



CHEERLEADERS REPEAT AS STATE CHAMPIONS

"B-l-o-o-m-i-n-g-d-a-l-e! Blooming-dale! Blooming-dale! Gooo Bull's!" The cheerleaders were famous for these simple syllables which they cheered at every school sporting event throughout the year. That wasn't the only thing they were known for, though. Western Conference, a cheerleading competition held on Friday, February 6, was taken over annually by Bloomingdale Cheerleaders in order to head toward championships. This competition was no place for a pep rally cheer; it was an intense series of tumbling, stunts, cheering, jumps, and even dance.

Varsity cheerleaders worked on their routine since early September, adding more and more unique stunts throughout the year in order to make it the best routine. They practiced everyday and focused on football season and tryouts as well. They had many tasks to accomplish in a short length of time, and tension was quickly rising. Still, the cheerleaders knew how to stay strong and managed to keep everything together. "I have had a great experience on the Varsity team," said Kirsten Vadelund, 10. "We have become a family. We fight and bicker sometimes when stuff gets tough, but we still love each other in the end."

The pressure was on, because after a four year winning streak, varsity had come home

with second place after losing to Durant in the previous year. The Western Conference was what could help redeem our cheerleaders' title as 'The Best.' "I'm nervous and anxious because there is going to be a lot of anxiety. Tons of people will be there watching us, hoping for a win," said Jessa Robles, 12, prior to the Western Conference competition.

To support the cheerleading squad, red t-shirts were sold during lunches the week before Western Conference, which were to be worn by friends, family, and students in order to show support at the competition. Also, the week before the competition, seniors on the squad picked an underclassman on the team to dress up each day in different theme. Monday was makeover day, where senior cheerleaders gave them a makeover. Tuesday was balloon and candy day, where they received balloons and tons of candy. Wednesday was hip hop day, and Thursday was crown and sash day, where each of the underclassmen looked like a pageant queen.

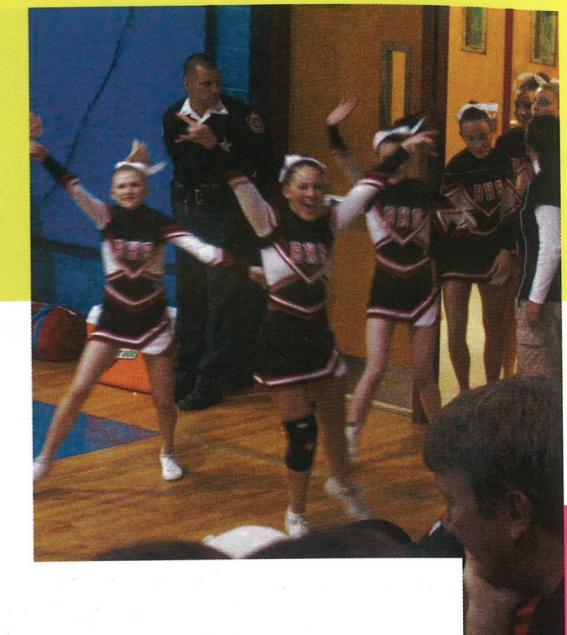
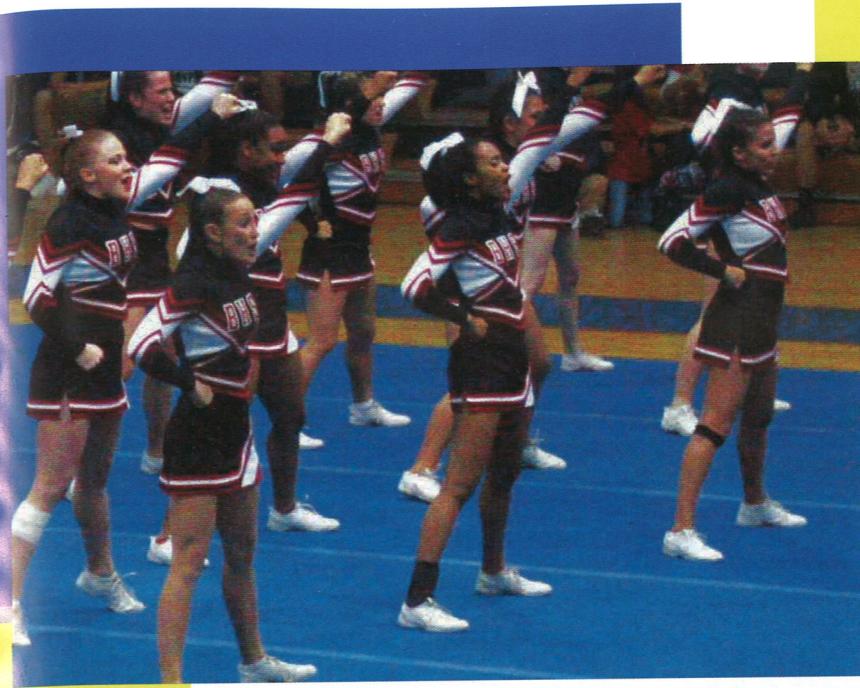
Unfortunately, the team didn't come out with a win but still looked forward to State Championships and strove to redeem themselves in spite of the loss to Plant City, who took first place, and the rest of the high

