



AP Photo

Receiver DK Metcalf (4) is tackled by safety Rayshawn Jenkins on Sunday.

'Home Ice Of Holds

owns at home for the 2nd straight time in the regular season.

The playoffs are a long way off. Yet what was once a distant vision has become closer to reality for a team that is starting to look like a contender. What is starting to look like a wide-open AFC.

"That's where we want to be, and we've put ourselves in the position to start entering the conversation," Rodgers said before cautioning, "a lot can happen."

A lot already has. Just not the Steelers. Pittsburgh, full strength on defense for the first time since the opener, overwhelmed the Browns while producing six sacks and hitting Gabriel 16 times.

Please see **STEELERS**,
Page 10

Ferry Wins First-Ever OVAC Volleyball Title



The Martins Ferry Purple Riders, pictured with their OVAC 3A championship trophy after scoring their first ever conference title victory vs. Shenandoah on Saturday inside Ohio University Eastern's ECO Center. Photos by Nick Henthorn

Champions Crowned On Action-Packed Saturday

By NICK HENTHORN
Sports Editor

ST. CLAIRSVILLE — The OVAC Volleyball Championships took over Ohio University Eastern's ECO Center all day Saturday, and local teams were all over the day's finals like white on rice.

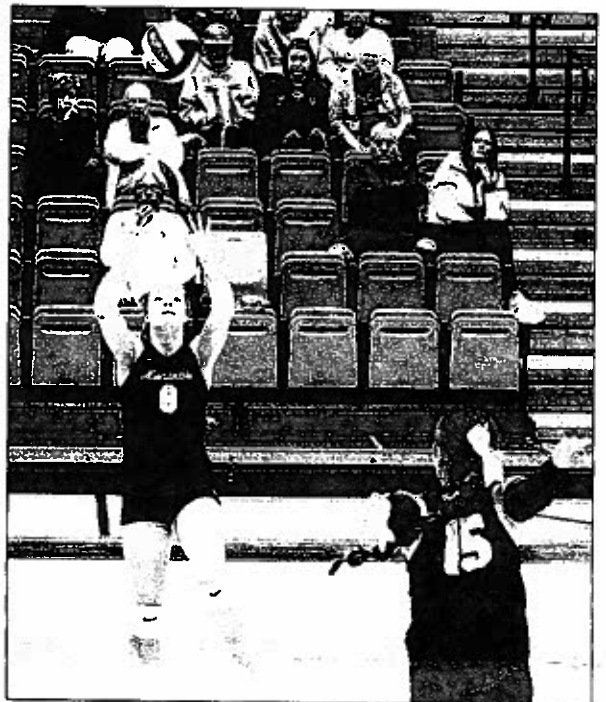
Across the five OVAC Classes, Martins Ferry was the day's big winner, taking home their first-ever OVAC Championship in a victory over Shenandoah, while John Marshall, Madonna, River and Union Local each finished as conference runners-up.

PURPLE RIDERS CLAIM FIRST OVAC CROWN

Martins Ferry earned their first-ever conference volleyball championship on Saturday, defeating Shenandoah in the 3A finals 28-26, 24-26, 25-20, 25-19.

A program which has not finished under .500 since 2021, Martins Ferry head coach Jaela Koeller thought Saturday was a long time coming for her Purple Riders.

Please see **VOLLEYBALL**, Page 10



John Marshall's Sarah Hess sets the ball against Morgantown in the 5A championship game inside Ohio University Eastern's ECO Center.

donal championships, Mart said.

Smith now will be tasked with trying to stop the bleeding on what has become a disastrous season. He will have his work cut out for him: Penn State's next three games are at Iowa on Saturday, at No. 1 Ohio State on Nov. 1 and home against No. 3 Indiana on Nov. 8.

Penn State will have to pay Franklin's base salary of \$500,000, supplemental pay of \$6.5 million and insurance loan of \$1 million until 2031.

It's a steep price, but one the university appears willing to pay to find a coach who can complete the climb to a national title.

the years and we've had some teams make it to the state meet and win some OVAC championships," he added. "We're looking forward to the next couple of weeks."

Arno noted each team will lose just one senior.

"We're really young on both sides," he said. "Consistency has been the key. We've talked about that from Day 1. We traditionally get faster throughout the season. We preach about being a family and that was evident Saturday as a lot of former runners and their parents came out to support us."

BOYS

Buckeye 8

The Big Reds had all

the scorers. This was first league champions for Bellaire.

The Potters' Made Roach crossed the first line first in 15:40. Union Local's Con Bendo was second 15:48.93.

OVCCCL

Bellaire's runners finished 3rd, 10th, 14th and 26th in the OVCCCL race, with Perdue once again setting the pace.

Linsly Jakob Schm Weigand was fourth 16:09.64, with Wheel Central's Michael F nick coming in eig with a time of 16:49.2

GIRLS

Bellaire posted 21-point victory (33-

VOLLEYBALL

(Continued from Page 9)

"There's been teams before where I'm like, how did we not - we've been in the top three or four - but how did we not seal that deal?" Koeller said. "And tonight we made it happen."

Martins Ferry's star junior, Giana Chirpas, was dominant against the Zeps, totalling 20 kills and eight blocks. In all three sets that Martins Ferry won, Chirpas tallied the set-clinching score - plowing down a set-point block in the first and third sets, and putting down a thunderous kill to clinch the match in the fourth set.

"Ups and downs today," Koeller said of her team's performance. It's real easy for kids sometimes to get down on themselves. Let's try to brush it off. Sometimes it takes a few minutes to come out of it. And every now and then we need that one person to make that spark and boom, light us up again. And I think that's what we were able to do in the third and fourth game that we weren't getting in the second."

Nicole Hammerquist had a big game in her own right with 18 kills and three blocks. Maddie Lucas finished with 15 kills and 14 digs, SJ Koeller tallied four service aces and laid out for an impressive 48 digs, while Olivia Harkness had three service aces while racking up 41 assists.

"We said coming into this season we had three goals," Koeller said. "OVAC was a personal one of mine since I started here. And the OVAC title was the last of our three goals. We hit them all this year. So man, it felt good. It felt good."

JOHN MARSHALL FALLS TO

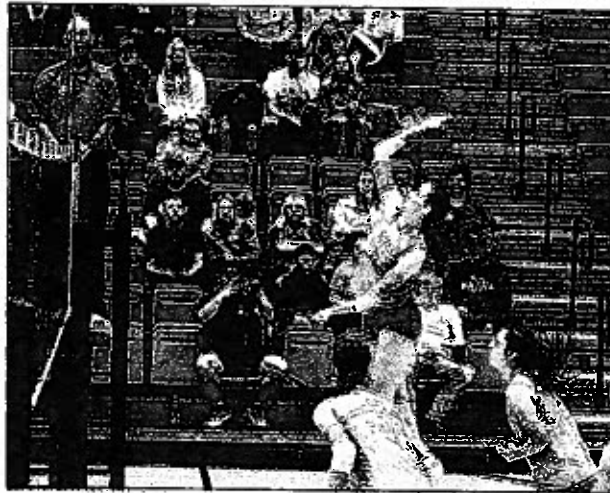


Photo by Nick Henthorn

River's Zoey Fox goes for a kill Saturday against Caldwell in the OVAC 2A championship game inside Ohio University Eastern's ECO Center.

I'm just so proud of my girls," John Marshall head coach Chelsea Eikleberry said. "They didn't quit. We didn't start off the game great. I don't know if it was just being in the morning or what, but you know what? They battled. Coming back that third set and winning was huge, and really that fourth set was back and forth in a really close game. I wish we could have pulled that fourth set out, but I'm just so proud of them for battling and playing some really good volleyball today."

Nia Miller led John Marshall with 18 kills, followed by Addison Blake's nine. Zoey Koontz tallied a team-high 10 digs, one more than Bre Defibaugh.

MADONNA SWEPT BY ROCKETS

The Blue Dons fell to the Connoton Valley Rockets in straight sets, 25-22, 25-15, 25-15, though Madonna still had reason to hold their heads high after making the conference championship one year after not qualifying for the 1A tournament at all

championship game as Caldwell and the River Pilots duked it out Saturday. Caldwell took the championship game in four sets, 25-21, 25-19, 15-25, 25-14.

While the Pilots were disappointed with the result Saturday, River head coach Judi Curtis has her team looking forward - to a potential rematch.

"Like I told the girls, they had to fight hard to get here, and they did, so I was proud of them," Curtis said. "They worked hard and they continue to work hard. We have a younger team, so we'll just keep coming. We'll probably meet [Caldwell] in sectionals again."

Hallie Hammel led River with 13 kills, followed by Mallorie Maddy's 11 kills. Hammel also led the team with 12 digs. Maci Isaly had 11 while Maddy and Aubrey Fetty each had 10. Reagan Lucas cashed in three service aces, and Zoey Fox put down three blocks.

