU (28-2) vs. Hawaii (18-14),
5:30 p.m.
At Jon M. Huntsman Center
Salt Lake City
NC State (20-11) vs. Princeton
(23-5), 10 p.m.
Utah (25-4) vs. Gardner-Webb
(29-4), 7:30 p.m.
GREENVILLE 1
First Round
Friday, March 17
At Colonial Life Arena
Columbia, S.C.
South Carolina (32-0) vs. Norfolk
St. (26-6), 2 p.m.
South Florida (26-6) vs. Mar-
quette (21-10), 11:30 a.m.
At Purcell Pavilion
South Bend, Ind.
Creighton (22-8) vs. Illinois-Mis-
sissippi St. winner, 6 p.m.
Notre Dame (25-5) vs. S. Utah
(23-9), 3:30 p.m.
At Xfinity Center
College Park, Md.
Arizona (21-9) vs. West Virginia
(19-11), Noon
Maryland (25-6) vs. Holy Cross
(24-8), 2:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 18
At Pauley Pavilion
Los Angeles
Oklahoma (25-6) vs. Portland
(23-8), 9 p.m.
UCLA (25-9) vs. Sacramento St.
(25-7), 11:30 p.m.
SEATTLE 3
First Round
Friday, March 17
At Cassell Coliseum
Blacksburg, Va.
Virginia Tech (27-4) vs. Chatta-
nooga (20-12), 5:30 p.m.
Southern Cal (21-9) vs. S. Dakota
St. (28-5), 8 p.m.
Saturday, March 18
At Thompson-Boling Arena
Knoxville, Tenn.
Iowa St. (22-9) vs. Toledo (28-4),
3:30 p.m.
Tennessee (23-11) vs. Saint Lou-
is (17-17), 1 p.m.
At Value City Arena
Columbus, Ohio
North Carolina (21-10) vs. Pur-
due St. John's winner, 4 p.m.
Ohio St. (25-7) vs. James Madi-
son (26-7), 1:30 p.m.
At Harry A. Gampel Pavilion
Storrs, Conn.
Baylor (19-12) vs. Alabama (20-
10), TBA
UConn (29-5) vs. Vermont (25-6),
3 p.m.

NHL

Tuesday's Games
Carolina 5, Winnipeg 3
Vegas 5, Philadelphia 3
Tampa Bay 4, New Jersey 1
Montreal 6, Pittsburgh 4
N.Y. Rangers 5, Washington 3
Nashville 2, Detroit 1
Boston at Chicago, late
Ottawa at Edmonton, late
Calgary at Arizona, late
Dallas at Vancouver, late
Columbus at San Jose, late
N.Y. Islanders at Los Angeles, late
Wednesday's Games
Buffalo at Washington, 7 p.m.
Colorado at Toronto, 7 p.m.
Minnesota at St. Louis, 9:30 p.m.
N.Y. Islanders at Anaheim, 10 p.m.
Thursday's Games
Colorado at Ottawa, 7 p.m.

Clash of Champions Set For Tonight In Pa.

MIDLAND, Pa. - The 26th annual "Clash of Champions" is set for tonight at Lincoln Park High School as the OVAC All-Stars will meet the MAC All-Stars in a dual meet. The first match of 11 begins at 7.

The OVAC roster is comprised of John Marshall's Ethan Cook (126); Magnolia's Lucas Zombotti (132); Wheeling Park's Bradyn Lucas (138); Dover's Egidio DeFazio (144); Indian Creek's CJ Spencer (150) and Dom Paterra (157); Edison's Ethan Waggoner (165); Martins Ferry's Jonathan McFarland (165) and Alexander Finsley (190); Wheeling Park's Erick Brothers Jr. (215); and Indian Creek's Elijah Llewellyn (285).

Cook was an OVAC champ and placed fourth in W.Va. Lucas was a W.Va. state champion this year at 144 and an OVAC runner up. DeFazio was an OVAC champ, as was Llewellyn, who was also an Ohio D-II runner up, while Spencer was an OVAC runner up and placed fourth in D-II in the state. Finsley finished sixth in Ohio in D-III, and Brothers Jr. was third in the OVAC and W.Va. after winning three W.Va. state titles. He is a WVU signee.

The MAC all-Stars include Chartiers Valley's Brady Joling (126); Quaker Valley's Brandon Krul (132); Montour's Peter Chacon (138); West Allegheny's Nico Taddy (144); Quaker Valley's Logan Richey (150); West Allegheny's Ty Watters (157); Chartiers Valley's Dylan Evans (165); Carlynton's Chase Brandebura (165); Laurel's Chase Tintman (190); Butler's Landond Christie (215) and Laurel's Coltin Hill (285).

Watters and Evans were recently crowned PIAA Class AAA state champs at 152 and 160, respectively. Joling was third in AAA at 121 and Taddy seventh at 145.

Despite dropping a 26-25 reversal last year at West Liberty University, the OVAC leads the all-time series, 17-8.

Nailers Get Jeri-Leon In Trade With Maine

WHEELING -- The Wheeling Nailers, proud ECHL affiliate of the Pittsburgh Penguins, have made a trade, which takes effect immediately. Wheeling has acquired forward Keltie Jeri-Leon from the Maine Mariners in exchange for forward Carter Johnson.

Jeri-Leon, 23, is playing in his second professional season, and has spent the majority of his career with Maine, in addition to six AHL games with the Providence Bruins and Abbotsford Canucks. Keltie had a strong rookie campaign, as he led all first year players for the Mariners with 19 goals and finished second among rookies on his team with 35 points. So far this season, he has contributed 19 points in 38 games, while improving his defensive game. As his +/- jumped from -9 last year to +2 this season. For his career, the Kelowna, British Columbia native has accumulated 28 goals, 27 assists, and 55 points in 101 games. Prior to turning pro, Jeri-Leon played his junior hockey in the WHL. His best individual success came with Seattle, when he racked up 40 goals over a two-year span. His best team success came with Lethbridge in 2017-18, when the team reached

the conference final. Johnson, 27, ranks third on the Nailers in scoring at the time of the trade, as he has produced 11 goals, 24 assists, and 35 points, while being one of four players to appear in all 58 games this season. This is Carter's second pro season, as Wheeling originally acquired him in a trade with the Wichita Thunder following training camp. As a pro, he has 27 goals, 53 assists, and 80 points in 127 contests - all in the ECHL. With Maine currently sitting in third place in the North Division, it is likely that Johnson will have the opportunity to reach the playoffs for the first time. Prior to turning pro, the Gimli, Manitoba native played four years of college hockey at Miami University (Ohio).

