

# After initial setback, Baner fulfills goal by graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy

Debra Baner calls her story goofy. It's one she doesn't share with many people. But it's one people should hear. It's a testament to persistence when Plan A falls through.

Two weeks before she was scheduled to leave for basic training following graduation from Potomac High School in 2011, the all-state distance runner received a letter from the Air Force Academy. The school had rescinded her appointment.

Upset. Confused. Anxious. Baner was in an emotional tailspin. Air Force was her first and only choice. Her father graduated from the school in 1987. Baner planned on being the next family member to do so.

She did everything she was supposed to do, including dutifully informing the Air Force of a stress fracture she incurred after countless years of running. The instructions were clear for an incoming freshman accepted to the Air Force Academy. Any change in the freshman's medical status required the candidate to update the school.

Adhering to protocol, she reported her condition and thought nothing more of it. Then the letter came.

"I was young and naïve," Baner said. And honest.

She took a deep breath and considered her options.

Bill Stearns, Potomac's activities director and former track coach, was among those who told her to move forward. There was another way. She needed time to figure it out and check her motives.

It was good advice. Baner took time off to gather her thoughts and ask herself an important question: Was her desire to run in college or serve her country? She hoped to do both at Air Force. But what if one desire trumped the other?

She realized one did.

"I wanted to serve my country," Baner said.

Her decision led her down an unexpected path, one that includes still graduating from a service academy.

"I never wanted to give up," said Baner,

who graduated May 24 from the United States Naval Academy with a degree in Naval Architecture. "If I have the opportunity, why not give it a shot?"

It was a break from the original plan, but she has no regrets.

After spending a year at Northern Virginia Community College following her graduation from Potomac, Baner kept searching for ways to join the military. She applied a second time to the Air Force Academy and was rejected. She then attempted to join the Marine Corps. But they refused to take her immediately after she broke her collarbone playing hockey. Finally Baner approached the Navy. They accepted her on the spot.

She began basic training at Great Lakes near Chicago and then was assigned to Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.

Baner was all set to fulfill her six-year tour. But then she learned one day of a program offered by the Naval Academy that allows enlisted and reserve personnel to apply for appointment. There are up to 170 spots available to applicants who cannot be older than 23 by July 1 of the year of admission.

Baner, who enlisted at age 20, had to act fast to meet the deadline.

She met the requirements. She was in good shape and in good academic standing coming out of high school. She also demonstrated leadership qualities, was single and not pregnant. And a female Naval Academy graduate was willing to her put her application together.

With everything in place, Baner set aside any fears and tried once again to enroll in a service academy.

"If I got in, sweet," Baner said. "If not, I loved my job in Hawaii. I was not stressing about it."

One day, she received an email from a



Potomac High School graduate Debra Baner (middle) graduated Friday from the U.S. Naval Academy. SUBMITTED

congressman who appointed her. The Naval Academy accepted her. After 2.5 years in the Navy, she was on her way, enrolling in the academy in July 2015.

Two years older than the average plebe, Baner took some time to adjust to life at the academy. But she kept her focus on reaching larger objectives. She also stayed involved in athletics, competing for three years with the women's club hockey team before leaving to run again. Last fall, she participated in her first event since high school, running in a marathon in Richmond. She plans to run in more as time allows.

But first she heads to Pearl Harbor upon graduation, where she will be assigned to the USS Halsey as a surface warfare officer. The opportunity to return to a familiar place in a new role excites her.

"I get to lead these guys who I was once in their shoes," Baner said.

The 26-year-old Baner isn't sure yet whether she will remain in the Navy once her required five-year commitment for attending the academy is up. But she is sure of one thing now — she will be a service academy graduate.

"It's come full circle," Baner said. "I've fulfilled my goal."

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tional Football League.

Edwards said her love for football came from her father, Warren Broughton, an assistant fire chief in Prince William. Her favorite team is the Atlanta Falcons.

"I don't really know why I love the NFL, but I do," Edwards, who said she did not attend many high school football games because of a challenging schedule due to travel softball. "I don't care which team I work for, but I want to work in football because there are more opportunities than in other sports because more people get hurt."

