

side the Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center.

The Mohigans only held a one-point lead at halftime and a five-point lead after the third quarter but won the final frame 23-8. WP leading scorer Aiden Davis, who entered the contest averaging 26 points a game, was held to just five points and one field goal.

With the victory, the Mohigans advance to play on Semifinal Friday against No. 3 Huntington at 9:30 a.m. MHS defeated the Highlanders 98-57 on Feb. 3 in the Battle for the Springhouse at the Greenbrier.

Morgantown was led in scoring by senior Sharron Young with 17 points. The Akron signee also dished eight assists and grabbed four rebounds. He was joined in double figures by senior Jacob King with 14 and junior Brady Savage who finished with 12. The trio combined to shoot 18 for 28 from the floor with Young netting three triples.

"I love coaching down here and rarely get nervous but when I saw we had to prepare for Michael Jebbia and Wheel-

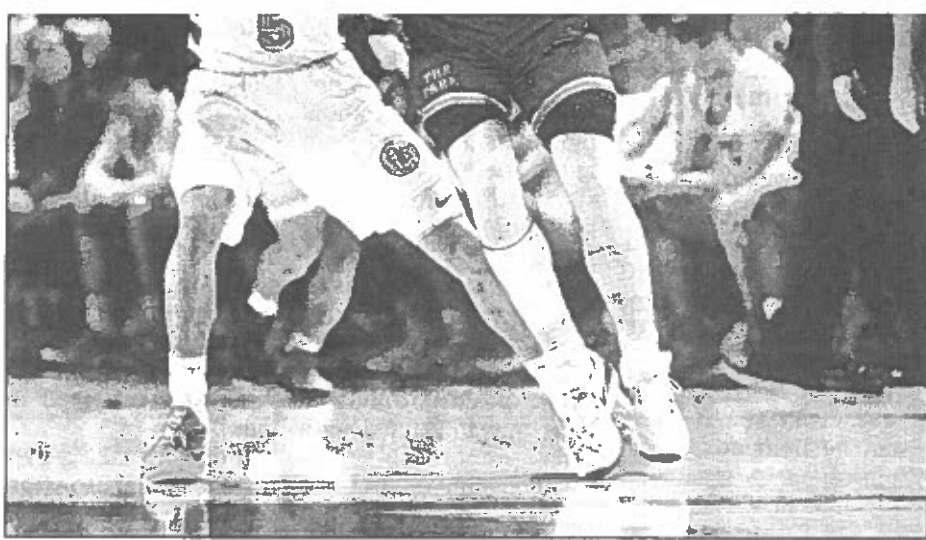


Photo by William Wotring/The Dominion Post
Wheeling Park's Aiden Davis (1) is guarded by Morgantown's Sharron Young (5) on Wednesday in their state quarterfinals matchup.

ing Park I was pretty sick to my stomach all week." MHS head coach Dave Tallman said. "They do what they do and spread you and move the ball with good patience. They're a great program with some great athletes. On our end, only four turnovers the entire game and 16 assists. We knew it might be a grind-it-out win but that shows our maturity and experience and we got it done."

The Patriots were the team to jump out to an early lead after a quarter, 9-6, as the pace of

the game was set by their offense.

The Mohigans responded well however, and fought back in the second quarter to take a two-possession lead, but a Mykel Davis jumper at the buzzer cut the deficit to 27-25 for the Patriots going into the locker room. The senior WVU football signee led Wheeling Park with a game-high 22 points. Both sides shot over 50% from the floor in the second quarter.

The third quarter held true to the story of the first half as MHS held

onto a slight lead that the Patriots refused to let get away from them.

A 43-38 lead after three quarters for MHS had WP with its hopes high for the fourth. But those would quickly be denied by Young and the Mohigans to open the final eight minutes.

A 12-3 scoring run spanning five minutes into the fourth created some distance between the two teams as MHS took a 55-41 lead with just over three minutes to go.

Please see PARK, Page 10



Photo Provided
West Virginia University Athletic Director Wren Baker, pictured, has started a search for his next men's basketball coach.

Many Variables Going Into WVU Head Coach Search—Is Bob Huggins One Of Them?

By BOB HERTZEL
WV News

MORGANTOWN — If only our world were simple enough that an athletic director could be left to do the job he was hired to do without any interference, but in today's world, an athletic department may be known by the initials WVU but it is run more like a corporate giant like IBM.

Bosses have bosses. There's a president and a board of regents and powerful alumni and the never sleeping eye of social media on an AD such as West Virginia's athletic director Wren Baker, who has studied the field of potential coaches to be permanent replacements for Bob Huggins since last summer and on Wednesday declared

it hunting season for that coach.

But he does so under the large shadow that Huggins left when he first heard what came out of his mouth got him in trouble and cost him a three-game suspension, a new contract at \$1 million less and then what went into his mouth cost him the job he loved in his hometown at his alma mater.

There are those, powerful and generous backers of Huggins, who have worked in the shadows trying to clear a path for Huggins' return and he has been most cooperative with them, cleaning up his act, which was a necessary move to save his life than to save his job.

Please see WVU, Page 10

OVAC Takes Conference Clash vs. MAC

By KIM NORTH
Staff Writer

WELLSBURG - The OVAC, with three NCAA Division I recruits in the lineup, ended two years of frustration Wednesday night with a convincing, 40-18, victory over the MAC during the 28th annual "Clash of Champions" all-star wrestling match inside the Brooke Wellness Center.

Trailing 15-11 after six matches, Barnesville's back-to-back Ohio Division III state champions - Reese Stephen (152) and Skyler King (160) - did that again for one final time. Stephen, a two-time state champion who is headed to Cleveland State University to continue his academic and athletic careers, put the OVAC ahead for good, 17-15, with a 55-second pin. King followed with a 10-0 major decision and the lead was quickly up to 21-15.

"It started off a little slow for us," Barnesville head coach Jayson Stephen said of the dual. "I don't know much about any of those MAC guys, but Reese and Skyler came through again like they have their whole careers. It was all good."

