

## **Mechanicsburg Places Fourth in WGI Mid-Atlantic Power Regional**

By Andrew Barbin

The week started well, and ended better, for defending Blue Guard Champions Mechanicsburg. The Wildcats performed their elegant “Paradise” program at their “Art in Motion” competition, in a gym packed with appreciative family, friends, and local competitors. Although (as host) they performed in only in exhibition, the performance earned a score of 93.4, to maintain a 5.6 point lead over second place Redland in the Blue Guard division rankings for the Keystone Indoor Drill Association (KIDA). Mechanicsburg previously won head to head competitions with Redland and Cumberland Valley at Littlestown and Central Bucks West by similar margins this year.

The boost was needed as Mechanicsburg was traveling to New Jersey this weekend for its delayed start to competition in the highly competitive Scholastic Open division of the Winter Guard International (WGI), after weather prevented a prior trip to the New England Regional. With all the parents needed to move their extensive props, there were few if any friendly faces in the crowd, who were for the most part partisans of major east coast competitors like South Brunswick, Gates Chili and West Orange. A good score at WGI Regional and Power Regional events determines seeding, and expectations for judges at the World Championships. Mechanicsburg was 8<sup>th</sup> in the Scholastic A Division in 2006, and 26<sup>th</sup> after being promoted to the Scholastic Open Division in 2007.

Competition at the Mid-Atlantic Power Regional was stiff, with twice as many competitors in the SO Division as last year. All but one of the units was an SO Semi Finalist qualifier at the 2007 World Championships, and two units were SO Finalists. Most of the competitors had also already competed in at least two WGI Regional events this season. Undaunted, Mechanicsburg rose to the occasion and scored an 81.10 in Preliminaries, and an 82.5 in Finals to take Fourth Place, behind South Brunswick, West Orange and West Johnston.

Mechanicsburg had the satisfaction of finally placing ahead of Gates Chili, in both the Preliminaries and Finals. Gates Chili had previously outscored Mechanicsburg in six consecutive WGI Regional and five WGI World Championship performance rounds in SA and SO division competition in the past two years; including Gates Chili’s SA Division WGI Championship winning performance in 2006. Mechanicsburg also placed ahead of Scotland, which had placed ahead of them in the 2006 and 2007 World Championships, and King Philip Regional which also placed ahead of them at the 2007 World Championships. It was a big step up the WGI ladder for the Wildcats.

The scores put Mechanicsburg in Fifteenth place in the national WGI SO Division rankings. (<http://www.guardbuzz.com/>). At World Championships, the top fifteen SO units in Semi-Finals perform in the Finals at the Dayton Arena, before a sold out crowd filled with enthusiastic peers, in a true mountaintop experience for the Sport of the Arts. Last year they were spectators happy to have made the semi finals; after this weekend, the Wildcats will definitely be “in the hunt” for finals at this year’s WGI World Championships.