

## SPORTS

## UNDEFEATED

## Wesleyan finishes regular season without a loss

By Brian Bergstrom  
Editor

**BUCKHANNON** — It's Tuesday, Sept. 8. The sun dips below the horizon. In the distance, Wesley Chapel chimes 8 p.m.

The West Virginia Wesleyan College women's soccer team is huddled up, already on the ropes in just the second game of 2015 season. The veteran, nationally ranked Lady Bobcats are losing to upstart Fairmont State, a first

year program with first year players.

The pressure is on. Despite reaching the Sweet 16 in the NCAA tournament a year earlier, many pundits had already written off 2015 as a rebuilding year for Wesleyan. In the annual preseason poll, the Mountain East Conference coaches didn't feel Wesleyan would repeat as conference champions. That honor went to Notre Dame.

The coaches didn't even pick Wesleyan second. That spot went to

Charleston. The Lady 'Cats were third.

Disrespect? Maybe. But serious questions were being asked about a squad that lost three of their four starting defenders, not to mention one of the best goalkeepers in the country and an All-MEC first team center mid.

Trailing Fairmont State, the Lady Bobcats knew they had better rebuild fast if they were going to avoid one of the worst losses in the team's history.

**See Undefeated, Page 2B**



## Lady Buc spikers begin sectional tourney play with three-set win over Minutemaids

Squad will visit Hampshire today for sectional title

By Joey Kittle  
Sports

**WESTON** — The Buckhannon-Upshur High School volleyball team opened post-season play by knocking off Lewis County in straight sets Monday night in Class AAA, Region II, Section 2 play.

After the Big 10 Conference rivals split during the regular season, the Lady Bucs took the all-important third meeting by posting wins of 25-19, 25-22 and 25-8. They will now travel to top-seed Hampshire today for the sectional title.

Monday's win also secured B-U of a spot in Saturday's regional tournament at Musselman High School, as the sectional champ and runner-up both advance.

This will be the fourth straight appearance in the sectional title game for the Lady Bucs. They have won two titles in that span and finished runner-up last year.

"At this point, it is a fight to keep the season going. How much heart, passion and effort we put in will reflect the results we get," B-U coach Sheena Westfall said. "It is up to these girls to believe in themselves and their abilities, because they can do anything they set their minds to."

Westfall was pleased with how her team responded with so much on the line.

"[This game] could have been anyone's," she said.



Photos by JOEY KITTLE/The Record Delta

Buckhannon-Upshur's Sydney Maxwell (15) makes a return during the Lady Bucs' win over Lewis County Monday night in Class AAA, Region II, Section 2 Tournament play at Weston.

"Lewis County beat us in the sectional seeding game and we defeated them in the conference game at their place.

"I told the girls we had to keep emotions under control and not let them get the best of us, leave everything on the floor and take everything one point at a time. On our mistakes we kept our heads up and continued to encourage each other."

The Lady Bucs jumped out to a 12-9 lead in the first set before the Minutemaids rallied to take a 15-13 advantage. But

B-U answered with kills from junior Makayla Reynolds and sophomore Ashton Maxwell to regain a lead it would never relinquish.

Lewis County forged ahead 5-3 early in the second set and the match was tied at 7-7 before the Lady Bucs scored five of the next eight points.

"We lost our focus in the second set," Westfall said. "I had to call a timeout and to get the girls to settle back down and refocus on what we needed to be doing."

After the break, freshman Payton Kotol later connected on consecutive ace serves to increase the Lady Buc lead to 15-11.

Sophomore Sydney Maxwell served B-U to a 19-13 edge with three straight aces. The Minutemaids battled back, however, to close to within 20-18 and they eventually got even at 20-20.

Back-to-back kills by senior Kiana Harris and Sydney Maxwell then ignited the Lady Bucs to the three-point win.



B-U's Makayla Reynolds (20) and Ginny Suder (14) celebrate a point in Monday's sectional matchup at Lewis County. The Lady Bucs will visit Hampshire today in the sectional title game.

The third and final set was all B-U, as the Lady Bucs jumped out to a 10-3 lead and took complete control behind Lauren Louk, who was the server on eight straight points that turned an 11-3 lead into a 19-3 advantage.

"Lauren served an amazing game at a crucial point," Westfall said of the junior, who finished the night with 22 made serves and seven aces. "The momentum really stayed with us after her serves and our mindset coming into the third set was everything

remains on the floor ... we went all out for the entire 25 points."