JETS FALL IN FIVE HARD-FOUGHT SETS

The final game of the day, 4A's championship game between Union Lo-

After three wins that weren't decided until the final moments, the Steelers cruised. Pittsburgh never trailed and kept Cleveland out of the end zone while Rodgers threw second-half touchdown passes to Connor Heyward and DK Metcalf as the Steelers turned a rock fight into a bit of a blowout.

"We just had to bow up, and we did," inside linebacker Patrick Queen said. "In AFC North football, nothing is ever guaranteed."

Well, almost nothing.

WOE AND 22

Cleveland, with the exception of a playoff stunner in 2020, remained winless in Pittsburgh since 2003.

Gabriel, a third-round pick who took over for since-traded Joe Flacco last week, didn't turn the ball over but failed to ignite an offense that failed to reach 17 points for the 11th straight time.

Still, Browns coach Kevin Stefanski kept Gabriel in until the end, declining to give rookie Shedeur Sanders - elevated to backup after Flacco was shipped to Cincinnati - a look.

"We know (Gabriel) is tough, he's going to keep fighting," Stefanski said. "We've just, around him, got to make some plays."

Gabriel passed for 221 yards but needed 52 attempts to reach that total in the face of a pass rush that seems to be getting better with each week. The Steelers benefited from the return of outside linebacker Alex Highsmith from an ankle injury and defensive back Jalen Ramsey gutting through a hamstring issue that limited him in practice all week.

"Why is it starting to look the way that we desire? We got a full complement of talent," Steelers coach Mike

and four the right 25-yard put the g

Garret end, will meet again mas to a terbacks tackle E first star side wit from him "Bro

guys like Pat Frei round se out today

Jones line prev ing Rod NFL's manueve held the 41-year-

"The g ed to kee Frazier s do that, l Rodge used to, game re

on the took, the after fall calf - i

"Whe don't tun chance ir Especi

Brow on-Shoy did not left with

Nicole Hammerquist had a big game in her own right with 18 kills and three blocks. Maddie Lucas finished with 15 kills and 14 digs, SJ Koeller tallied four service aces and laid out for an impressive 48 digs, while Olivia Harkness had three service aces while racking up 41 assists.

"We said coming into this season we had three goals," Koeller said. "OVAC was a personal one of mine since I started here. And the OVAC title was the last of our three goals. We hit them all this year. So man, it felt good. It felt good."

JOHN MARSHALL FALLS TO TOP-RANKED MORGANTOWN

The Monarchs played the first game of the day, a 9 a.m. outing vs. the top-seeded Mohigans, and fell in four sets, 25-13, 25-17, 22-25, 25-22 in the 5A championship.

"I thought we did a really good job of staying with it," Morgantown head coach Abigail Wolfe said. "We came out with tons of energy and a lot of grit in those first two sets. John Marshall responded super well, they have a lot of tenacity. They come after the ball. They don't give up and they managed our serve really well in the third and fourth set. We kind of had to work through it and do a little bit more of, like, playing those longer rallies and winning them."

Morgantown's Leah Greeny led the Mohigans with 19 kills and 12 digs, the kills a team-high, and the digs second only to Audrey Tompkins' 13.

Paige Brink finished with 17 kills and eight digs, and Abby Paulson had nine kills and five blocks. Riley Brennan finished with 29 assists.

John Marshall, who defeated University in the OVAC semifinals to make it to Saturday, were looking for their first OVAC title since 2017, but came up just short.

"At the end of the day,

so proud of them for battling and playing some really good volleyball today."

Nia Miller led John Marshall with 18 kills, followed by Addison Blake's nine. Zoey Koontz tallied a team-high 10 digs, one more than Bre Defibaugh.

MADONNA SWEPT BY ROCKETS

The Blue Dons fell to the Connorton Valley Rockets in straight sets, 25-22, 25-15, 25-15, though Madonna still had reason to hold their heads high after making the conference championship one year after not qualifying for the 1A tournament at all.

"This is huge for us," Madonna head coach Jaedyn Hissam said. "This is my second year with Weirton Madonna. When I took on Weirton Madonna, they were, you know, not a winning program."

"A goal for us was to be able to turn things around. And I'm so super impressed by the way these girls have grown and changed in the last year. When I took this position, I never would have guessed we would have gotten to this point this fast, you know what I mean? We've been working and growing, so I'm super excited that we made it here. This was the first goal on my list for this year, and they've really been working hard and kicking butt, so they deserve to be here. Of course, everyone hates losing, but I'm so happy we made it to this point."

Madonna received seven kills from Rylee Birkhimer and six from Madi Owens. Birkhimer also had 12 digs, while Owens had 16. Both finished behind Breea Birkhimer's 18 digs. Sophie Brady racked up 18 of the Blue Dons' 19 assists. Geena Birkhimer and Lacy Quering each had two blocks.

RIVER THWARTED BY CALDWELL

It was all-red everything in the OVAC 2A

was proud of them," Curtis said. "They worked hard and they continue to work hard. We have a younger team, so we'll just keep coming. We'll probably meet [Caldwell] in sectionals again."

Hallie Hammel led River with 13 kills, followed by Mallorie Maddy's 11 kills. Hammel also led the team with 12 digs. Maci Isaly had 11 while Maddy and Aubrey Fetty each had 10. Reagan Lucas cashed in three service aces, and Zoey Fox put down three blocks.

JETS FALL IN FIVE HARD-FOUGHT SETS

The final game of the day, 4A's championship game between Union Local and Beaver Local, was the sole championship game to go to five sets, the Beavers eventually pulling through 26-24, 23-25, 17-25, 25-22, 15-10 in what was a slugfest of a finale.

"[Beaver Local's] a good team, it was a good match," Union Local head coach Kaye Sechrest said. "These girls don't give up. I mean, we got down in a few games, and we just couldn't come back from that. When you're playing a good team, you can't get down four or five points and expect to come back. We tried."

"These girls have grit. They are tough and they don't give up. It's just the way it is, somebody has to win and somebody has to lose. And today was not our day to win. We're looking forward to the tournament."

Across the hard-fought five sets, Union Local's Ameera Saunders shined with 30 kills and 22 digs, a monster performance that had her lead her Jets in both categories.

Laken Vinskovich finished with 13 kills, four blocks, three service aces and 14 digs. Alli Kellaway finished with seven kills and four service aces. Ramsey Butler also had four blocks. Delaney Butler played her role as setter to the tune of 49 assists. Myah Martins scrapped out 16 digs.

failed to reach 17 points for the 11th straight time.

Still, Browns coach Kevin Stefanski kept Gabriel in until the end, declining to give rookie Shedeur Sanders — elevated to backup after Flacco was shipped to Cincinnati — a look.

"We know (Gabriel) is tough, he's going to keep fighting," Stefanski said. "We've just, around him, got to make some plays."

Gabriel passed for 221 yards but needed 52 attempts to reach that total in the face of a pass rush that seems to be getting better with each week. The Steelers benefited from the return of outside linebacker Alex Highsmith from an ankle injury and defensive back Jalen Ramsey gutting through a hamstring issue that limited him in practice all week.

"Why is it starting to look the way that we desire? We got a full complement of talent," Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said. "When we put this band together, we feel like we can do the things you saw today."

EFFICIENCY OVER EXPLOSIVENESS

Pittsburgh didn't exactly tear through the NFL's second-ranked defense. Then again, it didn't have to.

Rodgers kept the chains moving by spreading his 21 completions among eight players. He threw a 12-yard TD pass to Heyward in the third quarter

GOLDEN BEARS

(Continued from Page 9)

Bridgeport's Dylan Charlton recovered an Oak Glen fumble on the Golden Bears first series of the game, but the Bulldogs drive stalled after a pair of first downs. Augusto Bettino, a foreign exchange student, kicked a 33-yard field goal to put the hosts ahead 3-0.

It was all Oak Glen from there on as the Golden Bears took the ensuing kickoff and marched 50 yards on five plays as Logan Murray scampered up the middle from 9 yards. After an offside penalty on Bridgeport on the conversion, Oak Glen went for two and Jacob Everett bulled his way in for an 8-3 margin.

After Cameron Carter intercepted a pass and returned it to the Bulldogs' 33, Murray capped a 4-play drive with a 1-yard plunge. Chase Hartung converted the first of his half-a-dozen

PATs and it was quick 15-3.

Murray caught a pass over the middle from Maddox Bowen on second play of the second quarter and took it to house for a 72-yard connection, making it 22-3.

Bridgeport's offer which was non-existent for much of the day, forced to punt and Cal found a seam beforeing 78 yards as the r was on. Bode Konc (7 yds) and Everett (added touchdowns before the half as Glen held a commanding 43-3 margin.