The Nailers will begin a three-game road series against the Norfolk Admirals tonight at 7:05. The other two games of the series will be Friday at 7:05 and Saturday at 6:05. The next home game is Wheeling Hockey Hall of Fame Night on Friday, March 24 at 7:10 against the Kalamazoo Wings.

Former Nailers Head Coach Peter Laviolette and former Thunderbird Brock Woods are the two inductees.

Canadiens Snap 7-Game Losing Streak Vs. Pens

PITTSBURGH (AP) -- Anthony Richard scored the winning goal in the third period and the Montreal Canadiens beat the Pittsburgh Penguins 6-4 on Tuesday night.

Richard scored at 3:05 of the third period. He took a stretch pass from Justin Barron and beat Casey De-



AP Photo

Pittsburgh Pirates starting pitcher Mitch Keller (23) delivers a pitch to New York Yankees' Rafael Ortega in a spring training game in Bradenton, Fla., earlier this season.

Bucs' Keller Gets Opening Day Nod, Bottle Of Bubbly

By **BERNIE WILSON**
AP Sports Writer

Pittsburgh Pirates manager Derek Shelton handed Mitch Keller the opening day assignment — and a celebratory bottle of bubbly.

Shelton broke the news to the 26-year-old right-hander on Wednesday that he'll get the nod when Pittsburgh begins the season at Cincinnati on March 30.

In a video posted on the Pirates' Twitter feed, Shelton and Keller sat down in the manager's office and began discussing the right-hander's side session.

Shelton asked how many pitches he threw.

"Twenty or so. I didn't really count," Keller said.

"How many do you think you'll throw on the 30th?" Shelton asked.

"I have no idea. What's the 30th?" the pitcher replied.

"Opening day," Shelton said.

"Ha ha!" Keller said, taking a moment to let it sink in. "Come on! Oh my god, dude!"

Shelton offered a congratulatory handshake and the two hugged. Shelton told Keller how proud he was of the hard work the pitcher put in transforming himself from prospect to big leaguer.

"Thanks! This is so sick!" said Keller, who requested another hug.

Shelton then handed Keller a bottle of Champagne. "First of many. You and Clancy, go ahead and celebrate," the manager said, referring to Keller's wife, Clancy.

"Yeah, we will," said Keller, who added, "I can't wait to tell my parents. This is cool."

After struggling in his first three big league seasons, Keller revived his career in 2022, going 5-12 with a 3.91 ERA in 31 games, with 29 starts. A brief stint in Triple-A last spring helped him refine a sinker that became an important secondary pitch during a promising second half. Keller went 2-5 with a 3.09 after the All-Star break.

Shelton later told reporters it was a special moment breaking the news to Keller.

"He was pretty fired up. This is a kid who was a very highly touted prospect and had to grind a little bit and discovered himself. It was a cool moment," Shelton said. "Everybody aspires to be an opening day starter at some point in their career, but for young guys coming up, I do think it's something they can look and say, 'Hey, this is a guy who came through our system.'"

Keller is the seventh different opening day starter for the Pirates in the last seven years, including JT Brubaker last season.

The last Pirate to start consecutive opening days was Francisco Liriano, who took the mound first for Pittsburgh from 2014-16.

KOWAR OPTIONED

The Kansas City Royals optioned right-hander Jackson Kowar, a first-round pick in the 2018 draft, to Triple-A Omaha along with right-hander Max Castillo and infielder Samad Taylor as they continue to finalize their opening day roster.

Kowar was drafted out of Florida as part of a wave of college prospects that Kansas City hoped would form the backbone of its rotation. But so far, only Brady Singer has emerged as a potential staff ace. Kowar, who allowed 17 runs in just 15 2/3 innings last season, coughed up three runs in five innings this spring.

Castillo and Taylor were acquired from the Blue Jays in a trade for infielder Whit Merrifield last season. Taylor in particular had a good spring, hitting .400 with a pair of homers, and is expected to help the Royals at some point this season.

IKF TO CF?

With Harrison Bader expected to be out until late April with a left oblique strain, the New York Yankees are considering having Isiah Kiner-Falefa play center field. Manager Aaron Boone plans to start Kiner-Falefa in center field beginning Friday.

"He's worked in the outfield the last couple of days and I looked at some video of it the other day, just watching how his feet move and stuff," Boone told reporters. "I think he'd be natural out there; the ability to move around, his speed and athleticism, his bat-to-ball."

Maroon Knights Get To Six After Trailing By 27 Late in 3rd Quarter

By **STAFF REPORTS**
CHARLESTON - Wheeling Central's struggles in the first half didn't leave it enough time in the second as it fell in the quarterfinal round of the W.Va. Class AA boys state basketball tournament.

The No. 7 seeded Maroon Knights (14-11) trailed 34-17 at the half against second-seeded Bluefield while only shooting 27 percent (7-26). However, a trey by sophomore Troy Anthony with 20 ticks remaining pulled them to within six, 74-68, but with no timeouts — they spent two in the first half trying to keep the game close — they were forced to foul.

The Beavers (19-7) missed two free throws with 13 seconds left, but Kam'Rom Gore tipped the second miss in for a 76-68 victory inside the Charleston Coliseum & Convention Center.