Please see OVAC, Page 10

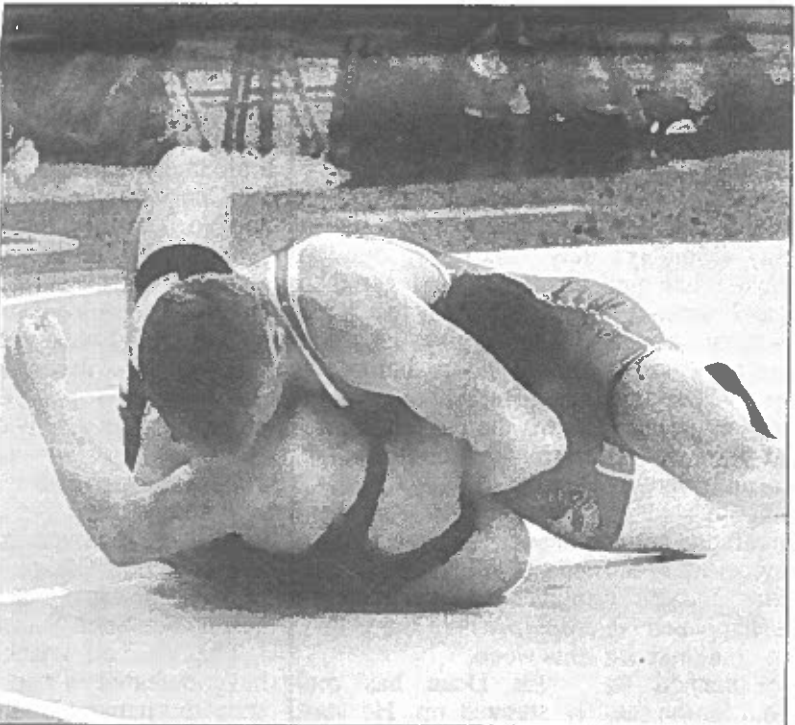


Photo by Kim North

Barnesville's Reese Stephen earns back points before pinning Freedom's Ryan Kredel during their 152-pound bout at the 27th annual "Clash of the Champions" all-star wrestling match Wednesday night inside the Brooke Wellness Center. Stephen recorded a 55-second pin that put the OVAC up for good at 17-15. They won 40-18.



Photo by Bill Ferguson Photography

Cameron's Lance Hartley 33 throws down a dunk over East Hardy's Gideon Good in the second half of their state quarterfinals matchup.

East Hardy Pulls Away From Cameron Late

By NICK HENTHORN
Sports Editor

CHARLESTON - The Cameron Dragons could not overcome an East Hardy team that was shooting the lights out on offense and pestering them heavily on defense.

The No. 3 Cougars secured their first state tournament win in school history on Thursday morning, winning their Class A quarterfinals contest 60-50.

Jordan Teets led East Hardy in scoring with 26 points, but the biggest number of the game was 27.

Cameron committed 27 turnovers against the Cougars, who scored 30 points - half of their total - off of them.

Creating a large number of turnovers while shooting 9-21 from the 3-point line, East Hardy followed their recipe for success that they'd had all season.

you have to shoot it." Cougars head coach Chris Hahn said. "We've always been a smaller school and we're a bunch of 5-foot-7, 5-8 guards. Some years, those guards are really fast and some years they're not. You have to be able to be an offensive threat or otherwise we're at a real disadvantage - these guys have embraced that."

The Dragons were led by Lance Hartley who scored 11 points. Colson Wichterman scored nine points with five rebounds and five assists, while Coiton Winters and Mason Scott each scored eight.

East Hardy led 14-12 after the first quarter and 26-24 at halftime.

The Cougars made five 3-pointers in the first half at a 33% rate, while Cameron shot 50% from the field and had a 12-2 advantage in points in the paint over the first two

Central Preparing For Tough Road In State Tournament – Starting With A Tough Rematch

By KIM NORTH
Staff Writer

CHARLESTON - W.Va. Class AA Region I rivals - No. 4 Wheeling Central Catholic and No. 5 Williamstown - will renew their series for the second time in two weeks when they meet in the final W.Va. Class AA state tournament quarterfinal on Thursday at 9 p.m. inside the Charleston Civic Center Coliseum.

The Maroon Knight (19-5) outlasted the Yellowjackets (21-3) by a 71-65 margin in double overtime on February 22 on Coach Skip Prosser Court in a regional semifinal in East Wheeling.

Wheeling Central led Class AA teams entered in the tournament in points per game at 69.3. Williamstown is a close second at 69.2.

"This is the toughest draw of the tournament. For either one of us to win the state championship, it is going

Mel Stephens admitted. "We just played Williamstown at our place two weeks ago and beat them in two overtimes. It was a great game.

"If we are fortunate enough to win Thursday, then we get No. 1 Bluefield on Friday in the semifinals, so it certainly won't be easy, but we're going down there with the mindset of playing three games and winning them all."

The Beavers eliminated the Maroon Knights last year, something that motivated them to make a return appearance.

"We've been fortunate enough to have a pretty good nucleus coming back year to year. Once you've gotten there, those guys want to come back," Stephens said of reaching the state tournament. "Especially if you don't win it, you want to get back and try to get that championship."

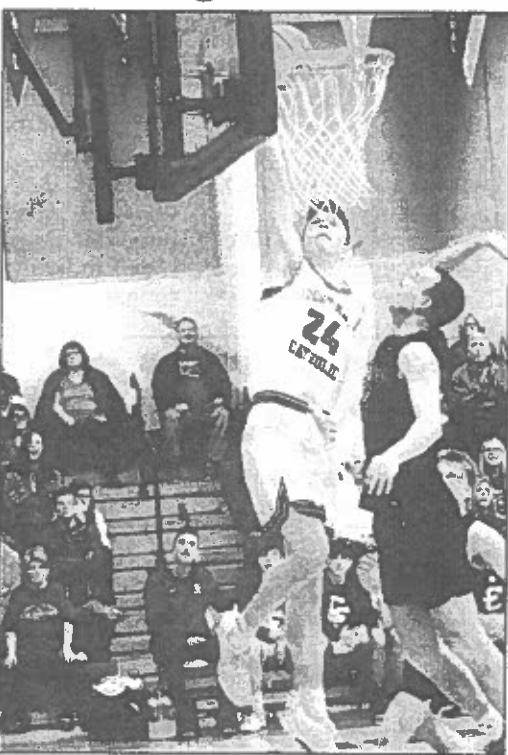


Photo by Nick Henthorn

Wheeling Central's Max Olejasz throws down a dunk against Williamstown during their previous meeting in the regular season. The Ma-

OVAC

(Continued from Page 9)

Reese said it was fun to wrestle in this type of environment.