With the second being played with a running clock under OHSAA's 30-minute mercy rule, both coaches agreed to shorten second half to 8 minutes.

However, that didn't stop the Golden Bears; they received touchdowns

maneuver held the 41-year-old to keep Frazier's do that, I Rodge used to, game re on the took, the after fall calf — i "When don't turn chance in Especi

Brown on-Shoy: did not left with Gage La quarter a from Ste Steele; ace Mil knee inju back Da injury in

Brown Steele; day.

WEDNESDAY,
OCTOBER 8, 2025
TV/ENTERTAINMENT.....13
COMICS14

The Intelligencer. SPORTS

Brought
WVU

Monarchs And Hawks Down To The Wire Again As John Marshall Advances To OVAC 5A Finals

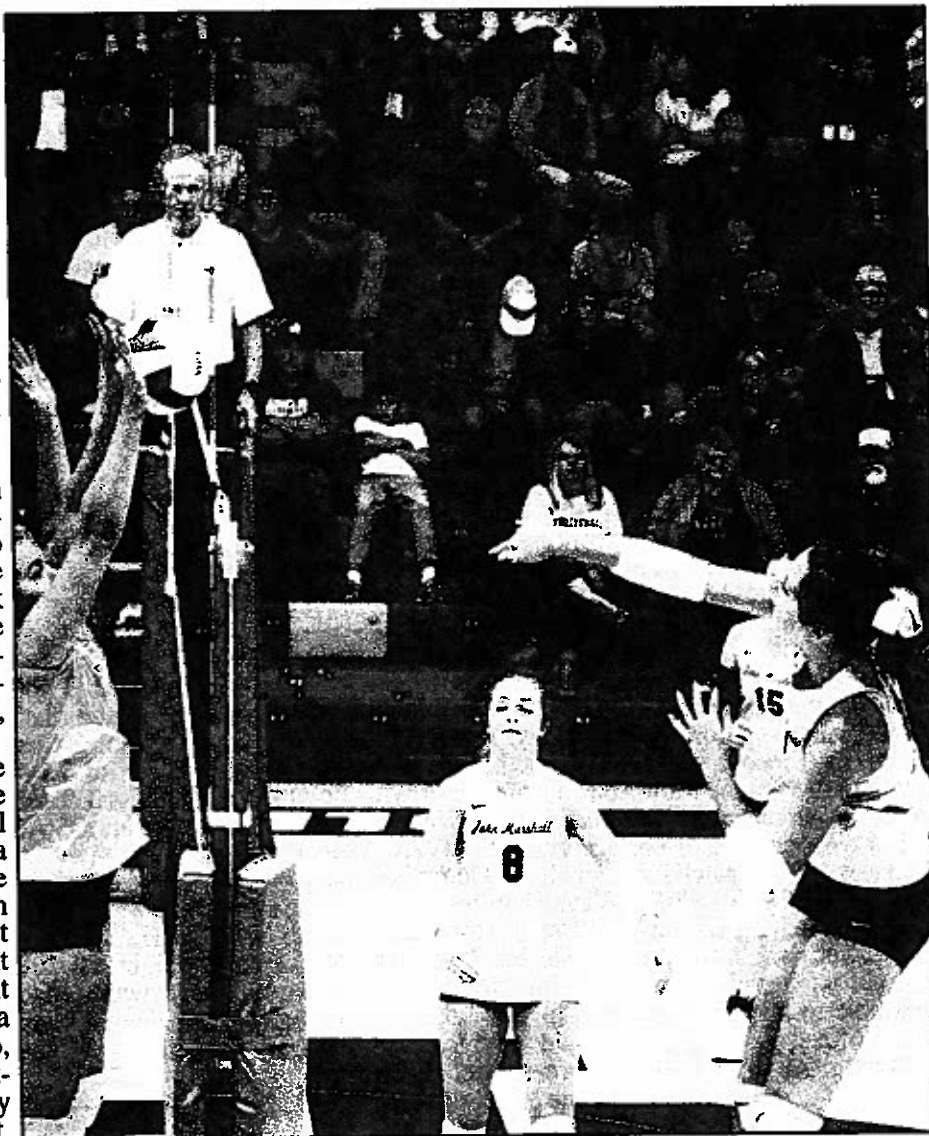
By NICK
HENTHORN
Sports Editor

MOUNDSVILLE — The John Marshall Monarchs and University Hawks are nothing if not consistent.

Heading into the two teams' OVAC 5A semifinals matchup inside the John Marshall Fieldhouse, the Monarchs and Hawks had met two times previously — both tightly contested, 3-2 John Marshall wins.

It was the same on Tuesday, with John Marshall taking the first two sets of the match before University battled back but couldn't complete the comeback in a five-set victory for the Monarchs, 25-19, 25-15, 27-29, 18-25, 15-9.

"We've played five sets with them all three games," John Marshall head coach Chelsea Eikleberry said. "We've come out as winners on all three of those, but they are hard-fought battles. I mean, give it to University. They're a good team. That Libero, [Lucy Johnson] I'm pretty sure she could play every spot on the court. She gets just about anything.



John Marshall's Nia Miller goes for a kill Tuesday during the Monarchs' OVAC 5A semifinals matchup against the University Hawks inside the John Marshall Fieldhouse.

Photo by Nick Henthorn

Please see WIRE, Page 10



Wheeling Central's Ren day against the Martin the Maroon Knights' OV

Martins Ferry Wheeling Ce

MARTINS FERRY advanced to the OVA with a sweep of No. 4 25-14, 25-21 and 25- on Tuesday night.

The Purple Riders (players as Giana Chir blocks. Nicole Hamme die Lucas chipped in 1 Olivia Harkness contri while SJ Koller had 2 ished with seven digs

Wheeling Central's each had six kills for 1 digs. Olivia Stephens 1

Times and pairing matches at the refurb Clairsville will be fina to OVAC Volleyball C

Please se

Union Local Continues Mastery Over St. Clairsville

By KIM NORTH

whomever."

Times and pairings for the five champion-



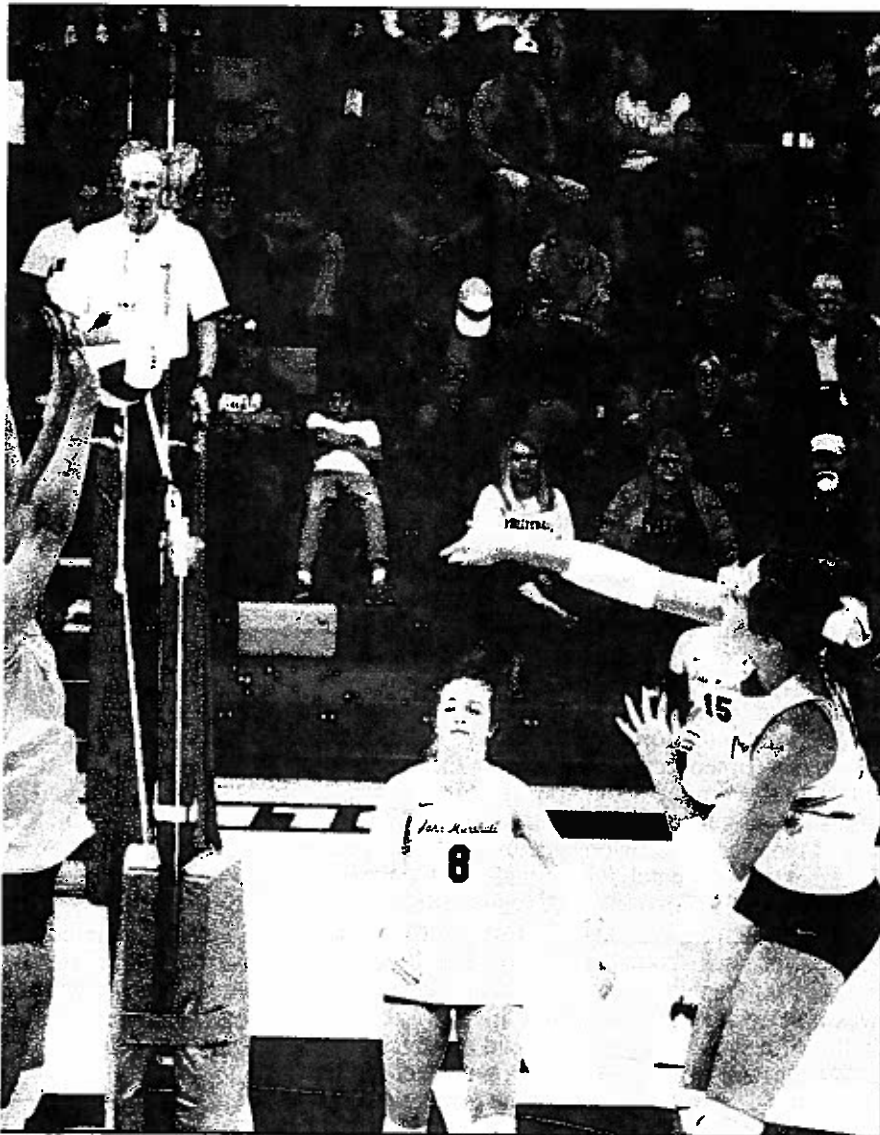
The Intelligencer.