Please see **CENTRAL**, Page 14

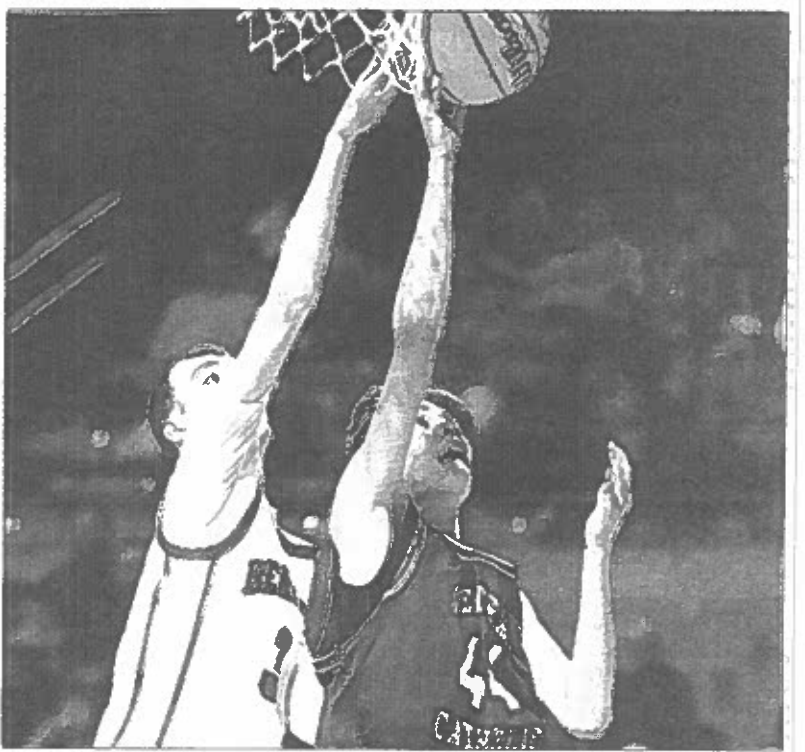
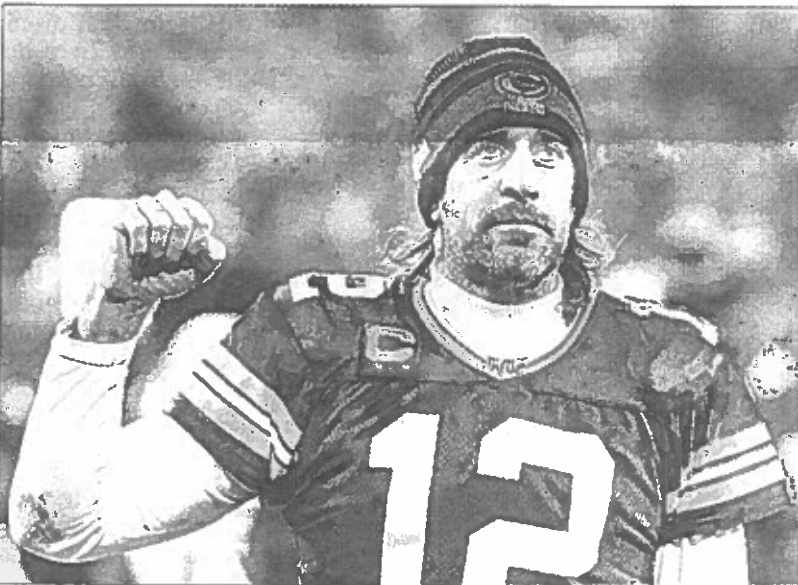


Photo Provided

Wheeling's Isaac Schmitt (44) battles with Bluefield's William Looney for a rebound during Wednesday afternoon's W.Va. Class AA quarterfinal round state tournament game in Charleston.



AP Photo

Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers (12) reacts as he leaves the field after a game against the Minnesota Vikings on Sunday, Jan. 2, 2022, in Green Bay, Wis. Rodgers says his intention is to play for the New York Jets in the coming season as the four-time NFL MVP quarterback waits for the Green Bay Packers to trade him. Rodgers made his comments Wednesday.

Rodgers Plans To Play For Jets In 2023, Awaits Packers' Move

By **STEVE MEGARGEE**
AP Sports Writer

Aaron Rodgers said Wednesday he intends to play for the New York Jets in 2023 after 18 seasons in Green Bay and the four-time NFL MVP quarterback is waiting for the Packers to trade him.

The 39-year-old Rodgers, speaking during an appearance on "The Pat McAfee Show" on YouTube and Sirius XM, said he believes the Packers want to move on and make 2020 first-round draft pick Jordan Love their starting quarterback.

"At this point, as I sit here, I think since Friday I've made it clear that my intention was to play and my intention was to play for the New York Jets," Rodgers said. "I haven't been holding anything up at this point. It's been compensation the Packers are trying to get for me, kind of digging their heels in."

Packers president and CEO Mark Murphy has acknowledged the team granted the Jets permission to talk to Rodgers, the face of the franchise since Hall of Famer Brett Favre was traded to the Jets in 2008.

The Jets sent a contingent that reportedly included owner Woody Johnson, coach Robert Saleh and general manager Joe Douglas to Rodgers' home in Southern California last week.

Rodgers expressed his appreciation for his 18 seasons in Green Bay but added that it's time for the Packers "to do the right thing."

"I have nothing but love in my heart for every Packer fan and everybody who works in the organization," Rodgers said. "My life is better because of my time in Green Bay. But we've just got to look at the reality. They want to move on. They don't want me to come back and that's fine. They're ready to move on with Jordan. That's awesome. Jordan's going to be a great player."

The Packers declined to comment on Rodgers' remarks, which follow days of speculation that his time in Green Bay might be done.

Murphy spoke of Rodgers in the past tense while discussing the quarterback's future with Green Bay TV station WBAY last week.

"Very few players play for only one team," Murphy told WBAY. "Obviously Brett had a great career. Aaron had a great career here. Regardless of what happens, Aaron will be in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. He'll be in our Hall of Fame. We'll bring him back, retire his number. This is just one of the things that we go through as a team. We want to try to achieve something that's good for both Aaron and us."

Please see **JETS**, Page 14

MAC Stars Top OVAC In Clash Of Champions

By **STAFF REPORTS**

MIDLAND, Pa. - The OVAC All-Stars dug themselves a hole that was just a bit too deep to recover from in the 26th annual "Clash of Champions" dual meet against the MAC All-Stars inside Lincoln Park High School.

The MAC, which had three NCAA Division I recruits in its lineup, won six of the first eight matches and led 29-9 before the OVAC reeled off three straight victories, but fell 29-24.

Wheeling Park's Bradyn Lucas, a two-time W.Va. Class AAA state champion, got the OVAC on the board with a 7-5 decision at 138. It was his 108th career win and cut the deficit to 9-3 after the MAC won the 126-pound match by a 5-0 decision from Davidson recruit Brady Joling of Chartiers Valley and received a pin at 132 by Quaker Valley's Brandon Krul.

