

Guard brings their all to new winter season

Winter guard comes back stronger and determined for a chance to claim a spot at Winter Guard International finals

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A rifle flies up into the air and seamlessly glides back into the hands of senior Ashley Wilder. As she dances gracefully, she continues twirling her rifle smoothly across the floor.

Winter Guard International [WGI] calls guard a combination of the use of flags, sabers, mock rifles, and other equipment, as well as dance and other interpretive movement. Guards can be found in high schools all the way up to drum corps, which are independent marching band groups who compete nationally.

With the new winter guard season around the corner, Emerald Guard members are kicking it into high gear to achieve their goal.

Along with goals for the whole team, the upperclassmen have ideas for the future of the team.

"I hope to leave the underclassmen with inspiration and someone that they can look up to for when they get into my position in the future," said senior Emily Ford.

Some members have taken upon themselves to even be a life example.

"I would like to be a part of a life lesson for [the underclassmen]," said Wilder. "I want them to learn from me to not be afraid of challenges like I was."

With last year's success motivating them, the team is preparing and striving to excel this winter season.

"My hopes for this season are that we make it all the way through and can leave an impact on everyone that sees our show," said eighth grader Lizzie Coats.

With Candlelight [2017] being a show that put the Emerald Guard on the map ranking them 17th in the nation, the team is striving to leave their name in the top of the nation's charts at WGI World Finals.

"No two seasons are the same so you never really know what's coming or what other guards are going to be doing," said senior Camryn Schneidau.

As the competition heats up, the guard must physically and mentally challenge themselves and go farther and harder than they have ever gone before.

"Winter guard is challenging in its dance and performance aspect because you are so much closer to the audience than in marching band," said Schneidau. "Technique is so important during [the] winter season which also makes it very mentally challenging because you always have to be engaged in everything you do."

Every team is not only a team but also a family. Teammates come together and bond over a common interest and are there for each other.

"The bond between my teammates and myself is very strong," said Coats. "We are constantly around each other and they are more like family than just a friend to me."

The bond of a team who feels like family is one like no other.

"These types of relationships take a long time to form," said freshman Leigha Estar who has been in guard for six years. "But the activity we are a part of makes us so much closer, in such a short amount of time."

Of course, like other programs, each school runs their guard program in their own unique way.

"The size of FC's guard is massive compared to my old guard [at Benton Central]," said junior Hannah Hamelman.

Along with different guard structures, comes different work ethic.

"I love the ethic these girls put in," said Hamelman. "We hold each and every one of ourselves accountable."

Although teams vary from school to school, memories are made no matter what winter guard team you are on. Each person has their own favorite memory and unique story.

"Some of my best memories from winter guard are all the inside jokes and mostly ones about our coaches that make practice and guard way more enjoyable," said Coats.

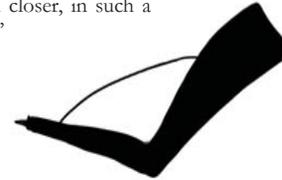
These memories can be so abundant that some members cannot imagine picking a favorite.

"There are so many memories, it's so hard to choose just one," said Schneidau. "If I had to pick, WGI would always be one."

With their flags twirling and sabers flying, the guard prepares for their powerful season comeback. The team's eyes filled with hope and hearts full of pride show their true passion for their love of guard.

"Not many people understand

what we do or appreciate it like we do," said Schneidau. "But that's okay as long as we love what we do and we know how important it is to us and our coaches."



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Ashley Wilder
senior