SPORTS

Brought to you by
WVU

9

And Hawks Down To Again As John Marshall To OVAC 5A Finals



John Marshall's Nia Miller goes for a kill Tuesday during the Monarchs' OVAC semifinals matchup against the University Hawks inside the John Marshall oldhouse.

Photo by Nick Henthorn

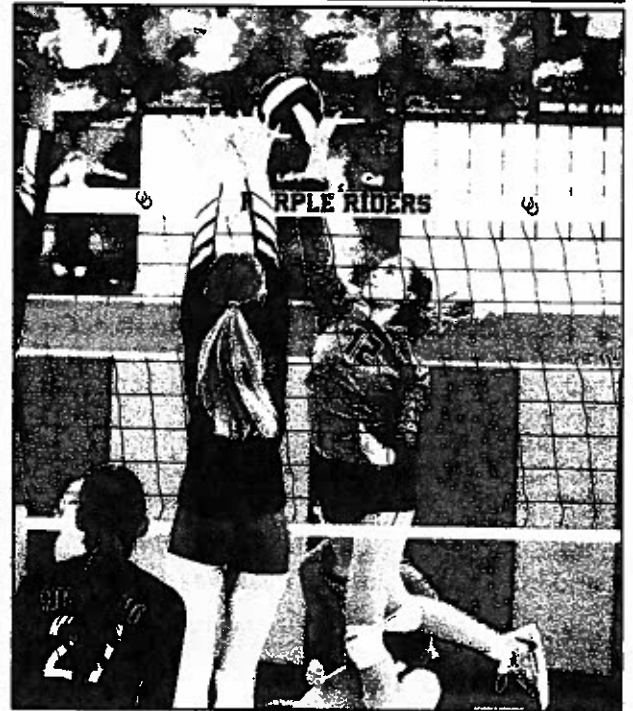


Photo by Kristin Mazgaj

Wheeling Central's Remy Peters goes for a kill Tuesday against the Martins Ferry Purple Riders during the Maroon Knights' OVAC 3A semifinals match.

Martins Ferry Sweeps Past Wheeling Central In 3A Semis

MARTINS FERRY - Top-seeded Martins Ferry advanced to the OVAC Class 3A volleyball finals with a sweep of No. 4 Wheeling Central by scores of 25-14, 25-21 and 25-13 inside Tolbert Gymnasium on Tuesday night.

The Purple Riders (16-5) were led by a variety of players as Giana Chirpas charted 13 kills and two blocks. Nicole Hammerquist added 11 kills and Maddie Lucas chipped in 10 kills and three service aces. Olivia Harkness contributed 29 assists and three aces, while SJ Koller had 23 digs and Gracie Lucas finished with seven digs and a pair of aces.

Wheeling Central's Lainey Peters and Remy Peters each had six kills for the Maroon, Lainey adding six digs. Olivia Stephens led the team in digs with 10.

Times and pairings for the five championship matches at the refurbished ECO Center west of St. Clairsville will be finalized on Wednesday, according to OVAC Volleyball Commissioner Wayne Ogilbee.

Please see **FERRY**, Page 10

I Continues Mastery Over St. Clairsville In Volleyball

whomever."

Union Local Continues Mastery Over St. Clairsville In Volleyball

By KIM NORTH
Staff Writer

ST. CLAIRSVILLE - It doesn't matter the sport nor the season, there always seems to be one team that has another team's number.

This season Union Local had already posted a pair of regular-season volleyball sweeps against St. Clairsville. That trend continued Tuesday night inside a boisterous gymnasium at St. Clairsville High School as the third-seeded Jets (16-5) swept past the No. 2 Red Devils (16-4) by scores of 25-20, 25-13 and 25-17 in an OVAC Class 4A Tournament semifinal on John Jenkins Court.

The victory, which came in 57 minutes of match time, propels the Jets into Saturday's championship match against top-seeded Beaver Local, which swept No. 4 Oak Glen in the other semifinal on Tuesday. Union Local was the Class 3A champion a year ago before bumping back to 4A this campaign. The Jets also won an OVAC title in 2022.

"The girls were ready tonight," veteran Union Local head coach Kaye Sechrest said. "We want to win (Class) 4A this year and go back-to-back."

Sechrest said it doesn't matter who the opponent is on Saturday at the refurbished ECO Center west of St. Clairsville.

"We've played both teams and they are both very good," she noted. "It is what it is. We're there. We'll get ready the rest of the week for

whomever."

Times and pairings for the five championship matches will be finalized on Wednesday, according to OVAC Volleyball Commissioner Wayne Ogilbee.

Union Local's 'twin towers' completely dominated the play at the net with 35 kills and numerous blocks. Ameera Saunders, a 6-1 junior, recorded 20 kills and a pair of blocks, while also charting two service aces. Six-foot senior Laken Vinskovich had a double-double with 15 kills and 11 digs.

"We just need to keep getting better every day. I still think we get better from our losses," St. Clairsville head coach Steve Harris said. "We struggle with them, but we've got to get over it."

"I give them all the credit in the world," Harris added. "They are great blockers, great hitters ... they make you work hard."

Sechrest lauded her team's near-perfect play. "The girls played really well tonight," she offered. "With Laken and Ameera, then throwing in Alli Kellaway, Delaney Butler and Myah Martin, it was a complete team effort. If you want to be good, you've got to work as a team."

Sechrest said the key to this team is "togetherness. They like each other and that goes a long way towards winning," she added.

Please see LOCAL, Page 10

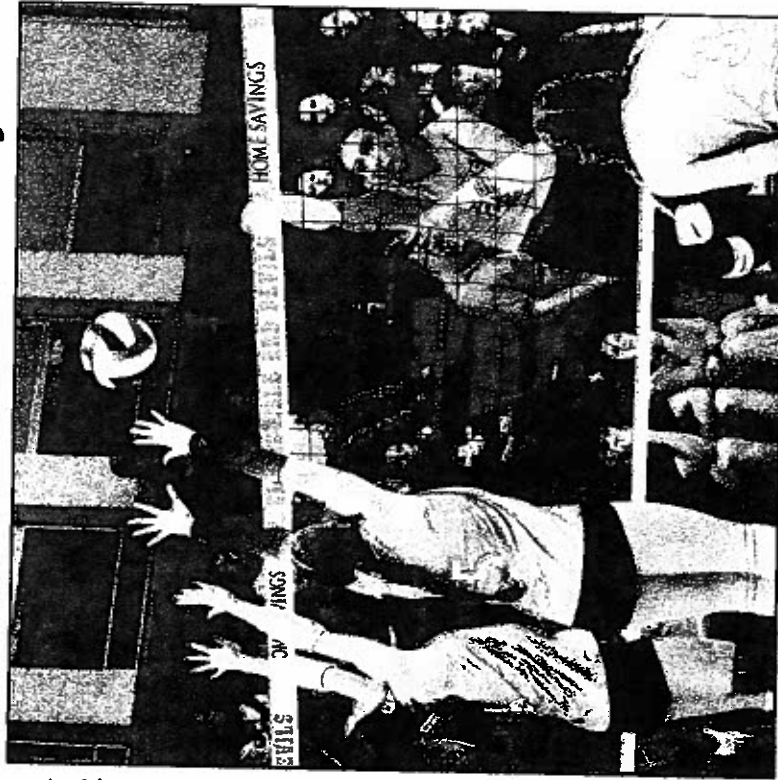
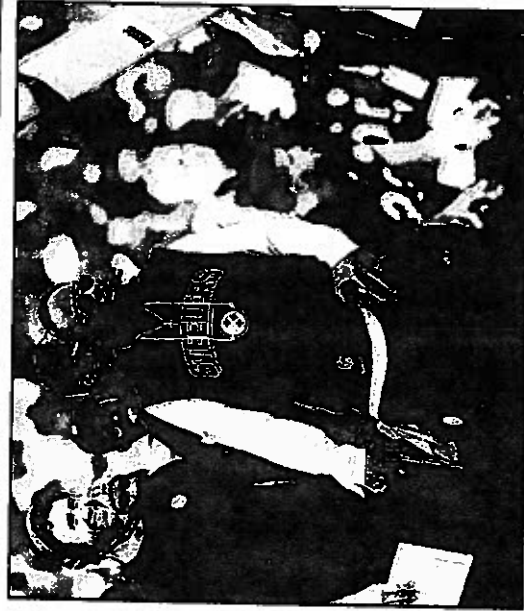


Photo by Kim North
Union Local's Ameera Saunders keeps an eye on one of her 20 kills Monday night as St. Clairsville's Corinn Pitts (6), Lola Schumacher (5) and Helene Landon (3) defend during the OVAC Class 4A semifinal match on John Jenkins Court inside St. Clairsville High School.