Please see **OVAC**, Page 14

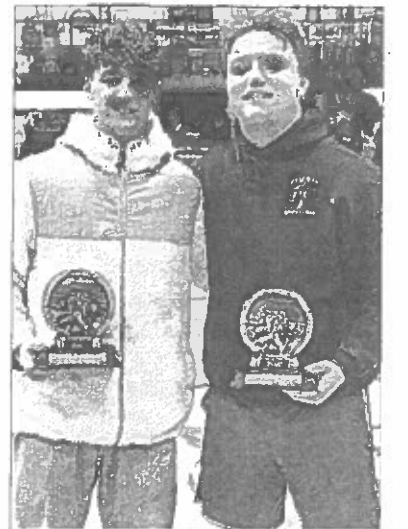


Photo Provided

A pair of WVU signees -- West Allegheny's Ty Watters, left, and Wheeling Park's Erick Brothers Jr. -- were voted the Most Outstanding Wrestlers for the MAC and OVAC, respectively, following Wednesday night's Clash of Champions inside Lincoln Park High School in Midland, Pa. The MAC won, 29-24.

Carter Goes Down At Ga. Pro Day **BUTLER**

(Continued from Page 13)

ATHENS, Ga. (AP) - Stetson Bennett gave himself a lukewarm grade for his workout of about 55 passes for NFL scouts, general managers and coaches at Georgia's pro day on Wednesday.

Jalen Carter didn't stick around to comment on his performance.

Following position drills, he was sprawled on his back with arms outstretched on the turf, suffering from apparent cramps. The defensive tackle did not participate in other tests, including the 40-yard dash and broad jump.

Bennett and Carter helped lead Georgia

to back-to-back national championships but each has been dealing with off-field legal problems in a troubled offseason.

Bennett was arrested in Dallas on Jan. 29 and charged with public intoxication. Carter - widely regarded as one of the top picks in the April 28 NFL draft - faces misdemeanor charges of racing and reckless driving in relation to the Jan. 15 crash that killed teammate Devin Willock and Georgia recruiting staffer, Chandler LeCroy. It isn't clear how the charges will affect Carter's draft status.

OVAC

(Continued from Page 13)

West Liberty recruit Nico Taddy, of West Allegheny High School, bumped the MAC margin back to 13-3 with a 13-3 major decision at 144.

A third-period pin from Indian Creek's CJ Spencer, a two-time all-Ohioan, drew the OVAC to within 13-9, however, back-to-back technical falls by D-I signees and recent PIAA Class AAA state champions Ty Watters (West Allegheny/WVU) at 157

and Dylan Evans (Chartiers Valley/Pitt) at 165 pushed the advantage to 23-9 and a pin by Carlynton's Chase Brandebura in another 165-pound bout clinched the victory.

Martins Ferry's Alexander Finsley earned a 2-point reversal in the third period for a 4-3 win at 190 before Wheeling Park's 3-time W.Va. state champion and 4-time state placer Erick Brothers Jr. and Indian Creek's

two-time Ohio D-II state placer Elijah Llewellyn closed the match out with pins in 1:45 and 2:20 at 215 and 285, respectively.

For their performances, the two future Mountaineers - Watters and Brothers Jr. - were voted the Most Outstanding Wrestlers for the MAC and OVAC, respectively.

This is the second straight win by the MAC, but the OVAC still leads the all-time series, 17-9.

CENTRAL

(Continued from Page 13)

"We really struggled in the first half. To me, it was the little stuff that hurt us all year," veteran Wheeling Central head coach Mel Stephens said. "We had to call a couple of time outs there to try and slow them down, and in the end having no timeouts hurt, as well."

Sparking the Maroon Knights comeback was their three-point shooting. After making just 3 of 10 in the opening 16 minutes, they went 10-for-19 after the intermission, including 7 of 12 in the fourth quarter when they exploded for 30 points.

"We made a really nice run there at the end to get back in it, but with no time outs we had to foul," Stephens noted. "We went to a smaller lineup and got some shooters in the game. We just ran out of time."

Stephens pointed to one area that was a deciding factor.

"Bluefield shot 62 percent (31-50) and had 48 points in the paint," he said. "Their shots were a lot easier than ours."

Five different Wheeling Central players tickled the twine from downtown, with Anthony, Quinton Burlenski and Eli Dean having three each. Jeremy

Ratcliffe and Tyler Dean each knocked down a pair.

Burlenski, a rising junior, led the Maroon Knights with 18 points, one more than Anthony. Eli Dean finished with 11. Burlenski also added four rebounds and a like number of assists, while Anthony cleaned the glass six times - with four being on the offensive boards - and handed out a trio of helpers. Freshman Max Olejasz chipped in eight points and five rebounds.

All five Bluefield starters reached twin figures as R.J. Hairston had a double-double with 13 points and a dozen rebounds. He also handed out seven assists and charted a pair of steals.

Caleb Fuller led the Beavers with 21 points while William Looney added 17. Gore 12 and Sencere Fields 11. Gore had four assists and Fields three steals.

Bluefield had five more rebounds with 33 and turned the ball over one more time with 11.

"I just told my team that we've got everyone coming back and for them to remember this feeling," Stephens said. "Hopefully this motivates you to get back here next year."

In a separate interview that aired Friday during a broadcast of the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association girls basketball championships on Green Bay TV station WCWF, Murphy said he would honor a trade request if Rodgers made one.

"It's trying to find what he wants and what we want, and hopefully we can find a win-win situation," Murphy said.

Rodgers had said at the end of the 2022 season that he would need time to decide whether to return to the Packers, request a trade or retire. He said Wednesday he had discussions with Packers officials regarding his future shortly after the team wrapped up a 8-9 season that ended a string of three straight NFC North titles.

"Everything that I was told in the week that I was in Green Bay was: 'Take as long as you want and we want you to retire a Packer. If you want to come back and play, obviously the door is wide open,'" Rodgers said. "That was the information I was going on."

As he pondered his future, Rodgers spent multiple days last month on an isolation retreat in Oregon, where he said he stayed alone in a room in total darkness.

