



Springs Valley Blackhawk Brigade

2010 ISSMA Class "D" State Champions

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Springs Valley wins Epic State Championship

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INDIANAPOLIS – “It is our time!” These were the words of sophomore Chance Kellams spoken to his peers just prior to warm-ups at the ISSMA State Finals at Lucas Oil Stadium on Saturday. Kellams was right! It was the Springs Valley Blackhawk Brigade’s time. The students marched to their first state championship in 33 years.

The state championship for Springs Valley is the first since the Brigade’s first in 1977 under the direction of John Aylsworth, father of current director Luke Aylsworth. It is the first class “D” state championship as in 1977, ISSMA only had three classes and the Brigade earned the class “C” title.

Springs Valley is only the seventh band to win a Class D championship since the new class began in 1981. Paoli, Forest Park, and Clay City won 23 of the 28 titles with Woodlan and Sheridan each earning one and Lewis Cass earning three of the last four until this year.

"This was several years in the making," said State Champion Director Luke Aylsworth. "Every member, senior, band booster, and staff member from the last ten years played a vital role in this achievement. It was a long-term group effort to restore our tradition. Now, we can proudly say we added to it."

It has been 10-years since Aylsworth first walked into the band room with a list of 30 students in band. During that year, the Brigade had one of the lowest district scores in the state. Now, with nearly 100 students on the roster, the Brigade has the highest score at state finals and a championship trophy.

You could see the fire in the eyes of the students during warm-up. "You could see in everyone’s faces that we were ready," said senior Michelle Stinchcomb. Following a short wait in the endzone, the Brigade headed to the field to do something historic. "I knew it was the greatest show we could put on," said Kellams.

"On the podium, I was a little nervous when we started but excited to go out there and throw down," said junior drum major Nia Sietz. Once the show was over, every student

on the turf knew they had done something special. "It was a great feeling," said mellophone Nathan Apple. "I looked up and saw Mr. Aylsworth and Beavis (Justin Winger) jumping up and down."

"The students performed magnificently," said Aylsworth. "Honestly, they performed portions of the show better than I have ever seen it at a contest or at practice. They just decided that this group would be the one. It was the student enthusiasm, hard work, and dedication that made this possible."

Following the performance, the Brigade was ushered quickly back onto the floor of Lucas Oil Stadium for awards. The band stood on the field awaiting the awards. As bands were called, the anxiety grew for Springs Valley. Most of the staff gathered in the back of the stadium to await the announcements. Once Forest Park was announced as the state runner-up, the emotions let loose for anyone cheering for Springs Valley.

Stinchcomb held the flag for the Brigade and was front and center to see the crowd's initial reaction. "The only people I noticed was Mr. Aylsworth's mom (Patti) and sister (Lacy). They screamed and started balling. That's what made me cry."

As has been tradition for years, the Brigade is to remain at set until called to attention during awards. Even after learning they won state, the students remained calm, but the tears could be seen on everyone's face. "As soon as they called our name, I lost it," said saxophone Jacob McCormick. Apple added that, I don't get teary eyed much, but I was just then."

The competitive nature of marching band can sometimes get the best of people. On Saturday, the respect for each group and their hard work was shown as both the Pride of Paoli and Lewis Cass Marching Kings paused as they marched out of the stadium to recognize the newly crowned state champions. "It just shows the support we have for each other and that we don't let the rivalries get to us," said McCormick.

Once the students got to the tunnel and stopped marching, the emotions were released. The band was laughing, crying, hugging, and simply celebrating what they had just done. Bill Laughlin, director at Paoli, made it a point to come seek out the Brigade to congratulate them prior to leaving the stadium.

The celebration continued at Greenwood High School where the Brigade changed, ate dinner, and was greeted by family and friends. This was nothing compared to what was coming up once the band hit Orange County.

As the band entered Orleans, the fire and police departments were waiting to greet the Bulldog Regiment. They placed 10th in their fourth state finals appearance. They recognized the band by honking and sounding their sirens as the Brigade passed.

The Pride of Paoli again showed their sportsmanship as they were just ahead of the Brigade and they pulled off to the side of the road with their town emergency officials

and all waved and congratulated the Brigade as they drove through. Paoli also competed at State Finals and finished fifth in their 27th appearance. "They have backed us all year," added Kellams when talking about both Paoli and Orleans and their sportsmanship.

Once the state champions hit Prospect, it was time to celebrate. Six fire trucks from French Lick, West Baden, and Orange County Rural District along with the police departments and county sheriff's department guided the Brigade on a trip through town they will never forget.

Fans lined the construction-filled streets to celebrate with the Brigade. The busses were going so slow that fans even walked up to the busses and gave students handshakes and high fives.

As the three busses pulled into the school parking lot, there wasn't an empty spot to be found. Over 700 people were at the school to welcome the band home. The group was whisked to the back of the gym. Principal Troy Pritchett officially introduced the newly crowned champions to a loud audience. As the members of the band walked out, "We are the Champions" was being played over the sound system.

"It's unbelievable," said Kellams. "We couldn't have asked for anything more." Stinchcomb said that walking into the gym with "We are the Champions" playing was, "the coolest feeling in the world."

"I am so proud of our community, students, staff, parents, and school!" added Aylsworth. "They truly deserve to be called champions. It was an awesome feeling to ride back into town as the Class D State Champion."

One of the youngest members of the marching band is Elizabeth Orr. Orr, an eighth grader, was in pit last year and marched flute this year. "It feels amazing to be an eighth grader and have a chance to win a state championship. Thank you to everyone who came out and supported us."

The Brigade has concluded back-to-back undefeated contest seasons and their first state championship in 33 years. What is next for the Brigade? The same as it was for Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning when he won the Super Bowl. The Brigade is going to Disney World in March.

Memorabilia from the state championship weekend will go on sale soon. The Brigade is looking at getting t-shirts, patches, posters, and more. Go to [Blackhawk Brigade.com](http://BlackhawkBrigade.com) to learn more.