

Triumph over Tribulation

Team overcomes challenges to win state

The minutes felt like hours as the competition cheer team sat waiting to hear the results. The team impatiently watched the clock; and they sat in a circle holding hands, breathing heavily. "I don't think we ever believed we could actually do it," junior Sarah Schade said. Finally, they heard second place awarded to Valley. "We didn't think we had won until they called that Valley got second," Schade said. For the first time in school history, the cheer team won the state championship title.

This was no simple accomplishment for the team. The girls had multiple setbacks at the beginning of the year. "A few people [quit] here and there, causing the routine to change multiple times," junior Ally Holton said.

The cheer season was long and tasking. "Cheer is a big commitment starting from May through January, so the girls have to really want to do it," coach Kate Safris said.

Along with teammates quitting, they also had to deal with girls getting major injuries. Junior Mryn Johnson got a serious concussion while pulling the tug of war rope at Rock Around the Clock when she was kicked in the back of the head. This then caused her head to be smacked into the ground in front of her. "As I've been told my memory, eyesight, and concentration will not be the same as it was before because this is my second severe concussion," Johnson said.

The team's stunts required four girls, but if one got

injured and needed to be taken out, then the rest of the girls had to readjust the entire routine. "We were already a small team to begin with, and we really strive to be the best of the best," Schade said.

The loss of teammates made it difficult for them to find a confidence in their routine. They never thought that they would do well in competition. "Cheer, I don't think people realize, is kind of like basketball or football," Safris said. "We have positions, so if we lose our quarterback the rest of the team could be good, but if you don't have a quarterback you're in trouble."

The girls had believed since the beginning of their season that they would not win, they were unsure of how good the other teams were. "We always told everyone we were awful, we convinced everyone we were really bad," Schade said. "Then we ended up winning state and surprised everyone."

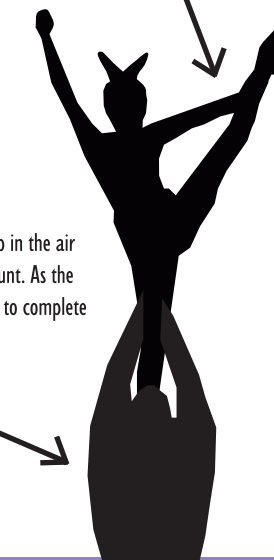
Their success continued onto Dallas, placing fourth at nationals, the highest placing in school history. Bringing in a coach who was also a choreographer from the South helped them create a routine that was able to hit the difficulty needed to win. "We were really fortunate that our squad was really young this year, with over half of our squad being underclassman," Safris said. "The skill level in Johnston is here, the talent is absolutely here," she said.

flyer

This is the cheerleader who is on top of each stunt. Before even going into the air, flyers must learn how to hold their own weight and keep their chest up.

base

The job of a base is to toss the flyer up in the air in order for them to complete their stunt. As the base it is important to catch the base to complete the stunt successfully.



1. Standing in a prep, freshman Haley Sharp starts to do a pyramid. Sharp was one of six freshman on the team. "This entire team was a family and I felt very welcomed," she said. (Photo by Abbie Craig)

2. Junior Brooklyn Symber performs at the state cheerleading competition. The team won state for the first time in school history, beating four-time state champs, Ames. (Photo by Abbie Craig)

3. Seniors Maddie Smith and Megan Young smile as they throw candy into the crowd during the homecoming parade. Smith was aiming for a kid's bucket, but missed it. (Photo by Abbie Craig)

4. Sparkle Squad members work on making a poster for their homecoming parade float. The homecoming parade was Sept. 22, with powder puff football following it. (Photo by Kati Anderson)

5. Seniors Alex Dougherty and Haley Blackford cheer at state wrestling. The cheerleaders were able to sit on the mats when performing at the tournament. (Photo by Jordan DeRoos)

6. Waving at the crowd-lined streets throughout the parade route, senior seniors Katie Kelly and Bryce Rowland ride in the homecoming parade. Kelly wore her cheerleading uniform during the parade even though she was a part of the homecoming court. (Photo by Abbie Craig)

7. Throughout the parade route, senior Molly Martin and staff member K.T. Menke yell a cheer. Martin was a part of Sparkle Squad, which began in 2015. (Photo by Abbie Craig)

8. Doing a turn, senior Megan Young performs with the dance team at half time of the Waukee game. Young has been on the team since she was a freshman and was a captain this year. (Photo by Kati Anderson)

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