

Dunbar, Tates Creek cheerleaders excel

For the fifth straight year, Paul Laurence Dunbar High School has earned a first-place trophy at the Universal Cheering Association's National High School Cheerleading Championship in Orlando, Fla.

"There's nothing like it until you see how intense it is for these kids – what they do in 2½ minutes," said Dunbar coach Donna G. Martin, who works alongside the team's choreographer, Saleem Habash, a former coach for the University of Kentucky cheerleading team.

"Dunbar wins because of a strong work ethic by kids, coaches and parents," Martin added.

So what does she tell her cheerleaders as they head into championship-level competition in the large varsity division?

"Things all the coaches tell the girls before taking the floor," she said. "Don't hold anything back by being afraid to lose. Give it your best shot, and PERFORM. Take one thing at a time in the routine.

"(And) whatever happens, we are proud of you, and be the first to congratulate whoever wins."

Teams from Tates Creek and Henry Clay high schools also competed in Florida. Tates Creek, coached by Tiffany Brown and Jomo Thompson, advanced to the finals of the small varsity division and placed eighth, according to Susan Cutshall, president of the Tates Creek Cheerleading Booster Club.

ONLINE:

Go to <http://www.varsity.com/vwired/08nhscs.asp?page=webcast#set> and click on "most popular," then click PLD Large Varsity Finals to see Dunbar cheerleaders perform.