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# DHS Cheer Team Awards Recognition

MARCH 10TH 2023 BY DEE LOFLIN

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The 2023 Dexter High School Fall Sports Awards Ceremony was held on Thursday, March 9, 2023.

"The winter sports season feels both tremendously long and oddly short all at the same time. One moment, you're looking forward to the end when you have "free time" and the next you're wishing for time to slow down so you can embrace each "last," commented Rilee Jones, Basketball Cheerleading Coach. "I know for senior athletes, this is especially true. To me, one of the best things about athletics and about coaching is getting to watch athletes flourish in their talents and successes, but also growing as individual people along the way. What I love most about coaching cheerleading is getting to witness that growth, as well as the lessons learned, the humble teaching moments, and the unbelievable talent among this squad. I also cherish the moments of watching these girls cheer the boys' and girls' basketball teams to victories on the sidelines while also having fun."

When it comes to a typical game day for these girls, the basketball cheerleaders are responsible for memorizing and perfecting over eighty sideline chants, countless timeout and floor cheers, as well as routines, stunts, and tumbling sequences - sometimes doing so 3 - 4 nights a week on those busier game weeks. They have handled their responsibilities well this year and have consistently made me proud.

"This year, one of the team's proudest moments is "taking back the plaque" as we like to say," continued Jones. "Winning the SCAA cheerleading award is an ultimate honor for Dexter Cheerleading. County week is a time that the squad gets to showcase their diligent

work and commitment with the goal in mind to win. It sure feels good to know this team are county champions again!

"Besides that, this year has also been a lesson about prioritizing responsibilities and having effective time management. Unlike any other year before, these girls all balanced competitive cheerleading practices at various times of the mornings and evenings, then turning around to attend school, keep their grades up, and then attend another basketball cheer practice or game in the evening. I know there are some other competitive cheerleaders in the crowd tonight who can relate to this as well. All this said, I am so proud of these young ladies for their determination to get through the frustration, the tears, the setbacks, the injuries, and the disappointments in order to turn those setbacks into valuable life lessons and motivation to keep going and improve. It has been a successful season, and I couldn't be more proud of this team," Jones said of her girls.

Cheer athletes that received varsity letters are Lexi Bennett, Bella Cook, Emma Dorton, Ellie Dowdy, Jayci Holcomb, Lexi Holden, Meredith Nea, Emma Pennington, Avery Riley, Grace Sepulvado, Nia Stromas, and Cali White.

Coach Jones wanted to reflect about her seniors. Below are her comments about each one.

Jayci: She is the sweetest, kindest soul, as well as one of the captains this year who has helped the squad and me stay organized with a positive attitude at all times. She is always smiling, understanding, and trustworthy, and I can't commend her enough for that. I am especially proud of Jayci's improvement with tumbling over her time on the squad.

Lexi: She is the most encouraging cheerleader on this squad. She is a cheerleader for the cheerleaders. There is never a moment when a teammate needs some encouraging words that Lexi is not clapping for, individually helping them, or getting in their face and telling them to conquer whatever they're afraid of. I am so proud of her.

Bella: She has made so much progress over her time on the squad with her confidence, sidelines motions, tumbling, and especially jumps. She has a toe-touch that will make anyone do a double-take. Bella is a team player, always up to do what is needed to better her team. She has stepped up multiple times, especially while stunting, to help other groups or individual cheerleaders better themselves, and I admire her for that.

Grace: She is the most hype cheerleader on the squad. There is literally never a dull moment when Grace is around. She is always making the girls and me laugh, but she also knows when to be serious and to help others. She too is one of the captains this year, in which her leadership has made me beyond proud. I have faith that Grace's amazing talent

in cheerleading will continue past high school.

Ellie: She is the most level-headed one of the group. She is always making me smile, as well as making me proud with her work ethic and improvement in tumbling and sidelines over the years. I also admire Ellie's leadership qualities and her determination to do something relentlessly until it looks showcase worthy. She settles for nothing but the very best, a quality every cheerleader should have.

"Each of these seniors has brought laughter, leadership, and talent to this squad. They have a skill set and energy that will be missed. Thank you for the roles you have served in this sport and the memories your team and I will never forget. Good luck in your futures; you make me proud."

"To be considered for the Basketball Cheerleading Award, I have compiled individual cheerleaders' commitment, dedication, talent, effort, and overall passion for this sport throughout their time on the team. Cheerleading takes a lot of patience, understanding, teamwork, flexibility, and leadership. There are many qualities that cheerleaders must exhibit both on and off the court to be deemed an exceptional cheerleader. That said, the basketball cheerleading award recipient must exemplify these qualities in order to be chosen. This year, the basketball cheerleading award goes to someone who consistently shows enthusiasm and passion for cheerleading, who makes efficient and sound decisions for her team, and who has always respected me as a coach. She has consistently shown dedication to her team, as well as exemplified extraordinary talent in cheerleading over the past four years."

Congratulations to this year's cheerleading award recipient, Grace Sepulvado.

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