

Via banquet a moving experience

Brennan brings laughs and Dailey's memory brings tears.

By Keith Groller

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There was plenty of talk Thursday night inside Freedom High School's gym during the soldout Via All-Sar Basketball Classic tip-off banquet.

Some of it made you laugh, especially keynote speaker Tom Brennan, a Phillipsburg native, ex-Vermont coach and ESPN analyst, reliving the time he urinated in his pants in a recruit's house.

Some of it inspired you to help others, especially when Via's mission was presented.

And some of it made you cry, especially when Notre Dame coach Pat Boyle talked about his former player, the late Jeff Dailey, as Dailey was inducted into the Lehigh Valley Basketball of Hall.

But the night was also about more than just talk.

It was about young people who have been in action, on both the basketball court and in the classroom.

That's why on a night of numerous, deserved accolades, some of the biggest were earned by Via's two \$1,000 scholarship winners -- Adrienne RaHS of Saucon Valley, and, who else, Trevor VanAckeren of Liberty.

"I'm very excited," said RaHS, a four-starter at Saucon Valley who is headed to Gettysburg College. "I worked hard in my four years of high school and got involved in a lot of things, so it's very nice to be recognized."

Because of her commitment to her softball team on Saturday, RaHS, a three-sport athlete, won't be able to play in the 33rd annual Via All-Star Classic, but hopes to attend.

"It's a great event and an honor to be involved," said RaHS, who is ranked sixth academically in a class of 198. "My softball team needs me or else I would play basketball. But I still hope to stop by and support the team."

RaHS called it an honor just to be selected along side Van-Ackeren, who has won every academic award possible during his senior year.

Earlier this week, the Wendy's High School Heisman winner was saluted as the Lehigh Valley Conference scholar-athlete in boys hoops.

"This was just a tremendous night," the Princeton-bound VanAckeren said. "This whole banquet tonight was amazing, to hear Tom Brennan talk, to see the Hall of Fame inductions and all of the honors people received.

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"We really do have a lot of great people involved in sports in the Lehigh Valley. It's an honor to be a student-athlete from this area. I just wish I could play, but I hurt my knee in the first week of track and I can't. I was still happy to be here tonight and I will be at the games."

Two players who will be able to participate on Saturday are East Stroudsburg South's Kelsey Gallagher and Dieruff's Travis Stoudt. They were also honored during the night as Via's players of the year.

"I'm just happy to win this award for myself, my teammates, my school," Stoudt said. "I'm very happy to play in this event. I'd like to end my high school career with a win, especially since my father [Tom] is coaching me one last time. It's going to be very special. This whole night was special. When you hear about Jeff Dailey, you can't help but be touched by it all."

Gallagher, who led the Cavaliers to the Mountain Valley Conference title, was not only representing her school and her team, but also the entire Mountain Valley Conference.

"Just to know an MVC girl can come out and do what any Lehigh Valley Conference girl can do is gratifying," she said. "It's kind of unheard of for an MVC player to win this kind of an award. [Pocono Mountain East's] Paige Carlin and I were just proud to be chosen to Via's team of the year, and then to get this honor, too, was really something special."

Among the other special players earning recognition were Via team of the year girls honorees Lindsey Gosse of Allen, Lindsey Gyulai of Nazareth and Kelly Sauerzopf of Saucon Valley.

The boys Via team of the year selections, in addition to Stoudt, were Jake Waylen of Northern Lehigh, Sergio Camacho of Liberty, Jon Mangual of Pocono Mountain West and Andy Stein of Freedom.

Joining the late Dailey as the newest members of the Lehigh Valley Hall of Fame were former girls stars Julie Amato of Notre Dame-Green Pond, and Tiffany (Bedics) Gallis of Bethlehem Catholic, and Glenn Noack, a member of Whitehall's 1982 state championship team.

Via's "Super Saturday" will feature four games starting at 10:30 a.m. and will also include a 3-point shooting contest.

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