Rodgers said he was 90% leaning toward retirement at the time of the retreat. When he was done with it, he said, he noticed a difference in the Packers' approach toward his future with the franchise.

"Now when I came out of the dark-

ness, something changed," Rodgers said. "I'm not exactly sure what that was, but something changed. ... I realized there had been a little bit of a shift. I heard from multiple people that I trust around the league - players mostly - that there was some shopping going on, that they were interested in actually moving me."

Rodgers said that made him realize the Packers probably didn't want him back.

"It was clear to me at that point, that although the Packers were going to say the right thing publicly, that they were ready to move on," he said. "I don't know what changed that or what moved that - if they just said, 'Hey, we need to make a decision here because he hasn't made a decision here yet.' Again, there's no victims here. I'm not sitting here as a victim."

The Jets' interest in Rodgers has been apparent as they seek to end the NFL's longest active playoff drought. They lost their final six games while going 7-10 last season and haven't reached the postseason since 2010.

Their new offensive coordinator is Nathaniel Hackett, who earned raves from Rodgers while coordinating Green Bay's offense from 2019-21.

"There's a lot of reasons why the Jets are attractive," Rodgers said Wednesday. "But there's one coach that has meant as much to me as any coach I've ever had. And he happens to be the coordinator there."



Photo Provided

West Virginia players, from left, Tre Mitchell, Erik Stevenson and Kedrian Johnson speak with the media before a practice in preparation for their NCAA Tournament game with Maryland.

NCAA

(Continued from Page 13)

Huggins had discussed it over and over during the season, but with a new national cast of inquisitors on hand this week, he had to discuss it again.

And as he did, he offered up insights that maybe none of us thought about as it was going on and he was putting his team together.

"I have a way. It varies," he said of molding a team. "You know, the idea that you treat them all the same is absolute BS. You can't treat them all the same. They are all different. They have different expectations, they have different goals, you find out what makes them tick."

"You find out where they want to go, what they want to do, what they want to be."

It's an individual approach to making them into one team, and it comes out of his background.

"It's the same thing that happened to me as a player. I had no idea what I wanted to do. I wanted to play basketball, and right now, if you asked every one of them what they want to do, they would want to play bas-

game. I've known Ron since he was a little kid. So I've got guys I can trust. I got guys who in a lot of ways know a lot more than I know about a lot of things."

That's what got them through the tough times, a bunch of individuals becoming a team as they lost three or four games that they should have won.

"We had opportunities early, particularly in the conference season where we should have won games and we didn't win games," Huggins said. "We missed free throws, we missed layups, we threw it away at a crucial time. We just did a lot of things that are uncharacteristic of, really, of this group. And it cost us."

"It got to the point where it was time to sit down and say, 'Fellas, we have screwed up. We put our backs against the wall. And we can either fight our way out or we can give in.' Obviously, they decided to fight their way out."

The thing was, Huggins could have lost his players. He was publicly critical of them, but you know what he was saying in press interviews wasn't

used his emotions for the good of the team.

"I played for Fran' Martin and Gregg Marshall, so it didn't take me long at all (to learn how to deal with Huggins)," Stevenson said. "Huggins is an amazing hall of famer, he's very demanding. When you meet his demands, he lets you play, gives you freedom. You couldn't ask for anything more than that."

"Believe it or not, Erik and I have always had a pretty good relationship. I think there's been a lot of guys through the years that we have great relationships that people really have no idea, because I think most of us think that it's nobody's damn idea anyways other than ours," Huggins said.

Huggins noted that a team takes care of each other, and Stevenson learned to be a part of that, especially down the stretch when the Mountaineers elbowed their way into the tournament.

This is a team that people from afar were kicking dirt on as it tried to crawl out of that grave it had dug for itself, and now, with the likes of Stevenson and Kedrian Johnson

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AP PHOTO

CHARLESTON GUARD Dalton Bolon (3) passes the ball against UNC Wilmington guard Shykeim Phillips (2) during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game in the championship of the Colonial Athletic Association conference tournament last Tuesday in Washington.

7th-year guard Bolon finally makes NAAs with Charleston

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — His teammates call him "Psycho D." The D stands for Dalton, although no one would be surprised if it was for Dad.

Dalton Bolon is 24, six years older than many of his College of Charleston teammates, and nearing the end of his college career. It's a seven-year journey that spans two schools, three degrees, countless teammates and now the NCAA Tournament.

"Looking for an eighth (year)," the guard quipped Wednesday. "If there's a way I can get an eighth, if you people could tell me how, that would be great."

Bolon's NCAA eligibility finally

expires at the end of this season. He's counting on it not happening Thursday when 12th-seeded Charleston (31-3) plays No. 5 seed San Diego State (24-9) in the South Region.

It will be the 155th collegiate game Bolon has played, finishing the last two seasons at Charleston after five years at Division II West Liberty in West Virginia. How did he get such an extended stay?

For starters, he redshirted as a freshman at West Liberty and then played four seasons for the Hilltoppers. He earned an extra year because of COVID-19 and decided to make the jump to Division I Charleston as a

graduate transfer.

He broke his right foot three games into what should have been his final season and was granted a medical redshirt for another year. So now's he's closing in on his 25th birthday and his third college graduation ceremony.

"They just call me 'Old Man,'" he said. "They say I'm like 30. Really? I'm young for my age."

He's the butt of many age jokes — Bolon's "got a mortgage to pay" and "kids back home" — and even provides fodder. He wears "dad shoes" when he's not on the court, something wider and more comfortable for his

See, **BOLON**, Page D4

"Twenty or so. I didn't really count," Keller said.

"How many do you think you'll throw on the 30th?" Shelton asked.

"I have no idea. What's the 30th?" the pitcher replied.

"Opening day," Shelton said.