Westfall also praised the serving of Autumn Hatfield and Kotol, while lauding the play of Reynolds and Sydney Maxwell at the net and the defense of Tatiyana Caesar, Kotol, Ashton Maxwell and Louk.

Sydney Maxwell finished the night with 12 points, three blocks and seven kills, Reynolds five kills and four blocks, Ginny Suder 19 assists and nine digs, Ashton Maxwell two kills, 16 digs and 15 made serves and Caesar 12 digs.

# No. 23 Charleston too much for 'Cats, 65-21

## Big second-quarter propels Eagles to MEC home win

**CHARLESTON** — No. 23 Charleston erupted for 28 second-quarter points to cruise past West Virginia Wesleyan, 65-21, in the Mountain East Conference Game of the Week last Thursday night at UC Stadium at Laidley Field.

The Bobcats are now 1-7 overall and 1-7 in MEC play. They will host U.Va.-Wise at 1 p.m. Saturday for Senior Day and eight senior players will be honored.

Junior tailback Michael Anderson was one of the few bright spots in the game for Wesleyan. He ran for 173 yards on 19 carries and one score — a 50-yard scamper in the second quarter that allowed the Bobcats to cut

the Golden Eagle lead to 10-7. But it was all UC after that, as the Golden Eagles scored the next 28 points to build a 38-7 advantage at the intermission.

Luke Casey sparked the Wesleyan offense to a score on its first drive of the second half. He capped off a 75-yard, seven-play drive with a 4-yard scamper with 8:47 left in the third quarter.

That made it a 45-14 game. Charleston scored three more times to up their lead to 65-14.

Casey scored his second rushing touchdown of the game with 6:27 left in the fourth quarter.

He finished off a 75-yard, five-play drive with another four-yard run.

Nick Banta's PAT kick made it a 65-21 game.

Wesleyan's offense racked up 348 yards.

Ryan Deal completed 12 of

his 25 passes for 142 yards.

Casey played the entire second half and was 2-for-8 for 24 yards. He also ran for 56 yards on nine attempts and had two touchdowns.

Anthony Okray collected three catches for 71 yards.

Mike Savage led the defense with seven tackles.

Charleston, which improved to 8-1 overall, was led by quarterback Jeremy Johnson. The former WVU recruit completed 18-of-24 passes for 301 yards and four TD passes.

Rashawn Dickerson caught six passes for 109 yards, including a 29-yard score, while Joey Augustin had five receptions for 95 yards and a 27-yard TD catch. Marvin Elam led the ground gain with 97 yards rushing on 13 totes and a 1-yard run.

The statistics:

W.Va. Wesleyan	0	7	7	7	21
Charleston	10	28	20	7	65

**First quarter**  
UC — Andrew Flohr 12 pass from Jeremy Johnson (Benes kick), 10:12  
UC — Benes 27 FG, 7:39

**Second quarter**  
WVWC — Michael Anderson 50 run (Banta kick), 14:42  
UC — Marvin Elam 1 run (Benes kick), 13:22  
UC — D'Andre Brooks 8 pass from Johnson (Benes kick), 9:14  
UC — Torie Wagner 80 blocked FG return (Benes kick), 3:46  
UC — Joey Augustin 27 pass from Johnson (Benes kick), :09

**Third quarter**  
UC — Rashawn Dickerson 29 pass from Johnson (Benes kick), 12:07  
WVWC — Luke Casey 4 run (Banta kick), 8:47  
UC — Jermaine Kelly 14 run (Benes kick), 6:02  
UC — Greg Bender 1 run (kick failed), :34

**Fourth quarter**  
UC — Kane Roush 1 run (Benes kick), 9:12  
WVWC — Casey 4 run (Banta kick), 6:27

**INDIVIDUAL**  
RUSHING: WVWC, Anderson 19-173; Casey 9-56; Marcus Smith 2-6; Andrew Jones 1-(minus 17); Ryan Deal 3-(minus 36); UC, Elam 13-97; Kelly 8-98; Roush 5-50; Bender 7-26; Michael Thomas 4-11; Dickerson 1-3; Tevion Cappe 1-0; TEAM 2-0; Bryce Hankins 1-(minus 3); Mason Olszewski 1-(minus 7); Johnson 3-(minus 15)  
PASSING: WVWC, Deal 25-12-0-142; Casey 8-2-0-24. UC, Johnson 24-18-0-301; Olszewski 1-0-0-0.  
RECEIVING: WVWC, Anthony Okray 3-71; Anderson 5-35; Stephen Rogalski 2-28; Marcus Smith 3-16; Ross Kim 1-16. UC, Dickerson 6-109; Joey Augustin 5-95; Elam 1-35; Jermaine Kelly 3-33; Andrew Flohr 1-12; J. Delahoussaye 1-9; D'Andre Brooks 1-8.



