

Kearney color guard unit ranks among nation's best

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

IRONDEQUOIT — At this very moment, Bishop Kearney High School's color guard is only preoccupied with three colors.

Gold, silver and bronze.

The Bishop Kearney Performance Ensemble appears poised to make a big impact at the national color guard championships, scheduled for April 10-11 in Dayton, Ohio. Kearney finished a best-ever fourth place at the national competition two years ago before taking fifth last year.

This year's color guard is looking to take its achievements a notch higher.

"This is an extremely talented group," said Ann O'Connell, a Spanish teacher at Kearney who has served as the color guard's moderator for the past 10 years.

In recent competition, the 19-member, all-female unit took first place in the High School World Class Division at the Atlantic Coast Regional in Long Island on Feb. 15. Competing against the top 14 national high schools on Feb. 22, Kearney finished second at the Winter Guard Midwest Regional tournament in Chicago, Ill.

Now the guard is looking ahead to the year's biggest competition in Dayton. Kearney has already qualified for the national championships as one of

the top 40 color guards in the country. If the girls score among the top 15 units in the April 10 preliminaries, they will advance to the next day's finals.

Should BK finish among the top three, the school will be awarded either a gold (first place), silver (second place) or bronze (third place) medal.

"Hopefully we'll get a medal. If we do, it will be the first time since 1980 that a guard from New York state has won one," noted Kristina Jurzyska, a co-captain and one of only two Kearney seniors in the group.

The guard's presentation this year will feature Edgar Allen Poe's *The Raven*. Color guards, which combine a mix of precision dancing, acting and equipment manipulation, are judged in five categories: equipment (banners, sabers and rifles), upper-body movement, lower-body movement, ensemble analysis and visual analysis.

"The show we're doing has been deemed by the national circuit as one of the most creative shows. There are parts when we have to perform to words with no music, which can be very difficult since color guards almost always perform to some kind of music," O'Connell explained.

Susan Mackowiak, the color guard's other senior and co-captain, noted that performing a difficult show can ultimately pay big dividends.

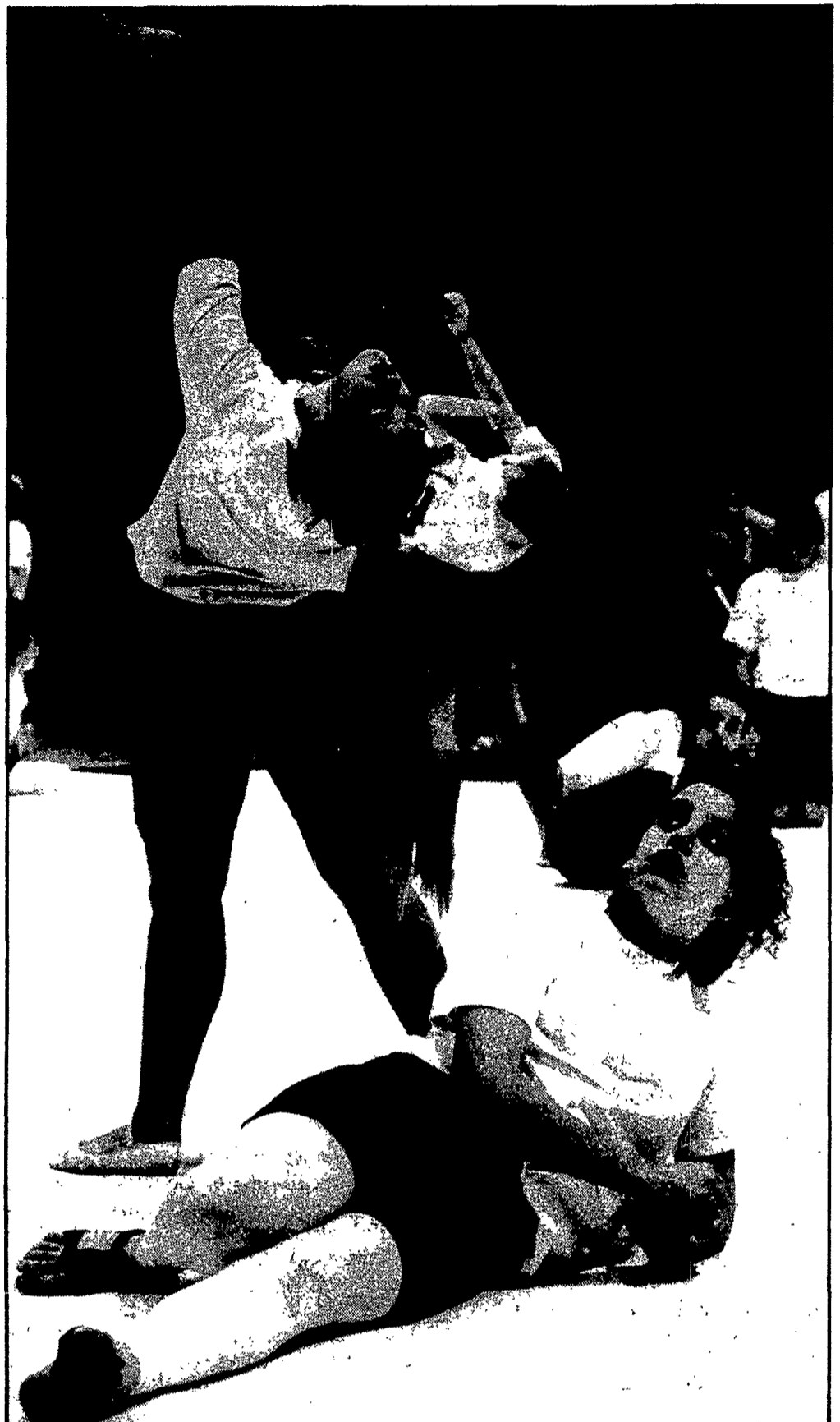
"There can be a group that's perfectly together with an easy show, and there can be a group that's not quite as together with a harder show. The judges usually favor the group with the harder show," said Mackowiak. "And you like to take on a harder show because hopefully, by nationals, you've mastered it."

