

Should cheerleading be recognized as a high school sport?

Send in your answer at projosports.com



NORTH KINGSTOWN UPSETS COVENTRY: View the gallery at HSGameTime.com/rhodeisland

PC-Pitt coverage

Kevin McNamara's multimedia preview this afternoon, live scoreboard and blog reports tonight, at projosports.com/pc

Out like a lamb

At the crux of PC fans' discontent with Tim Welsh is his record in postseason games:

	W	L
Big East tournament	1	8
NCAA tournament	0	3
N.I.T.	2	5
TOTAL	3	16

For up-to-the-second stats and scores: projosports.com/pc

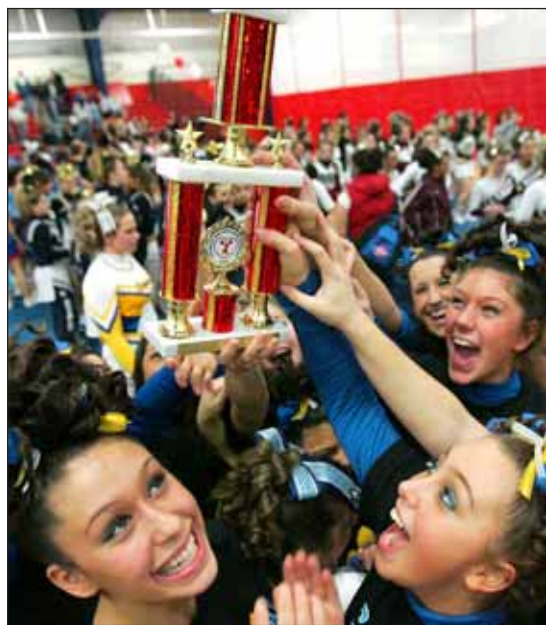
SECTION C



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THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / GLENN OSMUNDSON

The North Providence Cougars were on top of the world after finishing in first place at the Portsmouth High School Invitational.

Cheerleading has its place in interscholastic sports lineup

BY CAROLYN THORNTON
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

"We — are — the — Rams! Determined to be — the best of the best! Come on everybody, yell: L-S-A! Let's hear it! L-S-A! The truth — is clear! We won't be denied! . . . Ram pride! La Salle, that's us! The best you will find! The Rams are racing to the front of the line! Yeah!"

"Colors of a champion! You know who's going to take it! Portsmouth takes it! We'll always make it! The best in the state! A fact you've got to trust! We want that trophy for beloved — Patriots!"

On any other day, the La Salle and Portsmouth cheerleaders belting out those cheers would have been shouting similar words of support for their respective basketball teams, or perhaps their football teams.

Not this time. Competing at the second annual Portsmouth High School Invitational on Sunday afternoon and at other events like this throughout the winter, the cheerleaders were referring to themselves and their own quest for a state crown.

After going through extensive warmups and practicing their routine several times on the adjoining gymnasium floor, the teams wait for their turn to be called to the mat. Greeted by a packed field house full of equally rowdy fans — and a panel of judges — the cheerleaders launch into a spirited performance, chanting in unison as they create human pyramids and perform one series after another of choreographed backflips, front-hand springs and dance steps. They then wait anxiously to find out if they have scored high enough to bring home a team trophy.

While they enjoy cheering for their school's sports teams, the cheerleaders say that it is at invitational events such as this where they can really show what they're made of. Or as Portsmouth senior tri-captain Claudia Goodman says, "When it's competition, it's kind of like our time to shine."

For decades, cheerleaders have dutifully stood on the sidelines, engaging fans and supporting their hometown athletic teams.

Now they are getting their moment in the spotlight.

For the first time this season, the Rhode Island

SEE **CHEERLEADING, C6**

UNDER FIRE

PC at Pitt

- **TIME:** 7:30 p.m.
- **SITE:** Petersen Events Center, Pittsburgh.
- **TV:** Cox Sports (Cox Channel 3).
- **RADIO:** WEEI-FM (103.7).
- **TEAM RECORDS:** PC 13-10 overall, 4-7 in Big East; Pitt 18-5 overall, 6-4 in Big East.