Copy by Samantha Holsten & photos by Nahara Rivera schools. "I was disappointed with the results because we could have done so much better with all the practice we put into it. I am looking forward to the State Championships to show off our routine and to show how we really perform it, like at practice," said Meghan Placke, 10. "It is really a great routine. None of us know exactly what happened."

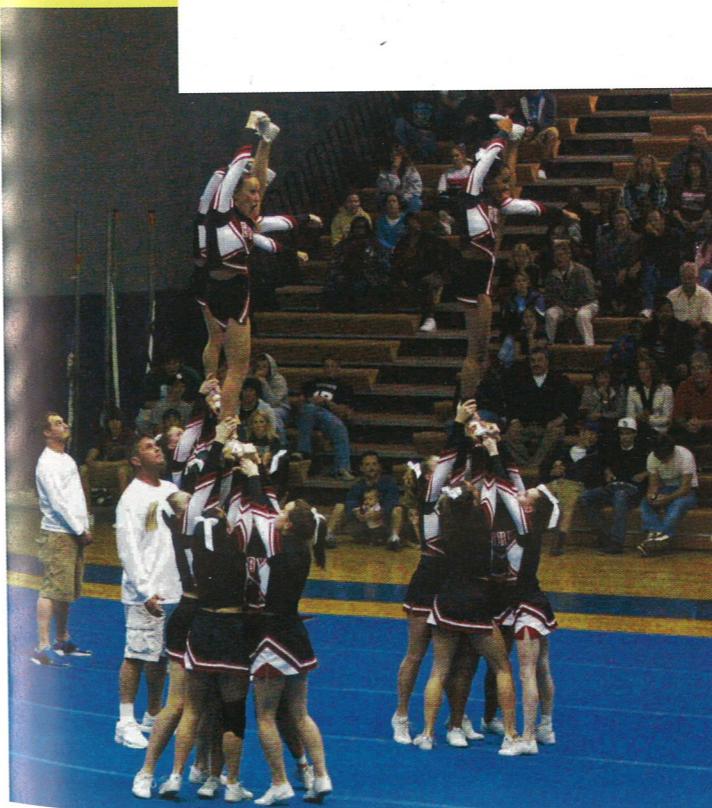
Not even the loss at Western Conference could bring down the spirits of the cheerleaders. They were sure that they could prove themselves and regain their title of 'The Best' at their next competition.

And they did prove themselves. The cheerleaders prepared relentlessly for States and came out on top. Last year was the first year FHSAA awarded a state champion in competitive cheerleading, and the team had won first place in the Large Varsity division. They repeated their victory in March.

"States was an unforgettable experience and more unforgettable because we started a tradition," said Briana Jones, 12. It wasn't just another competition. Bloomingdale won, it was our team truly pulling together as sisters to achieve the goal we set for ourselves in August. We wouldn't trade this experience for anything."



TRIP TO THE TOP



The cheerleaders form a pyramid formation. The team had practiced everyday after school before the competition.

Marissa May, 11, Chelsea Campbell, 12, Caitlin Thomas, 12, and Jessa Robles, 12, shout their hearts out so the judges can hear them. The squad was judged on everything, from what their stunts looked like to even how their ponytails looked.

The team enter the gym full of spirit. The happier the team was, the better the reaction of the fans.

The flyers perform a bow and arrow stunt. The flyers were Megan Placke, 10, Chelsea Campbell, 12, Linda Gardner, 12, and Caitlin Thomas, 12.

The cheerleaders wait in anticipation to hear the results of the competition. The girls came in fifth place at Western Conference.