BRIAN BERGSTROM/The Record Delta file photo

Michael Anderson rushed for 173 yards and scored a 50-yard touchdown in West Virginia Wesleyan's 65-21 loss at No. 23 Charleston last Thursday night.



Tiana Bennardo



Kristi Dalton



Colette Biondi

## Undefeated

From Page 1B

Looking back, maybe what happened next shouldn't be much of a surprise. Wesleyan head coach Patrick Holguin has been building up to this for years, quietly acquiring the pieces necessary to stare down defeat without blinking, somehow finding a way to win.

Wesleyan could have lost to Fairmont State that warm September night, but they didn't. They could have lost to Notre Dame, or Charleston, or Shepherd, or Concord, or Wheeling, or Urbana, or West Liberty, or Cedarville or Cal. But they didn't. Not once.

Now, two months later, Holguin has something he's never had before — an undefeated regular season. After 18 grueling games, his Lady 'Cats enter the postseason as the only remaining undefeated team amongst the Division II ranks with a 16-0-2 record.

"This is very unexpected," Holguin admitted in an interview Tuesday. "At the beginning of the year, I had some concerns about rebuilding a team that lost 13 seniors. I had some concerns about our inconsistencies. I had some concerns about our youth."

Those concerns spanned the length of the field.

Lauren Duncan — who has the NCAA record for save percentage at .957 — was a shutout machine, racking up 35 clean sheets during her time wearing the orange and black. How would incoming keeper Hillary DeWitt, a senior who hadn't seen much action, hold up?

What about the revamped back line, which could no longer rely on All-MEC first team outside back Jessica Hong, second teamer Amanda Forest or free kick specialist Megan McCoy?

And without a marquee forward, could the team muster enough scoring to stay competitive?

Questions, and good ones. But the 2015 Lady Bobcats had answers.

DeWitt is on the verge of shattering numerous NCAA records. She has 16 shutouts, one shy of the NCAA season mark. Her shutout percentage of .889 is well above the record of .739, and her goals allowed average of .106 tops the current standard of .144 set in 2005. She's even threatening her former teammate's record with a save percentage of .966.

"Hillary's performance this year has been outstanding," Holguin said. "Because, yeah, we could say our defense is preventing this or preventing that. But she still has to manage the game, and there is still pressure on her, and the pressure is only going to get greater. Every time, she has

answered the call."

Of course, it is hard to talk about DeWitt without mentioning the defenders in front of her — and one defender in particular. Once upon a time, fifth-year senior Rachel Ritchey was Wesleyan's best striker. Now, she's one of the premiere defenders in all of Division II women's soccer.

Whether sheer luck or coaching genius, the move from offense to defense has paved the way for Wesleyan's success over the last two years. Ritchey's impact is palpable on the field. She is an eagle in the air, a boulder on the ground.

"The leadership this year has been the best I've had in my 20-something years of coaching," Holguin said. "It all starts with Rachel Ritchey, the anchor, our most experienced player. We call her Coach Ritchey, because when we leave the team for any period of time, we see Rachel instructing, correcting, coordinating and motivating everybody."

But even with Ritchey returning for a final year, Holguin still had to replace the three graduating seniors around her. He turned to Mary Cooper, Taylor Morton and Kelsie Hibbs. Those names might not be familiar, but they should be, because they have filled some star-studded shoes with aplomb. There's a reason Wesleyan is giving up just three shots per game.

"That's the area I'm most proud of — we are very strong defensively," Holguin said. "It's a tribute to all the players buying into the defensive schemes, the work it takes to pressure and recover, and recognizing the game plan we have in place. They are working for one another, not just doing what they are [individually] supposed to do."

Wesleyan sports a nation's best goals-against-average of 0.106, giving up just two goals all year. The last time the Lady 'Cats were digging a ball out of their own net was Sept. 27.

Holguin said that level of stifling defense has been the biggest surprise of the year.

"We replaced both outside backs, and I rotate in six or seven midfielders sometimes," he said. "The biggest surprise has been our ability to deny shots, our overall group defending. It's well-coordinated and it's got some real determination behind it, real purpose. Nobody takes a break — they are working every minute they are on the field."

Up front, Holguin had a problem, but a good one. The coach has never had prolific scorers, so in recent years he adopted an offense-by-committee approach that allowed several younger players to frequently rotate into games.