The Kearney group stays together year-round. It performs as part of the Bishop Kearney Marching Band during the fall football season before competing from January through April as a color guard under the direction of Vincent Monacelli, a math teacher at Le Roy Central High School.

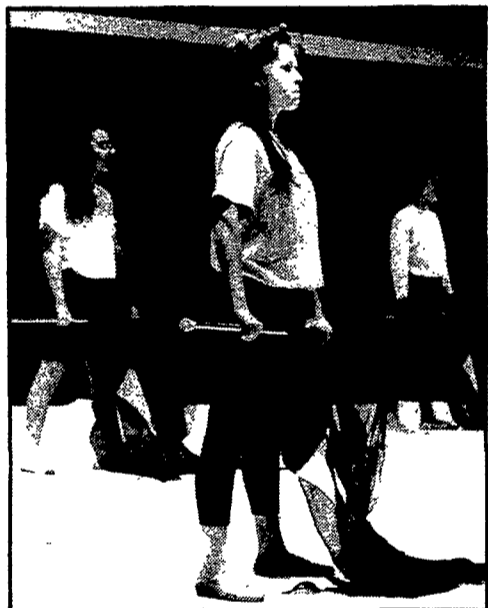
Kearney travels to five competitions around the country during the first four months of the year.

"This last month we've been together constantly," said Jurzyska.

After tryouts in late May, practices



Erik Kunkel/Photo intern
Rebecca Burkwit (left) and Amy Lombardo, members of the Bishop Kearney color guard, practice their routine Monday evening, March 9.



Jennifer Herrmann (center) stands at attention while the color guard rehearses part of its program.

for the following season are held every weekend throughout the late spring and summer.

Given the amount of time invested and the emphasis on teamwork, it's no surprise that the BK girls have developed a strong bond with each other.

"We're very close," said Jurzyska, who has been with the color guard for five years. "And even if you do have differences off the floor, you have to put that aside when you're performing because you all have to work together to be successful."

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YOUTH BRIEFS

Mission Month continues at Our Lady of Mercy High

BRIGHTON — Our Lady of Mercy High School, 1437 Blossom Road, has designated March as "Mission Month."

Mercy students are selling raffle tickets throughout the month. Proceeds will help 40 human-service agencies in the Rochester area.

Raffle winners will be announced on Friday, April 3, during the school's annual spaghetti supper.

Call 716/288-7120 for information.

Sale helps cancer society

ROCHESTER — The 22nd annual Daffodil Festival, sponsored by the Monroe County Unit of the American Cancer Society, will be held throughout Monroe County from March 23-29.

Bouquets of 10 daffodils will be available in area shopping centers, businesses, schools, churches and throughout downtown Rochester for a \$5 donation. Single daffodils will also be sold for 75 cents.

Volunteers are needed. Call 716/288-1950 for information.

AQ to host sale March 28

Aquinas Institute will present its fifth-annual Spring Arts and Crafts Sale on Saturday, March 28. The sale will take place at the school, 1127 Dewey Ave., from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Proceeds will benefit the school's music department.

For information, call Jean Berritella, 716/671-6927, or Barbara Ann Homick, 716/647-2990.