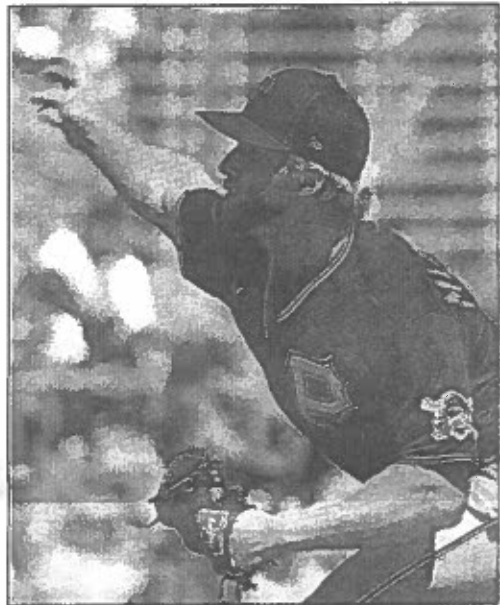
"Ha ha!" Keller said, taking a moment to let it sink in. "Come on! Oh my god, dude!"

Shelton offered a congratulatory handshake and the two hugged. Shelton told Keller how proud he was of the hard work the pitcher put in transforming himself from prospect to big leaguer.

"Thanks! This is so sick!" said Keller, who requested another hug.

Shelton then handed Keller a bottle of Champagne. "First of many. You and

See, **KELLER**, Page D4



AP PHOTO

PITTSBURGH PIRATES' Carmen Mlodzinski pitches to the Toronto Blue Jays during the fifth inning of a spring training baseball game Wednesday in Dunedin, Fla.

Wheeling CC eliminated

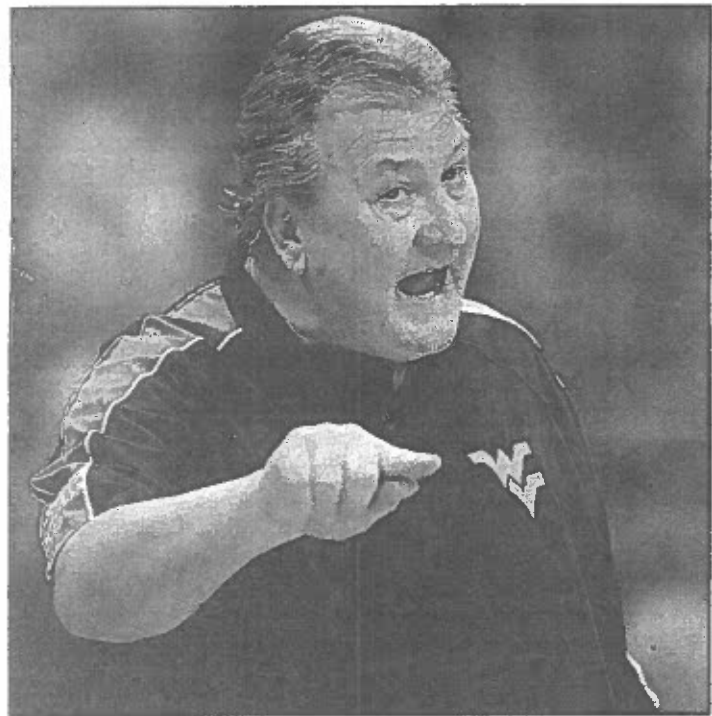
By **STAFF REPORTS**

CHARLESTON - Wheeling Central's struggles in the first half didn't leave it enough time in the second as it fell in the quarterfinal round of the W.Va. Class AA boys state basketball tournament.

The No. 7 seeded Maroon Knights (14-11) trailed 34-17 at the half against second-seeded Bluefield while only shooting 27 percent (7-26). However, a trey by sophomore Troy Anthony with 20 ticks remaining pulled them to within six, 74-68, but with no timeouts - they spent two in the first half trying to keep the game close - they were forced to foul.

The Beavers (19-7) missed two free throws with 13 seconds left, but Kam'Rom

See, **WHEELING**, Page D4



AP PHOTO

WEST VIRGINIA head coach Bob Huggins talks to his players during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game against Texas Tech in the first round of the Big 12 Conference tournament last week in Kansas City, Mo.

No. 1 Alabama readies for tournament "home" game

• WVU, Maryland to meet in opening game

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Alabama has the No. 1 overall NCAA Tournament seed, one of the best players in college basketball and likely a couple of games in its own backyard.

For a Crimson Tide team that's been an easy target for opposing fans over the past two months, playing less than an hour from campus is no small matter. It means most of the taunts will be replaced by cheers at Legacy Arena, especially for All-America freshman Brandon Miller. Hostile crowds have targeted Miller with taunts since his presence at the scene of a fatal shooting was made public.

It will be an overwhelmingly crimson and white crowd at Thursday's game against Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, (24-10) which advanced with a 75-71 win over Southeast Missouri State in a play-in game for its first NCAA Tournament win.

"This isn't technically a home game, but I sure hope that Legacy is packed out like a home game," Alabama coach Nate Oats said. "And it's been nice to play in front of our own fans and some friendly fans in Coleman. I hope we get a similar treatment here at Legacy."

See, **NCAA**, Page D4

OVAC wrestlers fall to MAC in all-star match

By **STAFF REPORTS**

MIDLAND, Pa. - The OVAC All-Stars dug themselves a hole that was just a bit too deep to recover from in the 26th annual "Clash of Champions" dual meet against the MAC All-Stars inside Lincoln Park High School.

The MAC, which had three NCAA Division I recruits in its lineup, won six of the first eight matches and led 29-9 before the OVAC reeled off three straight victories, but fell 29-24.

Wheeling Park's Bradyn Lucas, a two-time W.Va. Class AAA state champion, got the OVAC on the board with a 7-5 decision at 138. It was his 108th career win and cut the deficit to 9-3 after the MAC won the 126-pound match by a 5-0 decision from Davidson recruit Brady Joling of Chartiers Valley and received a pin at 132 by Quaker Valley's Brandon Krul.

West Liberty recruit Nico Taddy, of West Allegheny High

School, bumped the MAC margin back to 13-3 with a 13-3 major decision at 144.

A third-period pin from Indian Creek's CJ Spencer, a two-time all-Ohioan, drew the OVAC to within 13-9, however, back-to-back technical falls by D-I signees and recent PIAA Class AAA state champions Ty Waters (West Allegheny/WVU) at 157 and Dylan Evans (Chartiers Valley/Pitt) at 165 pushed the advantage to 23-9 and a pin by Carlynton's Chase Brandebura in another 165-pound bout clinched the victory.

