



The Mason competition cheerleaders compete in JAMfest Cheer Super Nationals in Indianapolis.

Photos contributed by Michael Asher

FIGHTING FOR FLAWLESS

Competition cheerleaders push for perfection in complex routines

Erin McElhenny | Staff Writer

Mason cheerleaders are used to being under the Friday night lights, but when it comes time for competition season, they're practically under a microscope. According to junior cheerleader Monica Touby, the components of a competition cheer routine are more complex than rallying the crowd.

"Sideline is basically us cheering for the team," Touby said. "We are doing chants and rarely do we go out to perform in front of the crowd unless we're doing a simple dance. Basically it's just to get the crowd involved, we're working with the black hole and just trying to get the team pumped up. Competition is more about our team; the overall goal is to work really hard at all of our competitions and qualify for state."

A typical competition involves arriving early to stretching and warming up before they begin their two and a half minute routine. Though it's only a short

time on the floor, the routine is scored on several specific components, according to Touby.

"With comp there is the intro (with all our tumbling skills, kind of to show off what we can do athletically," Touby said. "Then it moves into our cheer. We get scored on our crowd involvement, which means how much is the crowd yelling back with us, and if the cheer was easy to follow. Then the third part is the dance and it's supposed to be entertaining and fun and the music has to be good. When the judges score they give an overall score and then scores on jumps, tumbling, how involved the crowd got, and how sharp the motions were."

The team is awarded points for each mark that they hit, but the judges won't hesitate to deduct for sloppiness.

"You have to have the three components: the tumbling, your cheer, and the dance," Touby said. "You aren't allowed

to stunt. You have to compete in your division, so if you are 15 girls or less you're in the small division and if you have 16 or more you're in the large division. You can do dive rolls. You can have boys on your team. You can get deducted if you have nail polish on. You can't do a double full, you can only do one time around. You can get deductions if you fall in your tumbling, if your dance is sloppy, if the motions in your cheer are sloppy, if it's not easy to follow."

According to sophomore Sophia Boden, participating in both comp and sideline gives her the best of both worlds.

"For me, competing is completely different than a game on a sideline," Boden said. "Competing is so much more of a push and it challenges you so much more. I really felt like I wanted that extra cheer; that one more cheer. It's kind of like a whole different cheer from sideline, so it's almost like doing two differ-

ent sports just connected into one and I felt like I wanted that bigger push and to still compete as well as cheer on the sidelines. Competition is a lot of hard work, (coaches) push us a lot and there are a lot of practices. The whole dynamic with competition and sideline is a big load to carry but it's worth it."

Although competition is a different atmosphere from the sideline season, the girls on the team are required to participate in sideline to compete. All grades perform together and, according to Boden, it is one of the main reasons she enjoys the competition team so much.

"I actually love it, it's one of the reasons comp is so different," Boden said. "On sideline you're still separated a lot, but on comp you come together so much more. I know when I was a freshman coming into a huge school it was so scary and so weird and being on the comp team felt like a mini family."