



Springs Valley Blackhawk Brigade

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Brigade earned their 'Lasting Impression' as National Finalist

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INDIANAPOLIS – It was history in the making for the Springs Valley Blackhawk Brigade this past weekend as they ended their 2009 campaign as National Finalist at the Bands of America (BOA) Grand Nationals on Saturday.

The Brigade first took place in the National Prelims on Thursday morning. They were the first of 90 bands in preliminary action over the course of two days. Following their show, they headed back home and waited for news from Indianapolis. “I was shaking all day waiting to hear if we advanced,” said Brigade sophomore Nia Seitz. “I knew something incredible was going to happen.”

Friday Night, the Brigade held a pep rally in the gymnasium awaiting word from Justin Wining, visual and percussion instructor who stayed in Indianapolis to relay the news. Over 500 attended the pep rally to hear the news.

When Director of Bands Luke Aylsworth received the call, he had many fooled by his facial expressions. However, when he told the group, the crowd went wild. “It was a ‘holy crap’ moment,” exclaimed senior Caleb Stout. “There aren’t many words to describe it. We did something no one else in school history has done.”

Following that news, Aylsworth followed the announcement with the performance time. Springs Valley was again first, taking the field at 7:30 am. Meaning it was going to be a sleepless night for the Brigade. “Some folks got a couple of minutes in,” Aylsworth said. “I stayed up all night to get everything done. We left at 2:15 am.”

Many students did not get sleep either. Landon Price, a sophomore trombone player, said, “I went to Tommy’s (Lynch) house. We could not sleep and just stayed up and had fun.” While Seitz did go home, she did not sleep either. “I posted what happened on facebook and then sat around.”

The Brigade made it to Indianapolis and performed their show for the 12th time this season in competition. Following the performance, the exhausted Brigade spent all day in the capitol city, waiting for results at 5:30 pm.

The Brigade finished in third place nationally in Class A, just behind Williamstown (KY) and back-to-back champion Bourbon County (KY). Overall the Brigade finished 32nd nationally out of 90 bands from 21 states.

“Bands of America was an awesome experience,” said Aylsworth. “It was an honor to share the field with the other ninety bands at the event. These are the best bands in the nation. It was an amazing feeling to see Springs Valley on the field during Semi Finals retreat. We were standing next to the biggest names in the marching band activity. It was amazing!”

It has been an incredible and history making season for the Brigade. Springs Valley completed an undefeated regular season, including Grand Champion at Evansville Central, topping bands in each class above Springs Valley. They also qualified for state finals for the 20th time, fourth most among class D bands. A third place finish at state was the 16th time the Brigade has placed in the top 5. To conclude the magical season was this run at the BOA Grand Nationals. A national semi-finalist and class A national finalist, placing third.

“This has been an outstanding season,” added Aylsworth. “The students have been very focused all year and their hard work and dedication have been rewarded. I am so proud of their accomplishments and the character they have displayed all year. It is great to know that these students have etched something new into the Brigade tradition and legacy. In a storied program like ours, it is always hard to do something we have never accomplished before. However, this group did.”

Senior Morgan Elmore, who began marching in 2004 when the Brigade earned their first regional gold since the 1997 season. She, among others in her class, will graduate having marched at state four times, national competition three times, and marched in the RCA Dome/Lucas Oil Stadium seven times.

“This season has been incredible,” said Elmore. “To see how far the band has come. It is hard to describe. The feeling of looking at 90 kids who all look up to you and recalling being in their shoes a few years ago.”

It takes a lot to organize such a large group of students in this activity and it doesn't go unnoticed. “It requires a great deal of organization, dedication, and sacrifice to field such a competitive group,” said Aylsworth. “Our administration, school board, boosters, students, fans, community, and parents do a great job supporting the program. This entire community should be proud of the accomplishments we have enjoyed. It takes a whole community to produce these types of results.”

Outside of the results, this activity also teaches these young people life lessons. Everyone wants to be successful, but it can be done in other ways. “Marching band has taught me discipline and how to take whatever life throws at you and make the best of it,” said Elmore.

“You have to learn to get through the hard times,” added Seitz. “You aren’t always going to like who you are working with, but you have to enjoy every moment with them because you never know when it’s not going to be there.”

The Brigade will celebrate the season on Thursday Night with the annual banquet at the French Lick Resort and Conference Center at 6:30 pm in the Winsor Ballroom. The Brigade will then host a Pancake Breakfast on Saturday morning from 7:30 – 11:00 am.

The storybook has now closed on another marching band season. This one, unlike others, will have many highlights in it. One that rang true for everyone can be best summed up by saying, "In our lives, there are those special people that teach, motivate, love, and inspire us. These individuals leave lasting impressions on our lives and our character. Their influence guides us on our own search for success."