"You just go out and wrestle. There was no pressure. You just go out and have fun," he added. "It was nice to put the team ahead, especially with a pin to end my career."

When asked what it felt like to watch his son compete for the last time as a high school wrestler, Coach/Father Stephen replied, "I tried not to think about it, but since you brought it up, it's bittersweet, for sure. He's got a whole other chapter of his life ahead of him, as do most of the guys on the OVAC team. He had a good high school career, as did all of my seniors, and we'll wait and see what the future brings."

Parkersburg South's Gage Wright (172), the No. 1 ranked wrestler at 175 in the nation who is headed to Virginia Tech, also

pinned his opponent in 55 ticks as the margin increased to 27-15. Southern Local's Gabe Blissenbach (189) doubled the count at 30-15 with a 6-0 decision.

Harrison Central's Lucas Thomas (215) rebounded from a tough loss in the state finals on Sunday night, with a pin in 1:46 as the lead ballooned to 36-15. He is headed to Clarion University.

"It was good to come out here and get a win to end my career," Thomas noted. "It wasn't good the other night, but I came out tonight focused and took care of business."

Barnesville's Johnathan Huntsman (114), competing for the second time on the night, posted a 11-0 major decision for the final four team points.

Other OVAC winners were Oak Glen's Logan Davis (121) by 20-4 technical fall; Shenandoah's Tristen

Rossiter (127) by a 13-11 count; and Weir's Shawn Young (144) by a 5-4 nod.

King was voted the OVAC's Most Outstanding Wrestler. He was presented with a plaque by event director Danny Doyle.

"It feels good to be able to help the team," King said. "It's sad the season is over already, but it is something you have to deal with."

Prior to the dual meet, Stephen was awarded the OVAC's Ohio Wrestler of the Year, while Wright received the OVAC's West Virginia Wrestler of the Year. Each was presented with a plaque by OVAC Executive Director Dirk Decoy.

With the lop-sided victory, the OVAC now leads the all-time series, 18-9. The MAC had won 26-25 in 2022 and 29-24 last year. Next year's event will be held at a MAC school.

WVU

(Continued from Page 9)

Now, the other side has been heard, that being one of the school's most generous donors, Ken Kendrick, the head of the Arizona Diamondbacks, who told MetroNews that there was no way Huggins would get his job back.

"It's the second time he lost his job because of drunkenness," Kendrick said to MetroNews. "It may not be remembered by many, but it is by me."

"He was let go by Cincinnati for exactly the same reason. So, I think he has no place in the lives of young men who deserve quality leadership. So I would be one who would wonder about the mental capacity of any leader of any university who would consider hiring him for a coaching position."

The problem isn't with the values Kendrick holds, for they certainly are exemplary, but to come out so strongly at this time interferes with Baker's approach to hiring a coach.

Does he have to run it past Kendrick? Does he have to run it past other top-line donors?

Huggins certainly is a lightning rod, but he is a big part of the history of WVU basketball, which makes it a fair question to ask where he fits.

So it was that it was tossed to Baker during his only media session that will be held while the search goes on for the

new basketball coach. Would Huggins be involved in the search, even if not as a coach, then in an advisory capacity to Baker?

To Baker's credit, he tactfully answered the question.

"I think in terms of candidates I would probably not want to get into any individual names, but I understand why that question would come up. I'll let you know where my mindset is, though," the athletic director began.

"I have great respect and admiration and appreciation for what Coach Huggins did. I've said that multiple times, but I think you can be respectful of the past and still be focused on the future. My mindset right now is I need to be focused on the future."

"That probably doesn't answer the question the way you'd like, but I think you can read into that."

It doesn't take a gypsy fortune teller to figure out that Huggins will neither coach WVU or be on the advisory panel that Baker has put together.

Still, Kendrick's comments do raise the question of what role donors or the Country Road Trust - which was co-founded by Kendrick - should play in any decision Baker may make.

Again, he had a well thought out response to a

question he may not have expected.

"When people give their wealth and time and talent to support a program, I always give an ear to those data points, but I also give an ear to other data points as well," he began, and here's why.

"Ultimately, when a hire doesn't work and when you have to come into a (media) room like this, I've never seen anyone sitting with the athletic director," he stressed. "It's always the athletic director so I feel I have to make a decision that I feel is the best decision. I know I'm the one who is going to bear the brunt of that decision - good, bad or indifferent."

"So, I think it's good to get all the data points you can, but not be overwhelmed by it."

Where this will lead, no one knows, for there are many variables at work, but one would think that a program such as WVU that had been blindsided as it was by the Huggins affair would be an attractive draw for someone looking to move up from a mid-major or from an assistants' job on a Power 5 team.

There are many candidates and much competition for their service, so in WVU they may not be worrying about what's going on with the NCAA Tournament; they are very much in the conversation outside it.

PARK

(Continued from Page 9)

The Mohigans would continue to grow the lead and finish the game with a 19-point quarterfinal win over the Wheeling Park Patriots 66-47.

"We changed our looks against Aiden (Davis) today," Tallman said of the defensive effort. "When they

ball screened and got the switch they wanted we just decided to blitz the screen every time today and it worked for us. We tried to trap him and force the ball out of his hands. Some of their players stepped up but I thought getting the ball out of Aiden's hands

was crucial."

Morgantown will tip-off against Huntington in the opening game on Semifinal Friday at 9:30 a.m. in the first of two Class AAAA semifinals. The other semifinal will be between No. 1 Spring Mills and No. 5 South Charleston.

LATE

(Continued from Page 9)

East was able to maintain their lead with 17 points off 18 Dragons turnovers.

"We did cut it down, but that first half, they scored 17 points off turnovers," Cameron head coach Tom Hart said. "That did play a huge role."

East Hardy built their edge to lead 41-34 going into the fourth quarter, but Cameron stormed back to come within three.

The 3-point shot came through for the Cougars though, Nate Smith hitting a big shot from the top of the key to put East ahead 49-43 with four minutes remaining.

Smith made a play on defense next, snagging one of the Cougars' 19 steals, and found Jordan Teets for a long ball of his own to put East Hardy up 52-43.