Martins Ferry's Alexander Finsley earned a 2-point reversal in the third period for a 4-3 win at 190 before Wheeling Park's 3-time W.Va. state champion and 4-time state placer Erick Brothers Jr. and Indian Creek's two-time Ohio D-II state placer Elijah Llewellyn closed the match out with pins in 1:45 and 2:20 at

See, **OVAC**, Page D4



Photo Provided

PICTURED IS Team OVAC from the annual 'Clash of Champions' which pits the top senior wrestlers from the OVAC against the Pennsylvania-based MAC. The OVAC squad consisted of John Marshall's Ethan Cook (126); Magnolia's Lucas Zombotti (132); Wheeling Park's Bradyn Lucas (138); Dover's Egidio DeFazio (144); Indian Creek's CJ Spencer (150) and Dom Paterra (157); Edison's Ethan Waggoner (165); Martins Ferry's Jonathan McFarland (165) and Alexander Finsley (190); Wheeling Park's Erick Brothers Jr. (215); and Indian Creek's Elijah Llewellyn (285).

and Donovan Mitchell added 21 for the Cavs, who were playing the second night of a back-to-back.

• Bolon

Continued from Page D1
still-sore foot.

"I don't care what anybody says," Bolon said. "They see grandpas wearing these things. Like, grandpas are the smartest people on the earth. I don't know why people don't take their advice more often. These are so comfortable."

He's admittedly "not as hip" as his teammates, which shows up mostly when they're choosing music to play in the locker room.

"But, honestly, we're not crazy far apart," he said. "I'm still in the same stage of life that they are, best friends with all of 'em, to be honest with you."

• NCAA

Continued from Page D1

On the court, Alabama (29-5) is among the favorites to win the national title, behind only Houston according to FanDuel Sportsbook. Off the court, the Tide are much less popular these days outside of their own giddy fan base. Case in point: The security guard accompanying Miller at the arena on Wednesday after some of the angry messages Oats said have been sent his way.

"If you guys saw some of what I've seen sent his way, I think you would understand why that's the case," Oats said. "I don't want to get into all that. The entire situation, as you know, is just a heart-breaking situation on all accounts."

Police tied both he and freshman point guard Jaden Bradley to the scene of a shooting that led to capital murder charges against then-Tide teammate Darius Miles and another man. Though neither have been accused of any crime or been held out of a game, police say Miles had left his gun in the back of Miller's vehicle that night.

Through it all, Alabama has won both the Southeastern Conference regular-season and tournament titles with Miller leading the way.

The Tide returned to the No. 1 ranking in The Associated Press poll for the second time this season. The first was followed swiftly by a loss at Tennessee.

"We have been No. 1 during the season," Miller said. "I feel like before we weren't as prepared, but I feel like now we are more prepared for anything that comes our way."

The Islanders came in Thursday savoring the "shock the world" possibilities — if not the challenge of defending Miller.

"Everybody in the country and most of the world will know who the heck we are if we beat them," Corpus Christi coach Steve Lutz said. "This is what you dream about when you're a little kid. This is what you dream about when you're a coach. You've got to enjoy every moment."

The Islanders have had to overcome the left knee injury to Terrion Murdix, the Southland Conference defensive player of the year. He was hurt in the league championship game.

In other South region games:

No. 9 West Virginia vs. No. 8 Maryland at Birmingham, Ala., 12:15 p.m. (CBS)

A couple of coaches' kids will be facing each other when West Virginia meets Maryland.

Bob Huggins of the Mountaineers played high school hoops for his father, Charlie. The Terrapins are guided by Kevin Willard, whose father Ralph was a head coach at Holy Cross, Pittsburgh and Western Kentucky.

"My mother wanted me to be a doctor," Huggins quipped. "I found

holding the Cavs without a field goal for more than six minutes.

Cleveland got a huge lift from its

They look up to him because of his age and experience and admire him for his determination in returning from last year's season-ending injury. He also does enough wild things to earn the "psycho" nickname.

"He's probably the craziest dude I've ever met," teammate Jack Miller said.

Bolon is steady on the court, averaging 12.3 points and 4.2 rebounds. He talks trash, makes 3-pointers and is willing to sacrifice his body to help the Cougars win.

They've done that as well as

out how many classes you had to take to do that, and (decided) there's got to be a better way out than this."

Willard joked that he was the product of "child abuse."

"My first memory of life is helping my dad re-varnish St. Dominic's High School basketball gym," he said. "I was out there pouring the polyurethane while he was sweeping it."

Huggins will be making his 24th appearance at the NCAA Tournament. The Mountaineers (19-14) got in despite a 7-11 mark in the brutal Big 12.

Maryland (21-11) returned to the NAAs in Willard's first season after the departure of Mark Turgeon.

No. 2 Arizona vs. No. 15 Princeton at Sacramento, California, 4 p.m. (TNT)

Princeton coach Mitch Henderson was a player on the Tigers team that famously upset defending champion UCLA in the tournament 27 years ago. Now he's looking to coach the team to a win over a bigger program — literally.

If the 15th-seeded Tigers are going to have any chance against No. 2 seed Arizona, they will need to find a way to neutralize 7-foot center Oumar Ballo and 6-11 forward Azuolas Tubelis.

"Size, like as in Ballo and Tubelis, we haven't seen anything like that," Henderson said. "Those guys are enormous and they're fast. Again, we can practice with guys that have broomsticks attached to their hands. This is going to be new for us in some ways."

No. 7 Missouri vs. No. 10 Utah State, at Sacramento, California 1:40 p.m. (TNT)

Missouri guards Nick Honor and Tre Gomillion don't need anyone to warn them about the quality of play in the mid-major conferences before the Tigers take on Utah State of the Mountain West.

Honor began his college career in the Atlantic 10 at Fordham and Gomillion transferred to Missouri from Cleveland State of the Horizon League.

"We don't get caught up too much in level when it comes to basketball," Honor said. "Even though we're at the high major level, we still have the mid-major chip on our shoulder because at the end of the day we're still underrated and slept on around the country. We don't get caught up in that too much. Utah State is a good team."

The Aggies feel the schedule they played in the Mountain West, which got four teams into the tournament, was a good test for what they will see on Thursday. Now they hope to get their first tournament win since 2001.

games left — five home, five road. ... G Ricky Rubio sat out his "bobblehead night."

anyone in the country this season — 10 in a row and 30 of 32 since getting blown out at North Carolina in early November.