The Steelers Are Rested, Healthy And In First Place. Not That Mike Tomlin Wants To Talk About It

By WILL GRAVES
AP Sports Writer
PITTSBURGH - The Stadium on Sunday with Pittsburgh Steelers didn't the NFL's second-lowest scoring offense and their early hold on a rookie quarterback in the AFC North strengthened anyway.

While the Steelers just don't expect coach Mike Tomlin to rest too



Michigan's Bryce Underwood One Of Many Big Ten Quarterbacks Starting In Early Years Of College

By LARRY LAGE
AP Sports Writer

ANN ARBOR, Mich. - Bryce Underwood took a shotgun snap, dropped back, stood tall and delivered a 33-yard pass to Donaven McCulley up the sideline with perfect placement to show a flash of his talent in a win over Wisconsin.

Three snaps later, Michigan's quarterback looked like the freshman he is.

Underwood rolled left and threw left, losing control of the football as it came out of his right hand and sailing a pass over his target that was nearly picked off by the Badgers.

n. Valley advanced to tournament final by sweeping No. 4 seed Wood County Christian in the other semifinal Wednesday night at me. The Blue Dons did not alify for the annual

digs and Geena Birkhimer contributed 13 kills, four digs and one solo block. Also, Quering ended up with five kills, two digs and one solo block, Madi Owens added 12 kills and 28 digs and Brea Birkh-

DeCaria delivered two aces. The match was originally scheduled to start at 5:30 before it was moved back to 6 p.m. Once started, the match took nearly two hours to complete.

league with a skill set that will fit our personnel well. He is a gifted passer with a strong arm, and we are excited to have him on our team."

Rookie Dillon Gabriel replaced Flacco in the starting lineup and played well in Cleveland's 21-17 loss to Minnesota in London. Rookie Shedeur Sanders now moves up to the backup spot.

Flacco, who was Super Bowl MVP with the Baltimore Ravens 13 years ago, has played for the Broncos, Jets, Eagles, Jets again, Browns, Colts, Browns again and now the Bengals.

Flacco has thrown for 46,512 yards, 259 TDs and 168 INTs in 18 seasons. He is 10-6 in the playoffs with 3530 yards passing, 26 TDs and 12 INTs.

A block by Sarah some sealed the set for an Marshall.

John Marshall led wire-wire in the second set well, a thunderous kill in Paislee Babiczuk ded the set and put the monarchs in the driver's it.

The third set was neck-and-neck from start to tended finish. The two ms tied 5-5, 7-7, 12-14, 14-14, 16-16, 18-18, -21, and 24-24, ensur-; that the set would go o overtime. Urbanek d Lucy Johnson traded ls to tie 25-25. An at-tempted Monarch kill out bounds put University ead 26-25, but a kill m Naome tied things ck up. University even-illy got the edge after a nson kill and John Mar-all error to stay alive. University was surging t of the break and built 8-0 lead which would

set them on a straight course to tie the game two sets to two. Panson had six kills in the fourth set alone, and her final strike ended the set 25-18.

The fourth set started out close, the two teams tied 5-5, but John Marshall rang off the next three points to force a University timeout, which did little to stem the Monarchs' resurgence. They led 11-6, and Addison Blake ended the match for John Marshall with a kill.

After watching University come back from the brink, Eikleberry's squad was able to buckle down in the fifth set.

"I tell them to focus on one point at a time," the Monarchs' coach said. "And once we get that lead, we gotta hold on to it. Every point counts.

"We gotta get excited. We have to have lots of energy. And my girls

have a lot of grit. They want to win every night. They show up, they're working hard, and we're in a really good spot.

I'm really proud of them."

John Marshall will face Morgantown in the OVAC 5A championship Saturday. Times and pairings for the five championship matches will be finalized on Wednesday, according to OVAC Volleyball Commissioner Wayne Ogilbee.

"I'm pretty sure, not 100%, but I believe the last time we were there was in 2017," Eikleberry said. "Which was my last year coaching before I came back this past year, and we won that. We beat Morgantown in 2017 so we're excited to get back on Saturday, work hard this week in practice and hopefully have a good match."

FERRY

(Continued from Page 9)

Class 2A River Rises Over Clay-Battelle

BLACKSVILLE

The third-seeded Pilots (11-10) navigated their way past the No. 2 Cee-Bees by scores of 25-9, 25-10 and 25-13 Tuesday night in an OVAC semifinal.

Mallarie Maddy led the way with 21 kills and three aces. Hallie Hammel added eight kills and seven digs, while Maci Isaly finished with 33 assists, five digs, five aces

and two kills. Aubrey Fetty charted 17 digs.

GIRLS SOCCER

Steubenville 6, Linsly 0

STEUBENVILLE

Big Red shut out the Cadets on Tuesday, receiving three goals from all-time leading scorer Bailee Beall.

Beall also tallied an assist.

Gianna Thomas had one goal and two assists, while Jaylin Crites had a brace with two goals. Lucy Saccoccia had an assist.

LOCAL

(Continued from Page 9)

Despite owning two wins over the Red Devils, Sechrest was still worried entering the match.

"I'm always nervous," she admitted. "But we practiced really well yesterday (Monday)."

Senior Delaney Butler had 40 assists for Union Local, while Martin added five digs and two aces. Freshman Ramsey Butler finished with three kills and a pair of blocks, while Brooklyn Burley had five assists and Kellaway four kills and five digs.

If there is a silver lining for St. Clairsville, the loss doesn't end its season as sectional tournament play begins next week.

"This is a huge achievement for us to get into big matches like this," Harris said. "We're starting to get a feel for what it's like and I am super proud of my team. UL's been fantastic for years and we're trying to catch them."

No statistics were available for St. Clairsville.

TOMLIN

(Continued from Page 9)

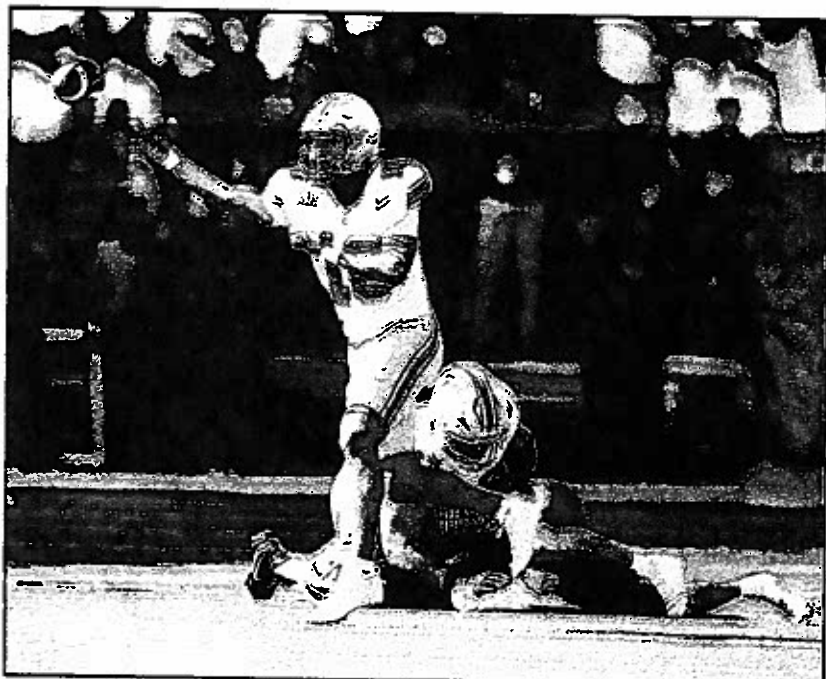
And while Tomlin might not publicly admit he was keeping tabs on Pittsburgh's rivals, his players were.

"I was watching every AFC North game I watched," Highsmith said. "It was nice to see those teams lose this week. So we got to take advantage of it."

something that could be improved, like increasing the frequency of red-zone opportunities, where Pittsburgh is very much in the middle of the pack.

"At this stage of the game, man, it's about getting better," Tomlin said.

Pittsburgh's only injury problem on offense is the tender shoulder



AP Photo

ot of
I see

ourth
k for
and
270-
ith a
Bad-

Jan-
ulley
for a
score
more
had
g 10

ckell
tting

right
grow
s tal-

Madonna Survives In OVAC 1A Semifinals vs. Heartland Christian

By AARON
PETCHAL

For The Intelligencer

WEIRTON - The Madonna volleyball was looking to make quick of its opponent in an OVAC Class 1A Tournament Semifinal, however, Heartland Christian displayed the heart of the lion as the girls from Columbiana County battled back and improbably found themselves a mere three points from victory.