"Those were two key baskets right there," Hart said.

Cuyler McCauley made a 3-pointer for the Dragons on their next trip, but with time playing against the Dragons, they sent East Hardy to the foul

line, hoping for misses that did not come as frequently as needed. The Cougars went 8-12 over the final 1:44 to stave off any comeback attempt.

Cameron finished with a 28-17 rebound advantage, but the turnover discrepancy - 16-27 - proved too much.

"One thing we got better at as the season went on was rebounding on both ends of the floor," Hart said.

East Hardy will play the winner of Tug Valley-Doddridge County in the state semifinals.

Cameron graduates a talented senior class of Lance Hartley, Colson Wichterman, Colton Winters and Carter Bertram and finish the year 20-6.

"I do think that these guys have helped set a bar with what expectations are. Not just a winning season, but winning an OVAC championship, winning a sectional, regional championship and getting back to Charleston. That's the new norm for Cameron basketball."

TOUGH

(Continued from Page 9)

"Having everybody back from last year is an odd situation. That's a first for us," Stephens added. "All the kids got to experience that last year. We didn't play well in the first game and got bumped out. That was kind of the fuel that drove this group to try and get back down there."

Wheeling Central is making its 18th appearance in the last 19 seasons - not counting the COVID year of 2019 - as 2011 was the only time they haven't headed south in mid-March. They have won 12 state titles in program history, with Stephens assisting on two under then-head coach Dave Wojcik and having six of his own. The last title came in 2018.

The 2024 season marked the debut of sophomore Eli Sancomb. The lefty and son of former Wheeling Jesuit

All-American and current head coach at Cal, Pa. Danny Sancomb, missed his freshman season due to a knee injury suffered in football.

He began his career this season like fireworks, but then got hurt again in January.

"By having everyone back, the guys were excited to have Eli return this year," Stephens noted. "Then, when he went down with the broken

phens said of the injury. "We told the kids that one guy was not going to replace Eli. It is going to take a team effort with everyone stepping up when needed or called upon. We've got contributions from a lot of guys throughout the season. They have kind of picked up the slack when he was out."

Stephens, without divulging any breaking news, reported that Sancomb is listed as day-to-day.

"He just got the cast off yesterday (Monday). We're trying to rehab him a little bit at a time. It's such a quick turnaround from getting the cast off on Monday and our first game being on Thursday. He did fairly decent Monday for just having the cast off. He said he had no pain after practicing Monday, so we'll see how that goes."

"When it happened (in January at Parkersburg South) we planned on him being out for the season, but now that he has the cast off we're going to see how things work out."

Stephens said if Sancomb can't play, he will be the biggest cheerleader the Maroon Knights have.

"He's such a great kid and teammate. He was at practice every day last year knowing that

and atone for the way they played last year."

When asked about the 9 p.m. start, Stephens said his staff has a plan.

"We practiced late Monday night and we are practicing late Wednesday night. I don't think a 9 p.m. game is a big deal. It's the early games (9:30 a.m.) that are hard to prepare for. We are going down on the day of the game. It makes it a little more normal for the kids," he explained.

"They get up and go to school for half-a-day. They get out, we bus down and get them checked into the hotel. That still gives us a couple of hours before we play, rather than going down the day before and sitting around the 12 hours."

The ultra successful Maroon Knights head coach talked about each player that has played a role in where the team is this week.

"Eli Dean has really stepped up. He started some last year, but has been coming off the bench to give us a spark. Quinton probably had better stats last year, but I think he is a better player this year because he has sacrificed some

scoring to get everybody involved and make us a better team, especially with the emergence of Eli (Sancomb). I think he

from last year. I think a lot of people forget that he is just a sophomore and still learning but he is getting better and better each game. He has probably averaged a double-double the last couple of months. He's also played good defense."

Stephens collected his 400th career victory in the Maroon Knights' regional win over Ritchie County. Wheeling Central owns victories over tournament entrants No. 2 Charleston Catholic and No. 7 Trinity.

Sancomb leads the team in scoring (19.2), although he missed most of the second half of the season due to the injury. Burlenski averages 10.8 points per game while Olejasz chips in with 10.3 points per game.

Williamstown is just three years removed from winning the Class AA state championship under head coach Scott Sauro.

The Yellowjackets have defeated a trio of state tournament qualifiers in Ravenswood, Logan and Webster County (in the Little Kanawha Conference Championship game).

Junior guard Parker Schramm leads Williamstown in scoring at 18.6 points per game. Fellow junior Jayden Bryant adds 15.6 points per contest.

Other teams in the

PIRATES OPENING DAY

April 5, 2024

Motor coach to PNC Park for Opening Day game against the Orioles. Ticket includes \$10 loaded value for concessions plus receive a Pirates Hat. \$139 per person



Barnesville wrestling state runner ups



Photo Provided

MEMBERS OF the Barnesville wrestling team are pictured with their Ohio Division III state runner up trophy Sunday night inside Value City Arena at the Jerome Schottenstein Center on the campus of Ohio State University. Holding the trophy are state champions — Reese Stephen, left, and Skyler King.

Clash of Champions wrestling match set

By **KIM NORTH**
Staff Writer

WELLSBURG — The high school wrestling season will officially come to a close Wednesday when the 27th annual OVAC vs. MAC "Clash of Champions" all-star wrestling match unfolds inside the Brooke High School Wellness Center.

Action begins at 7 p.m. with 12 bouts scheduled.

The OVAC, despite losing the last two meetings, still holds a 17-9 advantage. The MAC prevailed 29-24 last year at Lincoln High School in Midland, Pa., while also winning at West Liberty University, 26-25, in 2022.

The OVAC roster is made up of nine Ohio-side grapplers and three from W.Va. Of the dozen, 11 were either state qualifiers, state placers or state champions this past season, which just concluded Saturday for Buckeye State matmen.

The Buckeyes are led by Ohio state champions from Barnesville, Reese Stephen (152) and Skyler King (160); Parkersburg South's Gage Wright (172) and Oak Glen's Logan Davis (121). State placers are Shenandoah's Tristan Rossiter (127); Weir's Shawn Young (139); Barnesville's Karson Milhoan (145); Southern Local's Gabe Blissenbach (189); and Harrison Central's Lucas Thomas (215). State qualifiers include Barnesville's Johnathan Huntsman (114) and Caldwell's Jase Norman (285).