How much blame does coach Tim Welsh deserve for the Friars' struggles?

Tell us what you think at projosports.com/pc



Welsh has support of A.D. Driscoll as Friar fans revolt

BY KEVIN MCNAMARA
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

PITTSBURGH — Bob Driscoll hears the discontent in the streets and in the stands at the Dunkin' Donuts Center and he says he understands. He's not happy with his men's basketball team either.

The Providence College athletic director said yesterday that he's disappointed in a veteran-laden team that's 13-10 overall and 4-7 in the Big East. The Friars have lost five of six games and are in danger of missing the conference's postseason tournament at Madison Square Garden for the second time in three years.

"My reaction is I'm disappointed we haven't been better," Driscoll said. "There are lots of reasons you can point to. We've had injuries and a few other issues

but, at the end of the day, we're judged on our record. It's not what I wanted it to be."

The main target for PC fans' angst is clearly head coach Tim Welsh. Now in

his 10th season, Welsh led the Friars to the NIT last season and began this year with hopes of returning to the NCAA's for the first time since 2004. A season-ending foot injury to leading returning scorer Sharaud Curry greatly hindered the team's attack but the rest of the Friars haven't met expectations either. Driscoll said he's supporting Welsh. But if the Friars don't stage a turnaround over the next month, it is clear the A.D. may have to cut ties with the coach.

"I'm trying to focus on trying to win every game between now and the end of this season. I'm 100 percent in their corner," is all Driscoll

SEE **WELSH, C3**

Tim Welsh's Providence College Friars have lost five of six games, but athletic director Bob Driscoll says he's "100 percent" in the team's corner as PC gets set to face No. 22 Pittsburgh on the road tonight.

THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / GLENN OSMUNDSON

PC's Welsh no match for Big East-caliber of play

Bob Driscoll has a problem. And it's more than whether his hair is perfectly coiffed or his designer suit is properly pressed.

JIM DONALDSON



Providence College's dapper director of athletics has got to find the Friars a new basketball coach, and it's substance that matters in this search, not style.

This is Tim Welsh's 10th year at PC, and with the Friars struggling in the Big East at 4-7, having lost

five of six heading into tonight's game at Pittsburgh, it's time for a change.

Welsh hasn't done a bad job at Providence. Really, he hasn't. It's just that the job he's done hasn't been good enough for a school competing in one of the best conferences in the country.

He has yet to win an NCAA Tournament game, going 0-2, including a disappointing loss as a fifth seed to 12th-seeded Pacific in 2004, when the Friars collapsed down the stretch. Although they won 21 games that season, they lost their last four, and were one-and-done in both the conference and

NCAA tournaments.

Worse, PC has won just one game in the Big East Tournament under Welsh, and is in grave danger of not even getting to the Garden for the second time in three years.

Upcoming for the Friars are home games against conference powers Georgetown and Louisville, followed by road games at West Virginia — which overcame a 12-point deficit to win by 12 in Providence two weeks ago — and Cincinnati. Then UConn comes to Providence, intent on avenging an upset loss to the Friars in Hartford. For those who'd point out that

LONG-TERM RESIDENTS

Tim Welsh is one of only four coaches in PC history to spend 10 or more years on the job:

Name	Years	W	L	Pct.
Joe Mullaney	18	319	164	.660
Al McClellan	11	147	65	.693
Dave Gavitt	10	209	84	.713
Tim Welsh	10	158	137	.536

the Friars have been without their starting point guard, Sharaud Curry, because of injury; that Welsh twice has won 11 conference games, when no other PC coach ever has won more

SEE **DONALDSON, C3**

you got something to say?



In projoSports and online at HSGameTime.com/rhodeisland