

# HHS Blue Streaks Receive Back-to-Back Honors

By MEGAN WILLIAMS Daily News-Record

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**HARRISONBURG** — Harrisonburg High School's marching band, the Marching Blue Streak Band, has never competed in two competitions in the same day, and back to back weekends, as well.

It's a lot of work to put together a show, rehearse and travel with such a large group of students, said Daniel Upton, band director for HHS.

But students rose to the challenge. Last weekend, the Marching Blue Streaks competed in the Emerald Classic at Riverbend High School in Spotsylvania County, where they took five first-place awards and one second-place award. They were the grand champions with a score of 85, the highest of the 18 bands who participated.

Immediately following that competition the band traveled to Herndon to compete in the NOVA Regional competition. They received three first-place honors and one second, and were sixth overall out of 28 bands.

The weekend prior on Sept. 21, the Marching Blue Streak Band also competed in back-to-back showcases. The first was at Blast in the Draft at Stuarts Draft High School. They received the highest overall score of 28 bands, which included six first-place finishes.

Following that competition the band traveled to Salem for the Blue Ridge Regional, where it placed fourth overall with two first-place wins and four second-place wins.

Upton said he's been extremely impressed by the progress that students are making every practice and every performance. And despite the quick turnaround on competitions and on back-to-back weekends, students were ready to go each time.

"They were unloaded, instruments together and dressed in 15 minutes," Upton said of this past weekend's competitions, made even more complicated by a delay at the first showcase.

"The goal is to get better and they've done that in every capacity," he said.

Upton has been a band director at HHS for 8 years and said the students are continually improving his days and making his job worthwhile.

“The students continue to surprise me in every way,” he said. “If I’m having a bad day, they brighten it up quickly.”

This year’s marching band makeup is comprised of one-third freshman, which is more than usual. But that they’ve brought their A-game from day one and have nailed what’s been thrown at them.

Emily Nguyen, a junior and bass clarinet player, said performing as well as they have these past few weekends feels really good and is a validation of their hard work.

“You practice really hard and it’s a payoff when you see how far you’ve come from camp until now,” Nguyen said.

Fellow junior Carlos Diaz agreed, saying there is something about this year and the quick improvements the band as a whole has made that has stood out to him.

“We’re getting better a lot faster compared to last year,” he said.

The Marching Blue Streak Band will be performing at the varsity football game this Friday and will welcome over 80 eighth-graders from Thomas Harrison and Skyline middle schools to join them for pregame and in the stands.

On Oct. 12, HHS will host the 10th annual Shenandoah Valley Marching Invitational, with a 5 p.m. home show performance.

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