The Blue Dons, however, displayed the heart of a champion, as the girls from Hancock County collected the final three points of the match - the last of which came on a block by Lacy Quering - enabling No. 2 seed Madonna to survive

a scare from third-seeded Heartland Christian, 25-16, 25-17, 23-25, 16-25, 15-12, in a five-game thriller Wednesday night on Joanna Bernabei-McNamee Court inside the Bill Barrett Gymnasium.

With the win, Madonna will take on No. 1 seed and defending champion Conotton Valley in the tournament final at 1 p.m. Saturday down at the ECO Center in St. Clairsville. Conotton Valley advanced to the tournament final by sweeping No. 4 seed Wood County Christian in the other semifinal Wednesday night at home.

The Blue Dons did not qualify for the annual

conference tournament last season as the Rockets swept the Lions to win the title.

It is a different story this season as Madonna improved to 19-8-1 after the victory against Heartland Christian. The loss dropped the Lions down to 12-9 on the year.

Individually for Madonna, Sophie Brady delivered five kills, 42 assists and nine digs, Rylee Birkhimer recorded 18 kills, two assists and 22 digs and Geena Birkhimer contributed 13 kills, four digs and one solo block. Also, Quering ended up with five kills, two digs and one solo block, Madi Owens added 12 kills and 28 digs and Breea Birkh-

imer collected two kills and 26 assists. Finally, Abigail Boyd chipped in with three kills and one dig, and Danyka DeCaria produced 18 digs.

Serving played a key role in the victory for Madonna as the Blue Dons finished the night with 15 aces. Rylee Birkhimer led the way in that category for her team with six, Owens ended up with five and Geena Birkhimer recorded three. Also, Danyka DeCaria delivered two aces.

The match was originally scheduled to start at 5:30 before it was moved back to 6 p.m. Once started, the match took nearly two hours to complete.

Bengals Flacco F

Joe Flacco is on the The Cincinnati Ben quarterback from the 2026 sixth-round draft round pick next season.

The 40-year-old Flacco option. Jake Brownin, Joe Burrow, who is on Flacco started the f (1-4) this season, cor 815 yards and two tou

"Joe is an experien of winning," Bengals leader with a skill set He is a gifted passer excited to have him on

Rookie Dillon Gabi ing lineup and played to Minnesota in Lon now moves up to the l

Flacco, who was St more Ravens 13 year cos, Jets, Eagles, Jets again and now the Be

Flacco has thrown 1 168 INTs in 18 seas with 3530 yards pass

WIRE

(Continued from Page 9)

"So definitely compliments to them. They are a great team, but our girls, they came together as a team. That was a team win. It's been a team win every time we've played them."

For the Monarchs, Addison Blake tallied 14 kills, followed by Sarah Naome with 12 and Nia Miller with nine. Sarah H tallied all 25 of her team's assists, and Masyn Inclan led the Monarchs' defensive efforts with 15 digs.

John Marshall burst out to a 7-1 lead in the first set of the game, and maintained an advantage throughout. Two straight service aces by University's Maggie Panson highlighted a five-point scoring streak for the Hawks which brought them within three, 20-17, but a kill from the Monarchs' Isla Urbanek put the brakes on University's momen-

tum. A block by Sarah Naome sealed the set for John Marshall.

John Marshall led wire-to-wire in the second set as well, a thunderous kill from Paislee Babiczuk ended the set and put the Monarchs in the driver's seat.

The third set was neck-and-neck from start to extended finish. The two teams tied 5-5, 7-7, 12-12, 14-14, 16-16, 18-18, 21-21, and 24-24, ensuring that the set would go into overtime. Urbanek and Lucy Johnson traded kills to tie 25-25. An attempted Monarch kill out of bounds put University ahead 26-25, but a kill from Naome tied things back up. University eventually got the edge after a Panson kill and John Marshall error to stay alive.

University was surging out of the break and built an 8-0 lead which would

set them on a straight course to tie the game two sets to two. Panson had six kills in the fourth set alone, and her final strike ended the set 25-18.

The fourth set started out close, the two teams tied 5-5, but John Marshall rang off the next three points to force a University timeout, which did little to stem the Monarchs' resurgence. They led 11-6, and Addison Blake ended the match for John Marshall with a kill.

After watching University come back from the brink, Eikleberry's squad was able to buckle down in the fifth set.

"I tell them to focus on one point at a time," the Monarchs' coach said. "And once we get that lead, we gotta hold on to it. Every point counts."

"We gotta get excited. We have to have lots of energy. And my girls

have a lot of grit. They want to win every night. They show up, they're working hard, and we're in a really good spot.

I'm really proud of them."

John Marshall will face Morgantown in the OVAC 5A championship Saturday. Times and pairings for the five championship matches will be finalized on Wednesday, according to OVAC Volleyball Commissioner Wayne Ogilbee.

"I'm pretty sure, not 100%, but I believe the last time we were there was in 2017," Eikleberry said. "Which was my last year coaching before I came back this past year, and we won that. We beat Morgantown in 2017 so we're excited to get back on Saturday, work hard this week in practice and hopefully have a good match."

FERRY

(Continued from Page 9)

Class 2A
River Rises Over
Clay-Battelle
BLACKSVILLE

The third-seeded Pil (11-10) navigated th way past the No. 2 C Bees by scores of 25-25-10 and 25-13 Tu day night in an OV semifinal.

Mallarie Maddy the way with 21 kills : three aces. Hallie Hamel added eight kills : seven digs, while M Isaly finished with 33 sists, five digs, five a

LOCAL

(Continued from Page 9)

Despite owning tw Sechrest was still worr "I'm always nervous ticed really well yester Senior Delaney Butl cal, while Martin addex man Ramsey Butler f pair of blocks, while B and Kellaway four kill If there is a silver lir

STARTING

(Continued from Page 9)

"I think the guys gained a lot of

Union Local continues mastery over St. Clairsville in volleyball

By KIM NORTH
Staff Writer

ST. CLAIRSVILLE — It doesn't matter the sport nor the season, there always seems to be one team that has another team's number.

This season Union Local had already posted a pair of regular-season volleyball sweeps against St. Clairsville. That trend continued Tuesday night inside a boisterous gymnasium at St. Clairsville High School as the third-seeded Jets (16-5) swept past the No. 2 Red Devils (16-4) by scores of 25-20, 25-13 and 25-17 in an OVAC Class 4A Tournament semifinal on John Jenkins Court.

The victory, which came in 57 minutes of match time, propels the Jets into Saturday's championship match against top-seeded Beaver Local, which swept No. 4 Oak Glen in the other semifinal on Tuesday. Union Local was the Class 3A champion a year ago before bumping back to 4A this campaign. The Jets also won an OVAC title in 2022.

"The girls were ready tonight," veteran Union Local head coach Kaye Sechrest said. "We want to win (Class) 4A this

year and go back-to-back."

Sechrest said it doesn't matter who the opponent is on Saturday at the refurbished ECO Center west of St. Clairsville.