Young and Thomas were state runners up, while Rossiter and Blissenbach each finished third. Milhoan ended up eighth.

The team is completed by Edison's Caiden Cooley (133).

The MAC All-Stars have a PIAA state champion — Central Valley's Brenan Morgan (215, Class AA) — and one other state placer — Quaker Valley's Jack Kazalas (133, AA, 5th) on their roster.

Others are West Allegheny's Cade Stern and Caiden Harbert (114); Montour's Anthony Esposito (121); Central Valley's Don Lindsey (127); Montour's Anthony Orlandini (133); West Allegheny's Chase Scheps (145) and Nick Jones (152); Hopewell's Isaiah Pisano (160); Avonworth's Luke Hollywood (172); Fort Cherry's Anthony Salvini (189); and Quaker Valley's Chase Kretzler (285).

South Carolina, Iowa are 1-2 in women's AP Top 25

Southern California rode a Pac-12 Tournament championship to its best ranking in 38 years.

The Trojans moved up to No.

Wilson has agreed to sign a 1-year deal with the Steelers

Russell Wilson is heading to the Pittsburgh Steelers.

The nine-time Pro Bowl quarterback has agreed to sign a one-year deal with the Steelers, a person familiar with the details told The Associated Press on Sunday night.

The person, speaking on condition of anonymity because the contract hasn't been finalized, said Wilson will receive the veteran's minimum of \$1.21 million while the Denver Broncos pay the remainder of his \$39 million salary.

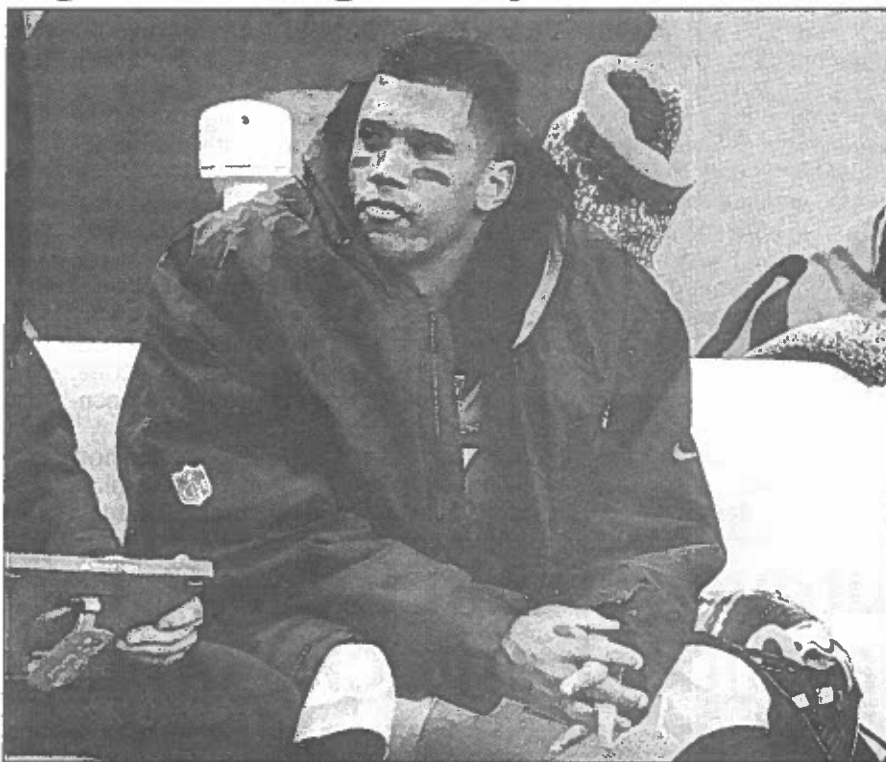
Wilson posted his intentions on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, saying: "Year 13. Grateful. @Steelers."

The 35-year-old Wilson was 11-19 in two seasons with the Broncos after being acquired in a trade from Seattle. He bounced back from a dreadful 2022 season and threw 3,070 yards, 26 touchdowns and only eight interceptions, but still lost his job to Jarrett Stidham after going 7-8 in coach Sean Payton's first season last year.

Wilson led Seattle to eight playoff appearances and a Super Bowl title in 10 seasons with the Seahawks.

The Steelers lost a wild-card playoff game with Mason Rudolph as their starting quarterback. Rudolph went 3-0 after replacing Kenny Pickett, who was 7-5 before going down with an injury. Mitch Trubisky started the other two games and went 0-2.

Pittsburgh is scheduled to play the Broncos in Denver this upcoming



AP Photo

DENVER BRONCOS quarterback Russell Wilson sits on the bench during the second half of an NFL football game against the Los Angeles Chargers, Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023, in Denver.

season — and the game could feature a return by Wilson. The NFL is expected to release its league schedule in May.

Last week, the Broncos informed Wilson they'd release him when the new league year begins Wednesday — but gave him permission to speak to other teams.

"We thank Russell for his contributions and dedications to our team and community while wishing him the best as he continues his career," the team posted on its social media channels last week, adding, "We are excited to improve this offseason and will have the flexibility to get better through the draft and free agency."

After signing a nearly quarter-billion dollar extension before playing a

down in Denver. Wilson contended the Broncos had threatened to bench him for the final nine games last season if he didn't push back his \$37 million injury guarantee in his contract.

Wilson declined to adjust his deal and started seven more games before getting benched in what Payton insisted was a football move, not a financial one.

The move also comes less than two weeks after Steelers general manager Omar Khan said the team had "full faith" in Pickett, a former star next door at the University of Pittsburgh who has struggled to be a difference maker at the most important position on the field.

Pittsburgh head coach Mike Tomlin has de-

fended Pickett at every turn since the Steelers selected him with the 20th overall pick in the 2022 draft. Tomlin admitted in the days after Pittsburgh's loss to Buffalo in the playoffs that 2024 would be a "huge" year for Pickett and the plan was to bring in competition during training camp.

That competition now likely won't be on the well-liked Rudolph — who will become a free agent on Wednesday — but instead a player with a potentially Hall of Fame caliber resume who has just one playoff win since 2016 and struggled to fit in in Denver.

