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Bearcats Honored At Winter Sports Banquet

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By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports Editor

It's been another great season for the Dexter Bearcats - the Lady Bearcats made another run into the playoffs, the wrestlers sent five to State, the cheerleaders won their second straight County Tournament cheer award, and the boys basketball team finished undefeated in SCAA play for the first time in over a decade, winning both the regular-season and tournament titles.

Parents, athletes, and coaches gathered to celebrate the successes of Bearcat Athletics in the winter season in the DHS Cafeteria on Monday night.

Cheer coach Laura Stone kicked things off by presenting first-time letter winners Alyssa Spear, Tayler Allen, and Madison McGowan with their awards.

"I want to thank the girls for their hard work, and their parents for all the support they've given us," Stone said. "These girls put in so many hours outside of the school day."

The Lady Bearcats were up next; assistant coach Eric Sitze, who handles JV coaching duties, expressed pride in the JV squad's 10-4 effort this season.

"It's been the first time in a few years with JV," Sitze said with a laugh. "We had a good tim; wicked up Taylor in mid season because we had one quit on us, and she helped out

tremendously with handling the ball. I'm proud of this freshman group for getting out there and working hard."

Head coach Chad Allen spoke next, shifting the focus to the Varsity Lady 'Cats. Their 24-5 record tied for the second best record in school history, just behind LBB's 28-2 effort in Allen's inaugural season. LBB's 24 point victory over Notre Dame in the District Championship game is also the largest margin of victory in a title game in school history.

"It was a great season," Allen said. "It didn't end the way we wanted, but we were one step closer to the Final Four this year. If we go one more step next season, we're in Columbia. Hopefully they will work hard over the summer. We're going to focus most on strength and conditioning; Coach Pixley and I are talking about a strength program for girls, with a different workout and gym times from the guys."

Hannah Noe took home the Free Throw (79%) and Defensive awards, while Brittany Harris edged the Rebound Award from Paige Patterson - Harris averaged 9.4 boards per game, while Patterson averaged 8.6 - and took home the Team MVP award outright. Harris also crossed the 1,000 Point mark this season; her 1,211 career points leave her in third place all-time, behind Katelyn Heil and Rachel Blunt.

The Freshman and JV Boys basketball teams were up next; freshman coach Mike Vipperman and JV coach Shawn Guethle were both impressed with the team's improvement over the season.

"The freshmen played a lot on JV," Guethle said, "and they came a long, long way."

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"[In our] third game, Poplar Bluff beat us by 30 points," he recalled. "They came up here for our next to last game, and we beat them by 20. This group did everything we asked and more. They didn't win a lot, but biggest improvement I've had in my 5 years as a coach."

Rob Nichols, head coach of the Varsity Bearcats, gave his thoughts on the season before presenting the team's individual awards.

"We played a few more sophomores than normal, and they did a great job," he said. "We started out slow, with a tough schedule early. This is a tough bunch of kids. Played through broken thumbs and bad knees early in the season."

"We had a 10 game win streak at one points," he continued, "and won the Stoddard County Conference and Tournament. This was the first time we were undefeated in the conference in over 10 years."

Tyler Miller took home both the Free Throw Award (83%) and Defensive Award; Jake Lee earned the Rebound Award (9 boards per game) and beat Miller by one vote for the Team MVP Award. Lee averaged 14.9 points per game and nine rebounds per game in his senior season.

Assistant Wrestling coach James Sneed announced the individual awards for the Bearcat Wrestling team to conclude the evening's festivities. The Varsity squad ended the season with a 15-3 record, including a second place finish in the Park Hills Duels, a first place finish in the Priory Invitational Tournament, and seven medalists at the prestigious Tiger Classic tournament. The 'Cats also had five state qualifiers, with Cody Stevens as the lone medalist.

"Thanks to the administration for their support and parents for getting the kids to the bus on time. When you're wrestling an all-day tournament in St. Louis, you'll wind up leaving the school at 5:00 a.m.," Sneed said. "We had a big team; we started with over 40, and ended the season with 36 wrestlers. The JV were in 4 tournaments this season, and did well. This sport is hard as a freshman or sophomore, as it takes time to learn, but we look forward to seeing these young guys on the mats in coming years."

Stevens took home the Most Aggressive Wrestler (wrestler that finishes the season with the most takedowns) Award and the team MVP. He also set the single-season takedown record with 114, shattering old record by over 30 takedowns. Junior Brad Wick, who battled injuries for a good part of the season, was deemed the Most Improved Wrestler by the team.

As one season ends, another begins - now the Bearcats, after a great Winter season, must move their focus on to baseball, softball, track, and boys tennis. With hard work and dedication, the Bearcats will continue to find great successes in their respective sports.

Photos Above:

Top: Individual award winners (front row, from left) Tyler Miller, Jake Lee, Cody Stevens, (back from, from left) Hannah Noe, Brittany Harris, and Brad Wick.

Bottom: Head basketball coach Rob Nichols addresses the crowd during Monday night's Winter Sports Banquet.

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