

Males give cheerleading squad makeover

BY LINDSEY PARSONS

Cheerleading is a girls' sport, right? At least that seems to have been the way it was around Rockcastle County High School for years. But, that's not true anymore. Thanks to four males, cheerleading at RCHS will no longer be thought of as a girls only sport.

Two senior and two junior boys have added their strength and skill to the other 20 members of the team. This actually isn't the first year there has been a male on the squad, only the first year there has been more than one. Senior John Hankins is returning for his fourth year as a Rocket cheerleader.

Hankins said he tried out because he saw guys cheering on television and thought it looked like fun. "Being the only male cheerleader for three years seems to have taken somewhat of a toll on him," however. He needed a little more testosterone on the team.

"In a way I enjoyed [being the only male] because I felt like all the attention was on me, but at times it got to be really annoying being around twenty girls with no guys. I finally have guys to talk to

instead of a bunch of girls," he remarked.

For senior Zach Pennix and juniors Kane Holbrook and Zach Powell, this will be their first year assuming a role as an RCHS cheerleader. Holbrook and Powell claim they never had true intentions of becoming a part of the team.

"It started as a joke and then we just kept doing it. Cathie Midkiff (fellow cheerleader) is to blame," Holbrook explained.

Coach Rhonda Rose is pleased to have more males on her squad. "Males getting involved in cheerleading is a great thing because the opportunity for scholarships is great, and their involvement shows maturity and respect for the sport," she said.

This year the team is divided into a competition squad and a game squad. Hankins is the only boy who will be cheering on both squads. The other three tried out only to compete.

Even with all the attention on the males, the female members of the squad couldn't be happier to have some boys stunting and



photoby Mindy Bullock

Cheerleaders Whitney Hansel, sophomore, and Zach Powell, junior, relax during a practice session early this week.

flipping with them.

"I think they're a great addition to our squad. It's made it better over all," senior Stormie Ambrose commented.

Captain Jennifer Carmack said, "I love it. It's great because we get to do more elite stunts and compete with more people on our level."

The boys seem to be enjoying it, too. Holbrook says he likes learning about the sport, something

he's never been exposed to, while Powell's favorite part is doing gymnastics and taking weightlifting. Although Holbrook thinks he needs work in some areas, neither have many complaints.

"I'm not a very good dancer, but as long as it's not too feminine, I'll do it," he admits.

What aspect does Powell not enjoy much? "Practice, because it's hard," he said.

Obviously the sport has

made an impression on these guys. "They have all spoken of an interest in cheering after high school if accepted somewhere, and they think more guys should try cheerleading. But, why?"

"Because they can take weightlifting," Powell commented.

Holbrook said, "Once you're into it there's a lot of places guys could be used. You might not notice it when watching at a pep rally, but there really is."



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