Wilson joins a team that has plenty of youth on offense in running

backs Najee Harris and Jaylen Warren and wide receivers George Pickens and Diontae Johnson, and stars on defense in perennial All-Pro outside linebacker T.J. Watt and safety Minkah Fitzpatrick.

With Watt and Fitzpatrick both in their primes, Pittsburgh appears to be in a hurry to close the gap between itself and the AFC's elite, a club the Steelers haven't been a part of for at least a half-decade. Team president Art Rooney II said in January it was "time to get some wins" in the playoffs, something Pittsburgh hasn't done since beating Kansas City in the divisional round in 2016.

Enter Wilson and first-year offensive coordinator Arthur Smith, hired last month to revive a unit that has finished 21st or worse in points per game four times in the last five years.

Getting Wilson on the cheap gives Pittsburgh plenty of flexibility in free agency as it looks to address positions along the offensive and defensive lines as well as the secondary and inside linebacker. The team cut several players — namely veteran defensive back Patrick Peterson and center Mason Cole — in recent weeks to create more flexibility and Wilson's arrival signals an "all-in" approach with the team in its longest drought between postseason victories since Franco Harris made the "Immaculate Reception" more than five decades ago.

Browns agree to re-sign Za'Darius Smith and Maurice Hurst

CLEVELAND (AP) — The Cleveland Browns have agreed to re-sign defensive

Wrestling Season Reaches Finale With "Clash of Champions"

By KIM NORTH
Staff Writer

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NFL Free Agency Kicks Off With Stars On The Move



AP Photo

Minnesota Vikings quarterback Kirk Cousins (8) looks to pass during an NFL football game against the Green Bay Packers, Oct. 29, 2023, in Green Bay, Wis. Kirk Cousins is heading to the Falcons. Saquon Barkley is joining the Eagles. Brian Burns is going to the Giants.

By ROB MAADDI
AP Pro Football Writer

Kirk Cousins is heading to the Falcons. Saquon Barkley is joining the Eagles. Brian Burns is going to the Giants.

The first day of the NFL's legal tampering period was a free-for-all frenzy with teams making one big move after another, highlighted by Cousins' decision to leave Minnesota for Atlanta.

The four-time Pro Bowl quarterback and the Falcons agreed on a \$180 million, four-year deal with \$100 million guaranteed and a \$50 million signing bonus, according to a person with knowledge of the terms who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because

the deal can't be signed until the new league year begins on Wednesday.

Barkley bolted New York for NFC East rival Philadelphia, agreeing on a three-year, \$37.75 million deal with \$26 million guaranteed, a person familiar with the contract told the AP.

Hours after losing Barkley, the Giants made a splash on the defensive side.

They're sending a 2024 second-round pick and a 2025 fifth-rounder to Carolina for Burns, who is getting a five-year contract worth up to \$150 million with \$87.5 million in guarantees, according to a person with knowledge of the terms.

Barkley, a two-time Pro Bowl

running back, joins an all-star offensive cast in Philly and replaces D'Andre Swift, who is heading to the Chicago Bears.

It was a busy day for running backs, who have been undervalued by NFL teams in recent years.

Josh Jacobs, a 2022 All-Pro, is leaving Las Vegas for Green Bay. Tony Pollard is going from Dallas to Tennessee, Austin Ekeler from the Los Angeles Chargers to Washington, Devin Singletary from Houston to the Giants, Gus Edwards from Baltimore to the Chargers, Antonio Gibson from the Commanders to New England and Zack Moss from Indianapolis to Cincinnati.

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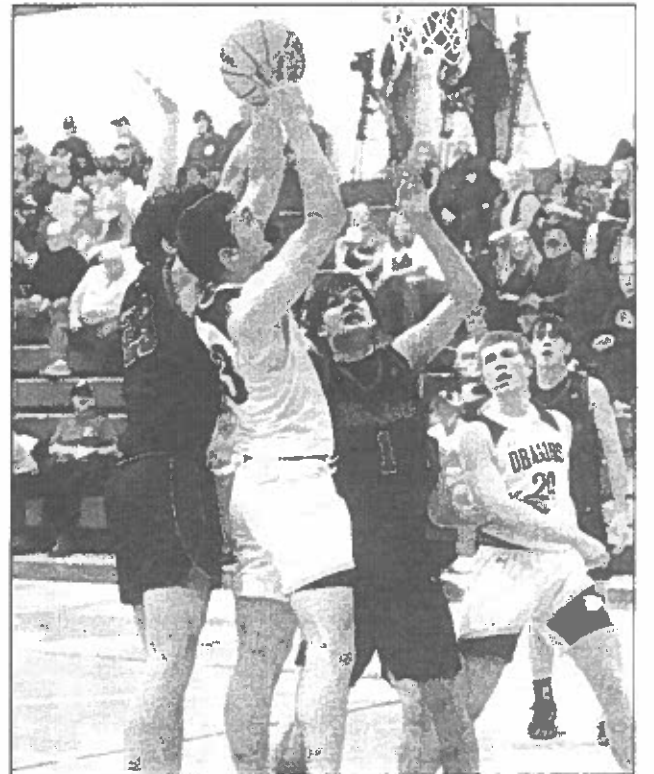


Photo by Nick Henthorn

Cameron's Lance Hartley goes up for a shot inside, defended by Trinity Christian's Carter Hartsock and Ben Lohmann during the OVAC 1A Championship inside Harrison Central High School on Feb. 10.

Dragons Bringing Hot Streak To State Tourney

By NICK HENTHORN
Sports Editor

CAMERON - Winners of nine of their last 10, the

Cameron Dragons have been tearing past their competition over the past month, and having booked their trip to Charleston for the state basketball tournament, the Dragons will look to keep up their hot streak in the state capital.

Cameron, seeded No. 6 in the Class A tournament, will face No. 3 East Hardy on Wednesday at 9:30 a.m. inside the Charleston Civic Center. Both teams return to the state tourney after first round exits last season. One is guaranteed to make it farther this ground, though both posted improved records in comparison to 2022-23.

The East Hardy Cougars (19-3) bested Pendleton

County on the road in their regional final to make it to Wednesday, topping the Wildcats 65-39.

Jordan Teets sunk six 3-pointers against Pendleton and scored 21 points. Teets is one of many shooters the Cougars deploy nightly, led by JW Teets, a senior while younger brother Jordan is a junior.