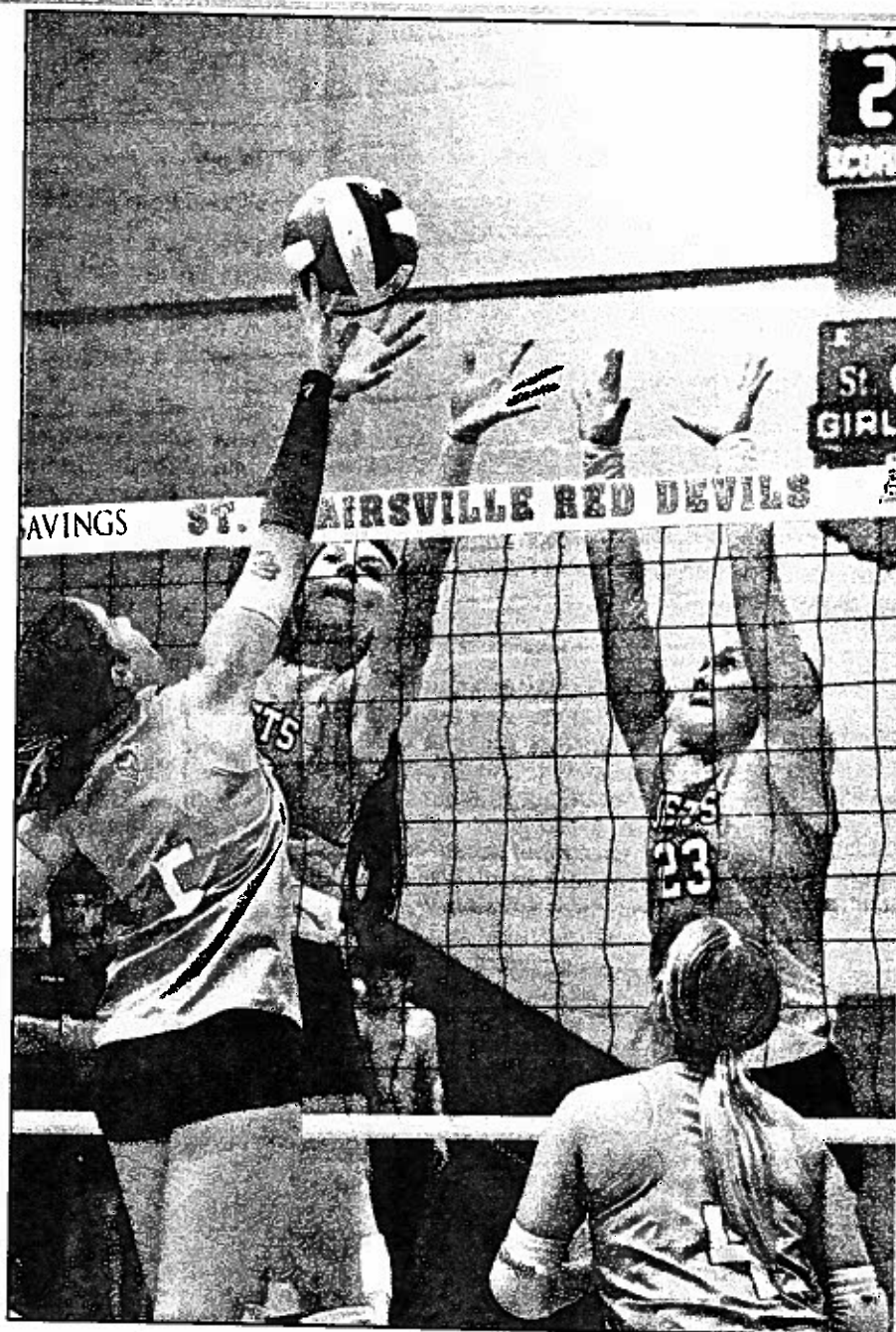
"We've played both teams and they are both very good," she noted. "It is what it is. We're there. We'll get ready the rest of the week for whomever."

Times and pairings for the five championship matches will be finalized on Wednesday, according to OVAC Volleyball Commissioner Wayne Ogilbee.

Union Local's 'twin towers' completely dominated the play at the net with 35 kills and numerous blocks. Ameera Saunders, a 6-1 junior, recorded 20 kills and a pair of blocks, while also charting two service aces. Six-foot senior Laken Vinskovich had a double-double with 15 kills and 11 digs.

"We just need to keep getting better every day. I still think we get better from our losses," St. Clairsville head coach Steve Harris said. "We struggle with them, but we've got to get over it."

"I give them all the credit in the world," Harris added. "They are great blockers, great hitters



ST. CLAIRSVILLE'S Lola Schumacher (5) tries to get the ball past the Union Local tandem of Laken Vinskovich (22) and Alli Kellaway (23) during Tuesday night's OVAC Class 4A semifinal on John Jenkins Court inside St. Clairsville High School. The No. 3 seeded Jets upset the second-seeded Red Devils, 25-20, 25-13 and 25-17.

T-L Photo/KIM NORTH

... they make you work hard."

Sechrest lauded her team's near-perfect play.

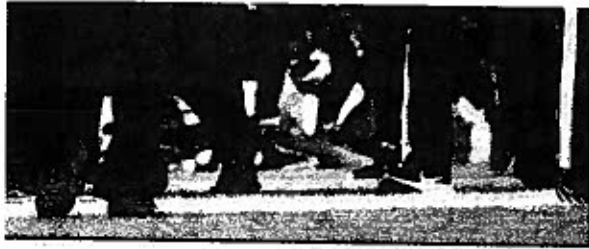
"The girls played really well tonight," she offered. "With Laken and

Ameera, then throwing in Alli Kellaway, Delaney Butler and Myah Martin, it was a complete team effort. If you want to be good, you've got to work as a team."

Sechrest said the key to this team is "togetherness. They like each other and that goes a long way towards winning," she added.

See UNION, Page B2

The Steelers are rested, healthy and in first



AP Photo

Head coach Mike Tomlin watches from the sideline between Minnesota Vikings and Pittsburgh Steelers in, Sunday, Sept. 28, 2025

ing Tom-
a teach-
needed.
elopment
ciency in
elers are
their trips
yard line
is some-
ved, like
red-zone
burgh is
he pack.
man, it's
said.
problem
oulder of
III, who
e" plane

ride back across the Atlantic after being evaluated at an Irish hospital. He thanked the doctors for their care but declined to provide any specifics on when he might be available.

If Austin can't play, the Steelers could turn to veteran Scotty Miller or second-year pro Roman Wilson, who had a promising training camp but barely has seen the field and has all of one catch for seven yards.

Tomlin, however, stressed that Wilson's lack of participation has more to do with the personnel packages the Steelers use on a week-to-week basis than any step backward in his development.

"It's still very early in this process," Tomlin said. "We've got 13 straight games ahead of us."

"So keep watching."

ter as the
intention-
o overstep
eaking up
summer

ot of trust
d say," he

with fresh-
Michigan
ning off a
g perfor-
w against

January to
ter he had
112 yards
becoming
lways had
10 times

ill said the
ot on Un-

ght now,"
grow and
ere is."

has com-
Ohio State
lege foot-
touchdown
the game

first five games for the Cornhuskers (4-1, 1-1 Big Ten). He has completed 74.5% of his passes for 266 yards per game with 12 touchdowns against two interceptions.

The biggest knock against Raiola has been his tendency to hold the ball too long, which has exacerbated pass-protection issues. Since the start of last season, Raiola has taken 42 sacks, fifth-most among FBS quarterbacks.

"Ultimately it's me, so I'll take that and we'll learn from it and be better," he said.

Washington has started for the Terrapins (4-1, 1-1) since Week 1 and they have already matched their win total for all of last season. He has thrown nine touchdowns with only two interceptions and has run for three scores.

Williams has eight touchdowns with only one interception and has two rushing touchdowns for the Huskies (4-1, 1-1).

Lindsey made the most of his redshirt season last year with the Gophers (3-2, 1-1), learning behind six-year transfer Max Brosmer.

He fits with the program's preference to develop players over the long term rather than frequently plug in newcomers from the transfer portal. Lindsey was the Gatorade Player of the Year for Arkansas high school football in 2023, but without an offer from his home-state Razorbacks, he went north to the state where his grandfather, Jim Lindsey, played seven

"I do love me some Shedeur Sanders, though, believe that. I care about him. The rest of that mess, I don't. I'm a coach trying to win just like they're trying to win games. I could care less who they traded."

Flacco, who was Super Bowl MVP with the Baltimore Ravens 13 years ago, has played for the Broncos, Jets, Eagles, Jets again, Browns, Colts, Browns again and now the Bengals.

If Flacco starts against Green Bay this week, he will become the seventh QB since at least 1950 to start against the

united team. Kyle Orton did it twice.

The Bengals were 4-3 with Browning in 2023 and he led them to a comeback win in Week 2 against the Jaguars after Burrow left the game. But Cincinnati has lost each of his three starts and Browning has six TDs and eight picks so far.

The Bengals released Brett Rypien after the trade.

Flacco has thrown for 46,512 yards, 259 TDs and 168 INTs in 18 seasons. He is 10-6 in the playoffs with 3530 yards passing, 26 TDs and 12 INTs.

• Union

Continued from Page B1

Despite owning two wins over the Red Devils, Sechrest was still worried entering the match.

"I'm always nervous," she admitted. "But we practiced really well yesterday (Monday)."

