



front row from left: V. Ragland, S. Beatty, M. Gatewood second row from left: S. Allison, R. Johnson, K. Smith, T. Marshall, A. Williams  
third row from left: S. Leach, K. Moyo, M. Hinton, T. Colson, B. Hemphill, N. Sutton.

## Cheerleaders shatter old image

We have the score on the board.  
We have the game, hooray!  
So get ready the Tigers are coming your way.  
Tonight's the night we're goin' to fight.  
There's no cheatin', no booin'. No cracks about us losin'  
'Cause I know we're going to win. Hey, Hey!  
Tonight! Hey, hey! Tonight!



BY WALT SCHAEFER  
The Cincinnati Enquirer

**I**t's Friday night. The Withrow Tigers burst from the locker room to the cheers of the throng in the bleachers.

Along the sidelines are the girls shaking pompons in their black and orange skirts, wool sweaters emblazoned with TIGERS. As the team readies for the kickoff, the girls begin the chant. The crowd roars.

In reality, there are two teams representing Withrow High School at this Friday night ritual. Yet, most spectators only recognize the boys in shoulder pads and helmets.

What about those girls on the sidelines? Ever notice how good they are? How their movements are synchronized?

These young ladies practice their cheers and chants, their kicks and back flips as much as the football team practices blocking and pass patterns.

"Being on the cheerleading squad is a very prestigious position to have in school. Girls want it," said Linda Childs-Jeter, 40, a teacher in the school's business education department in her 19th year coaching the cheerleaders.

"I think it's a thrill," said Valerie Ragland, 17, a senior varsity cheerleader. "You have to carry yourself well because a lot of people know you. And, you have to get out there with people watching you — and, be crazy."

The stereotype of the cheerleader is changing as is the way they are selected.

At Withrow, academic standing plays a big role in being a cheerleader.

"The girls must maintain a C-plus average at all times or they are removed from the squad," Childs-Jeter said.

And, grades have not been a problem. Most of Withrow's

cheerleaders are college-bound.

Senior squad captain, Milbeth Hinton, 17, of North Avondale, plans to study psychiatry. Ragland said she will study neonatology and plans a medical career caring for premature infants. Co-captain Sonya Beatty, 17, plans a technical career in word processing.

"It's good to make sure your grades are up before you do this," said Beatty, a senior. "If your grades are poor you shouldn't have the opportunity to lead cheers. This is a privilege."

Squad captain Hinton noted that "colleges look at applications and being a cheerleader shows that you can do more than one thing and that you are involved in your school and school spirit."

### Living by the rules

Cheerleaders should set a good example, Childs-Jeter said. "I'm a disciplinarian." Cheerleaders who exceed 10 demerits a year are removed from Withrow's squad. Infractions resulting in demerits include:

- Wearing jewelry when cheering.
- Violating the dress code covering uniforms.
- Chewing gum.
- Drinking alcohol.
- Being caught in a "hall sweep" — away from the classroom after the bell.
- Acting out in class or teacher discipline for behavior.

"We are not running a popularity contest," Childs-Jeter said. "I look for good young ladies who want to be involved in school activities, promote school spirit and contribute to their community."

The latter involves projects such as registering voters, visiting hospitals to cheer up patients, helping junior high school cheerleaders and planting flowers.

"The year the Bengals went to the Super Bowl, they asked us to join them when they visited Children's Hospital (Medical Center) to cheer up patients. We were in the ward with the children with incurable problems and we cheered them up," Childs-Jeter said. "Those kids really liked us."

There are tough athletic prerequisites to becoming a Withrow cheerleader, too.

"Judges look for good technique, a lot of pep, a nice voice,"

Childs-Jeter said. "We like girls with personality. That's not the same as attractive. We are not looking for 'pretty' but girls who can perform."

Cheerleading means work and time.

Cheerleader tryouts for the football season are held in April with practice beginning in June. The girls must attend a three-week cheerleading camp at Wright State University.

"They learn cheers, formations, gymnastics and even how to get along with others," said Brenda Goshade, the assistant coach and a school secretary.

"We take what we learn from camp and put it together to suit our squad," Ragland said.

### Practice, practice, practice

After camp the squad resumes practice for two hours a week in August. Once school begins, they practice two days a week after classes through the year.

Why do these girls spend so much time a week practicing to lead cheers?

■ Ragland: "I enjoy sports and I guess I'm a tomboy. But I'm so little I can't really play (high school) sports. So, this way I get to be involved in the game and support my team."

■ Beatty: "All the girls in my family were cheerleaders. Two of my cousins were cheerleaders here at Withrow. They came home and practiced their cheers in front of me. And, I liked them."

■ Hinton: "I've never watched a whole football game in my life. Before I became a cheerleader, I used to go over on the sidelines and watch the cheerleaders more than the game. It's fun and I have a lot of spirit and energy."

And, it takes a lot of personality and courage to face a few thousand spectators each weekend exhorting fans no matter the score:

T,  
I say T-I,  
I say T-I-G  
I say T-I-G-E  
I say T-I-G-E-R  
I say T-I-G-E-R-S  
TIGERS!

(Photo courtesy of Ernest Coleman and the Cincinnati Enquirer  
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