The Colonial Athletic Association champions have a chance to notch their first NCAA Tournament victory since 1997 — and with a starting guard who was born a year later and doesn't want his college career to end.

"It would be super impressive if he gets an eighth year," Miller said. "I mean he's really working the system at that point."

No. 13 Furman vs. No. 4 Virginia at Orlando, Fla., 12:40 p.m. (TRU).

Virginia is returning to the site of one of its worst NCAA Tournament games in history. No, not the first-round stunner to 16th-seeded Maryland-Baltimore County in 2018. The Cavaliers scored just 39 points in a 26-point drubbing to Florida at the Amway Center in 2017.

It remains the lowest-scoring game in the program's tournament history.

"Not a lot has changed in this tournament," UVA coach Tony Bennett said. "You'd better be ready."

The fourth-seeded Cavaliers (25-7) expect a better showing against No. 13 seed Furman (27-7) on Thursday. The Paladins have won six in row and 12 of 13, culminating with winning the Southern Conference Tournament more than a week ago.

Furman has a dynamic duo of super seniors — guard Mike Bothwell and forward Jalen Slawson — who could pose problems for Bennett's stout pack-line defense.

No. 12 Charleston vs. No. 5 San Diego State at Orlando, Fla., 3:10 p.m. (TRU).

If College of Charleston's players can match coach Pat Kelsey's energy and intensity, they should be in good shape in their first-round matchup against fifth-seeded San Diego State (27-6) on Thursday.

The 47-year-old Kelsey is known for hanging on rims at practice to get his guys' attention. But he divulged a little secret Wednesday.

"People think I go up with my vertical leap," he said. "I actually pull myself up on the net and grab that bad boy."

Players nonetheless raved about Kelsey swinging from the rim like he's in a dunk contest.

"Coach thinks he's 7 feet," guard Dalton Bolon said. "He'll be walking around with his chest out and stuff like that. ... He's got the most energy I've ever seen on every day."

The 12th-seeded Cougars (31-3) have won 10 in a row under Kelsey, culminating with the Colonial Athletic Association Tournament title. Their last and only NCAA Tournament victory came in 1997.

Now they get a San Diego State team that landed in Orlando after midnight thanks to its charter flight getting delayed because of restricted air space regarding President Joe Biden and Air Force One.

The Aztecs have lost four straight NCAA Tournament games, including the last two years as the higher seed.

boards — and handed out a trio of helpers. Freshman Max Olejasz chipped in eight points and five rebounds.

All five Bluefield starters reached twin figures as R.J. Hairston had a double-double with 13 points and a dozen rebounds. He also handed out seven assists and charted a pair of steals.

Caleb Fuller led the Beavers with 21 points while William Looney added 17. Gore 12 and Sencere Fields 11. Gore had four assists and Fields three steals.

Bluefield had five more rebounds with 33 and turned the ball over one more time with 11.

"I just told my team that we've got everyone coming back and for them to remember this feeling," Stephens said. "Hopefully this motivates you to get back here next year."

• Keller

Continued from Page D1

Clanc, go ahead and celebrate," the manager said, referring to Keller's wife, Clancy.

"Yeah, we will," said Keller, who added, "I can't wait to tell my parents. This is cool."

After struggling in his first three big league seasons, Keller revived his career in 2022, going 5-12 with a 3.91 ERA in 31 games, with 29 starts. A brief stint in Triple-A last spring helped him refine a sinker that became an important secondary pitch during a promising second half. Keller went 2-5 with a 3.09 after the All-Star break.

Shelton later told reporters it was a special moment breaking the news to Keller.

"He was pretty fired up. This is a kid who was a very highly touted prospect and had to grind a little bit and discovered himself. It was a cool moment," Shelton said. "Everybody aspires to be an opening day starter at some point in their career, but for young guys coming up, I do think it's something they can look and say, 'Hey, this is a guy who came through our system.'"

Keller is the seventh different opening day starter for the Pirates in the last seven years, including JT Brubaker last season.

The last Pirate to start consecutive opening days was Francisco Liriano, who took the mound first for Pittsburgh from 2014-16.

KOWAR OPTIONED

The Kansas City Royals optioned right-hander Jackson Kowar, a first-round pick in the 2018 draft, to Triple-A Omaha along with right-hander Max Castillo and infielder Samad Taylor as they continue to finalize their opening day roster.

Kowar was drafted out of Florida as part of a wave of college prospects that Kansas City hoped would form the backbone of its rotation. But so far, only Brady Singer has emerged as a potential staff ace. Kowar, who allowed 17 runs in just 15 2/3 innings last season, coughed up three runs in five innings this spring.

Castillo and Taylor were acquired from the Blue Jays in a trade for infielder Whit Merrifield last season.

Taylor in particular had a good spring, hitting .400 with a pair of homers, and is expected to help the Royals at some point this season.

IKF TO CF?

With Harrison Bader expected to be out until late April with a left oblique strain, the New York Yankees are considering having Isiah Kiner-Falefa play center field.

Manager Aaron Boone plans to start Kiner-Falefa in center field beginning Friday.

"He's worked in the outfield the last couple of days and I looked at some video of it the other day, just watching how his feet move and stuff," Boone told reporters. "I think he'd be natural out there; the ability to move around, his speed and athleticism, his bat-to-ball."

• OVAC

Continued from Page D1

215 and 285, respectively.

For their performances, the two future Mountaineers — Watters and Brothers Jr. — were voted the Most Outstanding Wrestlers for the MAC and OVAC, respectively.

This is the second straight win by the MAC, but the OVAC still leads the all-time series, 17-9.

Nailers snap skid

NORFOLK, VA- The Wheeling Nailers put their seven-game winless skid to bed in a big way on Wednesday night, as they played the first of three games at Norfolk Scope Arena this week. Brooklyn Kalmikov was the brightest star of the game, as he kick-started a three-goal first period by Wheeling and ended up with a hat trick and an assist. Tyler Drevitch posted his fifth multi-goal game of the season, while Jarrett Lee dished out three primary assists in his professional debut. That all added up to an 8-4 Nailers triumph.