Now, those 'younger players' are seniors, and they have made

the most of their final season by providing the leadership needed to transition from last year's good team to this year's great one.

Colette Biondi has quietly amassed nine goals this season, putting her near the top of the MEC scoring chart. More importantly, she has a conference-high six game-winning goals.

Fellow senior Keenan Moreta has four goals, while Ritchey has three. Seniors Tiana Bennardo, Kristi Dalton, Emily Blake and Hannah Gurtis all have contributed a goal apiece this year.

"Colette and Tiana and Kristi are such good people, such passionate people," Holguin said. "They've really matured over the last three years. It's showing this year, because every situation, they recognize it and they either help prevent it or work the team through it. That goes both on the field and off it, because they have been great leaders off the field as well."

"When the going gets tough, Colette steps up for us. Tiana doesn't get enough credit, because she doesn't score the goals, but her work and her extra effort is second to none. She's in there more than everybody doing the things that make a difference. Kristi is the one who wins everything in the midfield. She's the ball winner, and that is irreplaceable."

The underclassmen have come up big too. B-UHS product Lauren Cvechko has two scores, and fellow junior Laura Hill has one. Freshman Melissa Guydish also tallied a goal.

And then there's Jane Schleicher, a Freshman of the Year candidate with four goals and five assists. A whiz on the ball, Schleicher's creativity perfectly complements the more direct style Wesleyan often employs. Good luck game planning against that.

Feeding the forwards is a diverse midfield crew. In the center, Dalton is the aerial enforcer, while Kelsey Sitka is similar to Schleicher in her footwork and creativity. Sami Lackner and Brianna Swecker work tirelessly to contribute on both offense and defense.

"With Sitka coming out of the midfield, she beats a player and requires another defender to step to her," Holguin said. "That evens us up and allows us to put a lot of pressure up front. When Jane creates, she is able to beat a defender, and that puts us a person up."

"Jane really has a purpose, and that purpose is to go to goal on the dribble. She has some game winning assists because of her ability to attack one-versus-one."

With the undefeated regular season now in the books, things get interesting as the Mountain East tournament kicks off



Rachel Ritchey

Thursday.

First up is a rematch against Shepherd, a team Wesleyan dismantled 4-0 on Oct. 22. But the Lady Rams took Wesleyan to double overtime on Sept. 27 before falling 2-1, and let's not forget last year, when Shepherd came to Buckhannon and knocked off Wesleyan in a wet, dreary regular season game on the turf.

Thursday's clash will kick off at 3 p.m. at Culpepper Stadium.

Should Wesleyan emerge victorious, they will host the MEC championship match on Sunday against either Charleston or Notre Dame.

After that, it's on to the NCAA tournament.

With top-ranked Gannon falling 4-2 to defending PSAC champion East Stroudsburg last week, No. 11 Wesleyan is now the last undefeated team still standing in the national top 25 poll. The top two teams in the region get a bye and will likely host the first two rounds, and then the regional finals will be played at the number one seed.

Wesleyan is currently seeded second, but unlike the four-team MEC tournament, eight squads complete in the PSAC competition, and Gannon could certainly wind up with a second loss on their record. The veteran Lady Golden Knights, who returned 11 seniors this year, beat Bloomsburg 3-1 on Tuesday and will advance to the PSAC semifinals Friday, with the championship Sunday.

Regardless of the seeds, once the NCAA tournament starts, Wesleyan's first loss would be their last.

"I'm just asking [the team] to take care of the simple things, the fundamental things," Holguin said. "Just play simple, be disciplined and execute the best you possibly can. Outwork them every second of every minute of the game."

An undefeated regular season? How about an undefeated season, period?

It's a big question, but so far Wesleyan has had all the answers.



Hillary DeWitt

## FEARLESS FOOTBALL FORECAST

Week 10

Circle the winners

BUCKHANNON-UPSHUR at ELKINS	TEXAS TECH at WEST VIRGINIA
SHADY SPRING at LEWIS COUNTY	NOTRE DAME at PITTSBURGH
PRESTON at BRIDGEPORT	FLORIDA STATE at CLEMSON
FAIRMONT SENIOR at EAST FAIRMONT	TCU at OKLAHOMASTATE
LINCOLN at NORTH MARION	LSU at ALABAMA
ROBERT C. BYRD at PHILIP BARBOUR	DENVER at INDIANAPOLIS (NFL)
UVA.-WISE at WEST VA. WESLEYAN	OAKLAND at PITTSBURGH (NFL) TIEBREAKER
MARSHALL at MIDDLE TENN. STATE	

Total Points

Name:

Phone number:

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