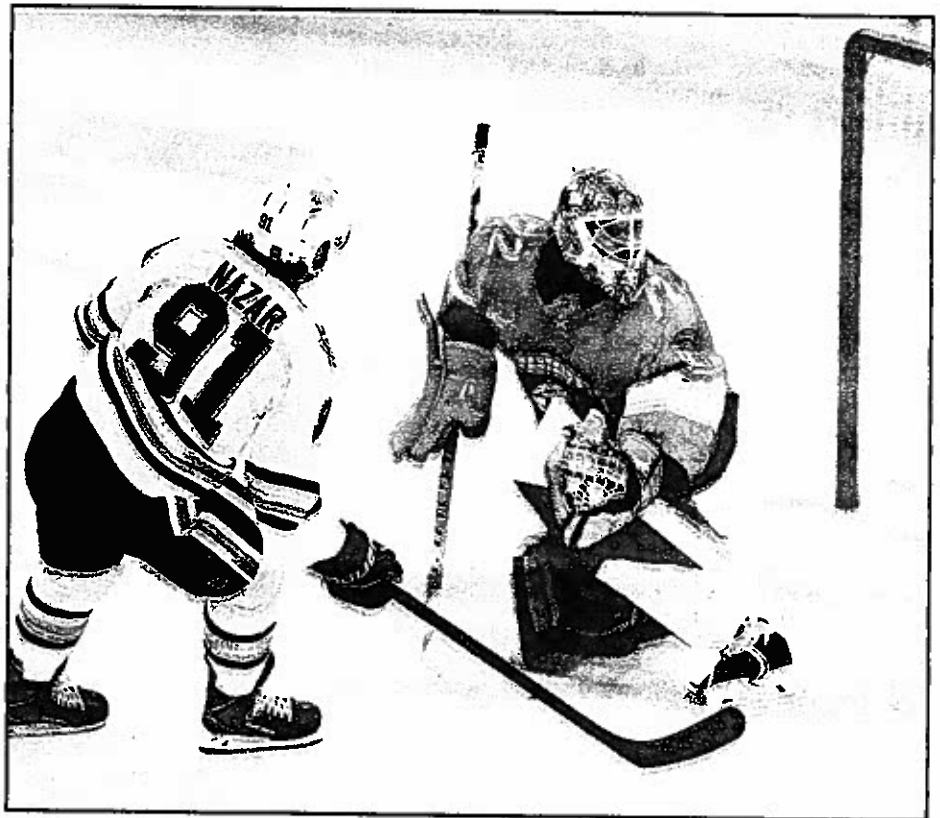
Senior Delaney Butler had 40 assists for Union Local, while Martin

added five digs and two aces. Freshman Ramsey Butler finished with three kills and a pair of blocks, while Brooklyn Burley had five assists and Kellaway four kills and five digs.

If there is a silver lining for St. Clairsville, the loss doesn't end its season as sectional tournament play begins next week.

"This is a huge achievement for us to get into big matches like this," Harris said. "We're starting to get a feel for what it's like and I am super proud of my team. UL's been fantastic for years and we're trying to catch them."

No statistics were available for St. Clairsville Tuesday.



CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS center Frank Nazar (91) scores on Florida Panthers goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky (72) during the first period of an NHL hockey game, Tuesday, Oct. 7, 2025, in Sunrise, Fla.

AP Photo

Boqvist scores go-ahead goal as champ Panthers beat Blackhawks on

The Steelers are rested, healthy and in first place — not that Mike Tomlin really wants to talk about it

PITTSBURGH (AP) — The Pittsburgh Steelers didn't play a game last weekend. Their early hold on the AFC North strengthened anyway.

While the Steelers rested up following the first regular-season game in Dublin, Ireland — a milestone win over the Minnesota Vikings that boosted them to 3-1 — the teams chasing them fell further off pace and in some cases, further into disarray (see the Ravens Ravens).

The Cincinnati Bengals have dropped three straight games in lopsided fashion since Joe Bur-

row's big toe bent the wrong way. The banged-up Ravens are a mess and coming off maybe the most disheartening loss in coach John Harbaugh's 18-year tenure. The last-place Cleveland Browns visit Acrisure Stadium on Sunday with the NFL's second-lowest scoring offense and a rookie quarterback in Dillon Gabriel making his second career start.

Just don't expect coach Mike Tomlin to get too caught up in the standings in early October, even if Pittsburgh is by far the healthiest and accomplished

(so far) team in a division that doesn't look nearly as formidable as it did six weeks ago.

"I don't care what happened with other people, particularly last weekend," Tomlin said Tuesday. "It's about us coming off the bye and getting ready for our game this week. I'm not a big-picture guy."

Maybe, but the little picture is pretty rosy, too. Cornerback Joey Porter Jr. and his balky hamstring could return to the lineup for the first time since the opener. Outside linebacker Alex Highsmith's ankle was well

enough to practice on Monday. If they're able to return, Pittsburgh's leaky but opportunistic defense could be at or near full health for the first time since the first half of Week 1 as long as defensive back Jalen Ramsey's hamstring is good to go.

And while Tomlin might not publicly admit he was keeping tabs on Pittsburgh's rivals, his players were.

"I was watching every AFC North game I watched," Highsmith said. "It was nice to see those teams lose this week. So we got to take advantage of

Martins Ferry sweeps past Wheeling Central in 3A semi-finals

MARTINS FERRY — Top-seeded Martins Ferry advanced to the OVAC Class 3A volleyball finals with a sweep of No. 4 Wheeling Central by scores of 25-14, 25-21 and 25-13 inside Tolbert Gymnasium on Tuesday night.

The Purple Riders (16-5) were led by a variety of players as Giana Chirpas charted 13 kills and two blocks. Nicole Hammerquist added 11 kills and Maddie Lucas chipped in 10 kills and three service aces. Olivia Harkness contributed 29 assists and three aces, while SJ Koller had 23 digs and Gracie Lucas finished with seven digs and a pair of aces.

Wheeling Central's Lainey Peters and Remy Peters each had six kills for the Maroon, Lainey adding six digs. Olivia Stephens led the team in digs with 10.

Times and pairings for the five championship matches at the refurbished ECO Center west of St. Clairsville will be finalized on Wednesday, according to OVAC Volleyball Commissioner Wayne Ogilbee.

Class 2A

River Rises Over Clay-Battelle

BLACKSVILLE — The third-seeded Pilots (11-10) navigated their way past the No. 2 Cee-Bees by scores of 25-9, 25-10 and 25-13 Tuesday night in an OVAC semifinal.

Mallarie Maddy led the way with 21 kills and three aces. Hallie Hammel added eight kills and seven digs, while Maci Isaly finished with 33 assists, five digs, five aces and two kills. Aubrey Fety charted 17 digs.

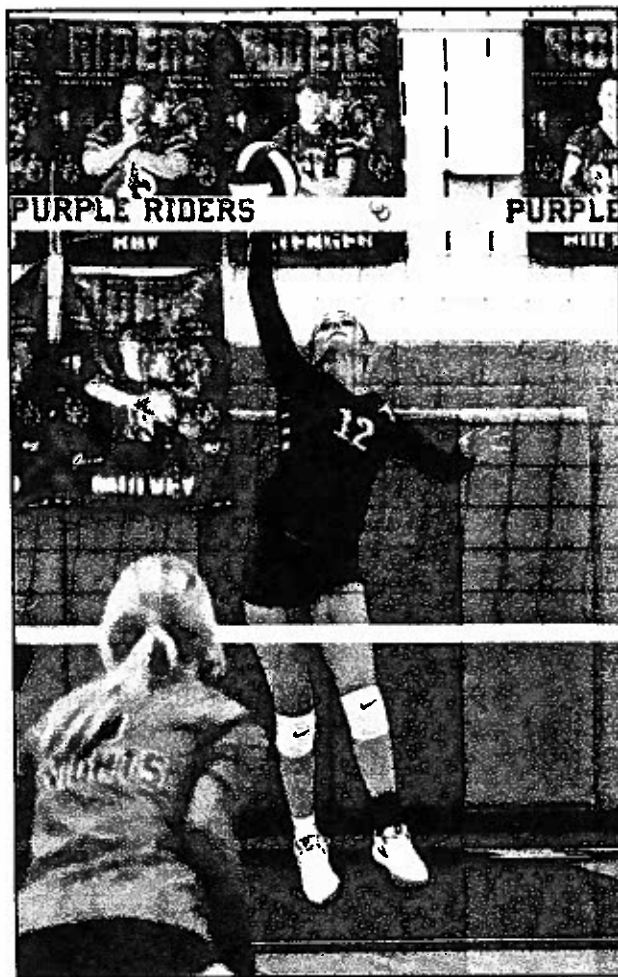


Photo by KRISTIN MAZGAJ

MARTINS FERRY'S Maddie Lucas goes for a kill on Tuesday against Wheeling Central during the Purple Riders' OVAC Class 3A semifinal victory over the Maroon Knights inside Tolbert Gymnasium.

Michigan Underwood many Big Ten starting 2nd year

ANN ARBOR, Mi — Underwood took a shotgun snap, delivered a 33-yard pass sideline with perfect timing in a win over Washington.

Three snaps later, like the freshman he is, Underwood rolled off the football as it came, catching a pass over his target from the Badgers.

The 15th-ranked Varsity team who are seniors or second year of college, comments and growing popularity.

Maryland freshman redshirt freshman Justin Smith, freshman Drake Dylan Raiola of Nebraska, and freshman of Washington are making their first starts.

Sayin won the conference award with top-ranked teams this week, matching the success of Lindsey and have each

See B