JW Teets became the eighth player in school history to reach 1,000 points this season. He made a pair of 3-pointers in the regional championship, as did Evan Hamilton and Nate Smith. The two Teets and Hamilton were listed among the All-Potomac Valley Conference boys basketball team.

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WVU — Perhaps Mercifully — Approaching Season Finish Line

By BOB HERTZEL
WV News

MORGANTOWN - We have come to that moment in time we have all dreaded for some time now; that moment when basketball reality slaps us all in the face.

It is a time when basketball fans should be excited in the moment, but instead

Considering that over the last four games they have allowed 360 points, 90 points per outing, which makes up the last four losses in a five-game losing streak they bring into the tournament.

That it is this bad is an indictment on everyone connected with the program, from Coach Josh

but by now this is a team simply limping toward the finish line, physically and psychologically beaten down through a 9-22 season and a last-place finish in a conference where the expectations going in was to be a middle of the road team.

After the latest game, that second Cincinnati

Cole, Giolito big topic before spring training game between Yankees and Red Sox

The topic before, during and after the spring training game between the Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees on Wednesday revolved around ailing right elbows.

For Boston, the news wasn't a complete surprise with righty Lucas Giolito likely done for the season following surgery. It wasn't the Tommy John version, though, which could mean a quicker return.

For New York, things remain uncertain as ace Gerrit Cole continues to undergo tests on his elbow after experiencing issues in bouncing back following spring training starts. He flew to Los Angeles on Wednesday to see special Dr. Neal ElAttrache.

Yankees manager Aaron Boone didn't want to speculate on the extent of the injury in an interview during a 9-4 loss to

the Red Sox. He didn't have a timeline after the game, either.

"I understand it's Gerrit Cole and it's a big story," Boone said. "But I'm not going to jump to a conclusion or speculate. We're still in the gathering of information, and then everyone's got to weigh in to determine what exactly we have."

Cole, the 2023 AL Cy Young Award winner, has been throwing fewer pitches in his spring training starts this year than other rotation members. The 33-year-old had an MRI exam on Monday and followed that up on Tuesday with X-rays and a CT scan.

"As much as it sounds crazy, you try not to get ahead of yourself too much with things especially when you don't know things," Boone said.

The Red Sox announced before their game that Giolito underwent ulnar col-

lateral ligament repair surgery Tuesday with an internal brace on his right elbow. The typical recovery from the internal brace surgery, which uses an artificial material to make the repair, has allowed pitchers to return to the major leagues in as little as nine months. With Tommy John surgery, where a tendon replaces a torn ligament, it can require a rehab period of 12 to 18 months.

Giolito had the procedure performed by Dr. Jeffrey R. Dugas at the Andrews Sports Medicine and Orthopedics Center in Birmingham, Alabama. The 29-year-old Giolito made two starts in spring training for the Red Sox after signing a \$38.5 million, two-year deal.

"I do believe it was like the best-case scenario," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said before the Yankees game. "Seeing what has happened with this procedure

in the past, he's going to be able to go out there and throw his changeup and his good fastball and help the Red Sox win some more games."

RODON'S OUTING

The only hit allowed by lefty Carlos Rodon over four innings against Boston was a homer. After retiring his first 10 batters, Rodon gave up a 421-foot drive by Triston Casas. He struck out three over a 68-pitching outing that featured improved fastball velocity reaching 97 mph.

"Today I got to build some confidence," Rodon said.

Rodon had allowed three homers over 5 2/3 innings in his previous two spring-training starts. He is scheduled to start the Yankees' second regular season game Mar. 29 at Houston.

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OVAC wins "Clash of Champions"

By **KIM NORTH**
Staff Writer

WELLSBURG — The OVAC, with three NCAA Division I recruits in the lineup, ended two years of frustration Wednesday night with a convincing, 40-18, victory over the MAC during the 28th annual "Clash of Champions" all-star wrestling match inside the Brooke Wellness Center.

Trailing 15-11 after six matches, Barnesville's back-to-back Ohio Division III state champions — Reese Stephen (152) and Skyler King (160) — did that again for one final time. Stephen, a two-time state champion who is headed to Cleveland State University to continue his academic and athletic careers, put the OVAC ahead for good, 17-15, with a 55-second pin. King followed with a 10-0 major decision and the lead was quickly up to 21-15.

"It started off a little slow for us," Barnesville head coach Jayson Stephen said of the dual. "I don't know much about any of those MAC guys, but Reese and Skyler came through again like they have their whole careers. It was all good."

Reese said it was fun to wrestle in this type of environment.

"You just go out and wrestle. There was no pressure. You just go out and have fun," he added. "It was nice to put the team ahead, especially with a pin to end my career."

When asked what it felt like to watch his son compete for the last time as a high

