



Saint Viator Cheerleaders Make A Statement



The JV team celebrates winning first place.

Saint Viator cheerleaders earned more state hardware Saturday at the Illinois Cheerleading Coaches' Association championship competition, after their varsity placed third among large schools while the junior varsity took first among small teams.

This came one week after the varsity squad made it to the final round of the IHSA state championships held on Feb. 6 in Bloomington, where they ultimately placed 10th overall.

But the real reward came last week when they returned to school: they were allowed to break from the dress code and wear their cheerleading T-shirts to school rather than their school uniform.

Chris Kirpatrick, dean of students and head football coach, who had noted the cheerleaders on the sidelines of every one of his games, including their playoff berth, alerted the rest of the faculty to the team's sweet rewards.

"I want to congratulate the cheerleaders on all their accomplishments at state this weekend," Kirpatrick said.

The cheerleading coaches, Chrissie and Terra Palumbo, are sisters and Saint Viator alumnae, who both competed on the squad themselves.

"Given all that they went through, how hard they worked and how hard they pushed themselves, the team's accomplishments and successes this year are twice as rewarding," says Chrissie Palumbo, head coach.

Like many of Saint Viator's athletic teams, the cheerleading squad was assigned to a smaller school division this year by the IHSA, but the coaches and athletic officials petitioned for the girls to remain in the large varsity division, and they pledged to make good on their gamble.

They competed in the large class in both the IHSA and ICCA competitions, and came away from both with state rankings.

"The coaches personally wanted the girls to push themselves and learn a life lesson as well," adds Palumbo, "that with hard work, determination and faith in themselves, they could do anything."

St. Viator was one of only a handful of schools that competed in both the IHSA and ICCA championship competition. While Athletic Director Tim Carlson said they would reevaluate that decision next year, he thought the ICCA competition on Saturday offered an exciting culmination for their program --- for both the varsity and junior varsity.

"It's just good for the program, to be able to send both," Carlson says. "It gives them a further opportunity to continue competing."