*Makena Wallace is a Center Grove High School senior cheerleader.* ***(Photo courtesy of Makena Wallace)***

**Athlete of the Month: Makena Wallace**

**By Mark Ambrogi**

When Makena Wallace looks back at her Center Grove High School cheerleading career, one thing stands out: Cheering the Trojans on to back-to-back Class 6A state football championship football in 2020 and 2021 at Lucas Oil Stadium.

“Football is my favorite to cheer, for sure,” Wallace said. “I love everything about it. Honestly everything about the football and basketball program have been super special.”

A senior, Wallace started cheering when she was 4 years old.

“My main focus was cheer and dance,” she said. “They were the only two sports that I participated in. I was always putting in hours at the gym and perfecting my skills. It paid off by getting to the World Championships five times and placing each time.”

When Wallace was old enough, she started competing on all-star competitive teams.

“I loved the whole experience and thanks to my coach Jonathon Espinosa I went very far in the sport,” Wallace said. “I fell in love with cheer at a competitive level and still miss it, I will always be proud of my accomplishments and friendships made through competitive cheer.”

She began cheerleading in school during her middle school years.

“So, this journey has been with all my friends and classmates,” Wallace said. “I will graduate this year with one of my best friends from cheerleading still by my side, and some of the best guy friends I could ask for that I have been cheering on from the sidelines for years. Center Grove has so many great memories for me, and all the hard work from the teachers, everyone in the athletic office and the amazing coaches have made that all possible. It really means a lot to look at these coaches who help us and see just how proud of us they really are.”

Wallace said several of the fellow cheerleaders are some of her closest friends.

Wallace has been on a team that earned a bid to the World Championships five times Her dance specialty is hip hop.

“Teams from all over the world compete in their division,” she said. “I cheered and danced for Tiffany’s Cheer & Dance Studio in Greenwood. I made my first senior dance team at age 10. That team was my favorite. The first four, from 2016 to 2019, was in person and then the fifth one in 2020 the teams competed virtually due to Covid-19.

The team placed second in the virtual competition. Previously, she was on a team that placed 15th.

She participated in competitive cheerleading for 12 years. She said her strength was tumbling.

“I will miss cheer, but I haven’t ruled out possibly cheering in college,” Wallace said. “Getting to coach would be so much fun. I would love to coach cheer and or dance one day for sure.”

Wallace will attend University in Florida to pursue a degree in marine biology and veterinary science. The animal lover has a bulldog, a rabbit and turtles.

**THE WALLACE FILE**

**NAME:** **Makena Wallace**

**HEIGHT:** **5 feet 1 inch tall**

**AGE: 17**

**CLASS:** **Senior**

**SPORT:** **Cheerleading**

**HOBBIES:** **Dancing, traveling, skiing and being with friends**

**FAVORITE MOVIE:** **“The Longest Ride”**

**FAVORITE SUBJECT:** **Science and psychology**

**FAVORITE GENRE OF MUSIC:** **Country**

**FAVORITE VACATION SPOT:** **Daytona Beach, Fla.**