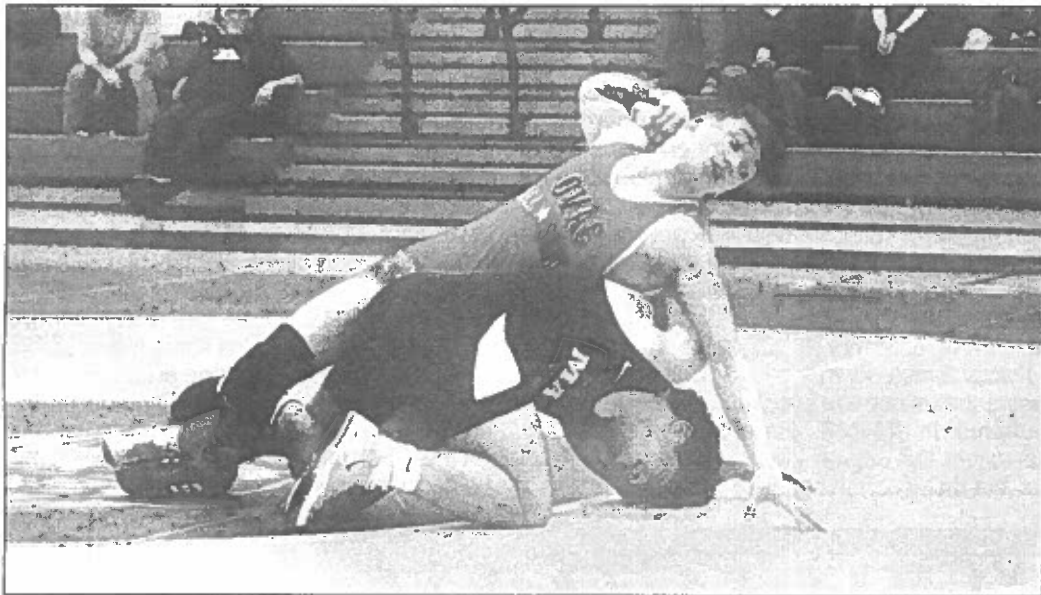


Photo by **KIM NORTH**

BARNESVILLE'S SKYLER King works on the arm of Baldwin's Keith Mincins during their 160-pound bout at the 27th annual "Clash of the Champions" all-star wrestling match Wednesday night inside the Brooke Wellness Center. King won by major decision, 1-0, and the OVAC snapped a two-year losing drought with a 40-18 decision.

school wrestler. Coach/Father Stephen replied, "I tried not to think about it, but since you brought it up, it's bitter-sweet, for sure. He's got a whole other chapter of his life ahead of him, as do most of the guys on the OVAC team. He had a good high school career, as did all of my seniors, and we'll wait and see what the future brings."

Parkersburg South's Gage Wright (172), the No. 1 ranked wrestler at 175 in the nation who is headed to Virginia Tech, also pinned his opponent in 55 ticks as the margin increased to 27-15. Southern Local's Gabe Blisenbach (189) doubled the count at 30-15 with a 6-0 decision.

Harrison Central's Lucas Thomas (215) rebounded

from a tough loss in the state finals on Sunday night, with a pin in 1:46 as the lead ballooned to 36-15. He is headed to Clarion University.

"It was good to come out here and get a win to end my career," Thomas noted. "It wasn't good the other night, but I came out tonight focused and took care of business."

Barnesville's Johnathan Huntsman (114), competing for the second time on the night, posted a 11-0 major decision for the final four team points.

Other OVAC winners were Oak Glen's Logan Davis (121) by 20-4 technical fall; Shenandoah's Tristen Rossiter (127) by a 13-11 count; and Weir's Shawn Young (144) by a 5-4 nod.

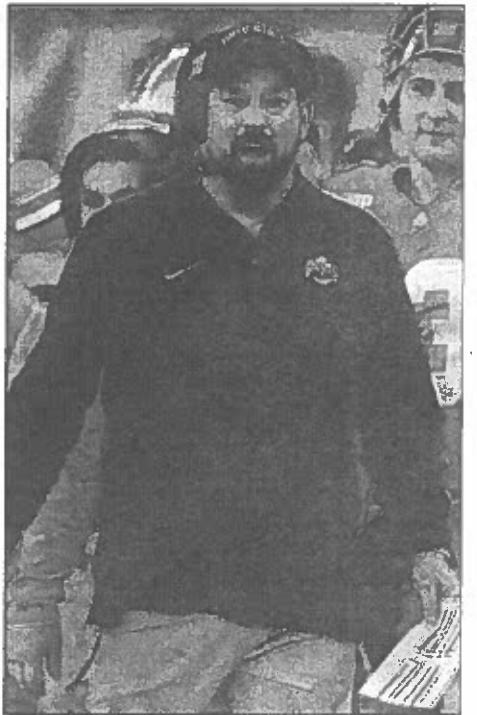
King was voted the

OVAC's Most Outstanding Wrestler. He was presented with a plaque by event director Danny Doyle.

"It feels good to be able to help the team," King said. "It's sad the season is over already, but it is something you have to deal with."

Prior to the dual meet, Stephen was awarded the OVAC's Ohio Wrestler of the Year, while Wright received the OVAC's West Virginia Wrestler of the Year. Each was presented with a plaque by OVAC Executive Director Dirk Decoy.

With the lop-sided victory, the OVAC now leads the all-time series, 18-9. The MAC had won 26-25 in 2022 and 29-24 last year. Next year's event will be held at a MAC school.



AP Photo

OHIO STATE head coach Ryan Day, center, reacts on the sideline during the second half of the Cotton Bowl NCAA college football game against Missouri in Arlington, Texas.

Michigan finalizing deal to hire RBs coach away from rival Ohio State

ANN ARBOR, Mich. (AP) — Michigan is finalizing a deal to hire running backs coach Tony Alford from rival Ohio State, a person with direct knowledge of the move told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because contract details and university approval were still being worked out.

Alford would replace Mike Hart, the former Wolverines star who had been running backs coach under coach Jim Harbaugh for three seasons.

Michigan coach Sherrone Moore pulled off a bold move in building his first staff after Harbaugh's return to the NFL, adding one of Ryan Day's top assistants with the Buckeyes.

Alford posted a statement on social media thanking Ohio State and its fans for nine "amazing" years, but he did not indicate his next move.

"All that being said, as I will undoubtedly miss so many things about being a member of the Buckeye Football Family, I am excited about what the future holds as I embark on the next chapter of this journey," Alford posted.

Ohio State hired Alford away from Notre Dame in 2015 as running backs coach and assistant head coach, and Day promoted him to run game coordinator a little more than a year ago.

Harbaugh led the Wolverines to their first national title since 1997, then left to lead the Los Angeles Chargers two months ago.

He encouraged athletic director Warde Manuel to hire Moore, who was Harbaugh's offensive coordinator.

Shields competes at New Balance National track meet



Photo Provided

BEN SHIELDS from St. Clairsville High School competes at the New Balance National track meet in Boston, MA in the two-mile on Saturday March 9. He won his heat with a new St. Clairsville indoor record of 9:17.30. The previous weekend he finished third in the 3200 at the OATCCC D2/3 Indoor track meet at Spire Institute in Geneva, OH. Shields is committed to run Division 1 cross country and track at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh in the fall 2024.

Scheffler is chasing history in The Players Championship — no one has ever repeated as champion

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Tiger Woods never did it. Neither did Jack Nicklaus,

peat winners in general," Scheffler said. "There's not a guy that you have seen win on this golf

course to win at Bay Hill by five shots. Already the best from tee-to-

He just seems to keep doing what he's doing."

Scheffler has been No. 1 for

History, however, is not on his side. The Stadium Course has a reputation of never favoring a