## PREP STANDINGS (through May 21)

BASEBALL		
Cardinal	District	Overall
xyPotomac	11-1	19-3
Hylton	8-4	11-10
Forest Park	8-4	12-10
Woodbridge	7-5	8-10
Colgan	6-6	11-11
Gar-Field	2-10	4-17
Freedom	0-12	0-17
Cardinal	District	Overall
xPatriot	7-1	16-4
Osborn Park	6-2	13-7
yBattlefield	5-3	16-4
Osborn	2-6	8-12
Stonewall	0-8	5-17
Class 3 Northwestern	District	Overall
Brentsville	8-2	17-3
Manassas Park	0-10	4-15
SOFTBALL		
Cardinal	District	Overall
xyColgan	11-1	18-5
Hylton	9-3	16-6
Forest Park	8-4	11-9
Woodbridge	8-4	11-10
Gar-Field	4-8	6-11
Potomac	2-10	2-17
Freedom	0-12	0-13
Cardinal	District	Overall
xyOsborn Park	7-1	19-2
Battlefield	6-2	12-10
Patriot	5-3	8-11
Osborn	2-6	9-11
Stonewall	0-8	3-12
Class 3 Northwestern	District	Overall
Brentsville	3-7	4-16
Manassas Park	1-9	5-12
BOYS SOCCER		
Cardinal	District	Overall
xHylton	11-1-0	15-2-0
Gar-Field	8-2-2	13-4-2
Colgan	8-3-1	13-5-1
yFreedom	4-6-2	7-7-3
Woodbridge	2-7-3	2-11-3
Potomac	2-8-2	2-12-3
Forest Park	2-10-0	3-14-0
Cardinal	District	Overall
xyBattlefield	6-1-1	11-5-0
Osborn	4-2-2	10-6-3
Stonewall	5-3-0	9-6-0
Patriot	1-4-3	3-11-3
Osborn Park	0-6-2	3-10-3
Class 3 Northwestern	District	Overall
Brentsville	4-6-0	4-12-0
Manassas Park	8-0-2	11-3-2
GIRLS SOCCER		
Cardinal	District	Overall
xyWoodbridge	12-0-0	15-2-0
Colgan	10-2-0	15-4-1
Forest Park	6-6-0	8-11-0
Gar-Field	6-6-0	8-8-1
Hylton	6-6-0	7-11-1
Freedom	2-10-0	2-13-0
Potomac	0-12-0	0-16-0
Cardinal	District	Overall
xPatriot	7-0-1	12-3-2
yBattlefield	6-1-1	16-2-1
Osborn Park	3-4-1	4-12-1
Osborn	2-6-0	8-10-1
Stonewall	0-7-1	1-13-1
Class 3 Northwestern	District	Overall
Brentsville	9-1-0	12-2-2
Manassas Park	0-10-0	0-16-0

X=regular season champion, Y=district tournament champion

## SOFTBALL » FROM PAGE 22

The desire to play at a high level has pretty much always been there for Edwards, ever since she began playing organized softball as a 10-year-old.

"I always envisioned playing college softball, at either an SEC [Southeastern Conference] or Big Ten school," Edwards said.

The fact that Edwards has quite a few family members that live in the South, as well as the desire to play in the SEC probably influenced her decision to sign with Mississippi State.

"I visited about five SEC schools, but when I visited Mississippi State, I liked the energy the team showed," Edwards said. "It made me feel like I was at home."

When asked if Mississippi State made any promises to her about future playing time, she said she was told, "Whoever is best on the field will play."

The opportunity to play high level softball and a solid academic program at MSU appealed to Edwards. Interestingly, Edwards said she plans to major in kinesiology, with the intention of ultimately becoming a physical therapist in the Na-

# Her one shining moment comes at perfect time

The text popped into my phone less than a minute after Virginia narrowly defeated Auburn Saturday night in the NCAA Division I tournament men's basketball semifinals.

There was hope after all.

After some concern over whether she even knew the Cavaliers were in the tournament, let alone on their way to the championship game, the all caps message from my niece Ashley allowed me to breathe a sigh of relief. No need to tease her or remind her the game was on. She knew. And to prove her point, she beat me by sending the first text without provocation.

The person who was blissfully unaware last year when Virginia became the first No. 1 seed to lose to a No. 16 seed and could not name one player on this year's roster was hooked.

"WE'RE GOING TO THE FINAL BABY!" she proudly proclaimed.

Monday night's overtime victory over Texas Tech only piqued her interest more. And I'm grateful she didn't miss it since she initially thought the game was being played Tuesday.

As both teams exchanged baskets in a back-and-forth battle, Ashley grew nervous and her stress level rose.

"I hate UVA for doing this again," Ashley texted at 11:35 p.m. Monday just before the five-minute extra session began. "Why do they have to keep going to overtime?"

Ashley had a full load of classes the next day, but she had no intention of going to bed now. Following the action on her phone inside her apartment, she planned on staying up anyway since the game started after 9 p.m. At this point, did a few additional minutes matter?

Ashley is the first to admit she's not a sports fanatic at any level. She has a



DAVID FAWCETT



The University of Virginia won its first national title in men's basketball Monday.

UVA



Ashley Rowzie shows her school spirit the day after Monday's national championship game. SUBMITTED

passing interest at best. Really, it's nothing new, but it still stuns me and other members of her sports crazy family that she's never attended a single athletic event at UVA.

Granted, she had plenty of other things to keep her preoccupied, especially this semester. Exams are in early May followed by graduation a few weeks later and a wedding in August.

But in her final school year living in a close-knit community as an undergraduate at one of the nation's top academic universities, she caught the basketball

bug before beginning the next chapter of her life.

The pull of Virginia's run to the championship grew too strong. As school spirit overtook her, she suddenly grasped the significance of being a UVA student at the right place at the right time when the men's basketball team won its first-ever national title, thus completing the most amazing season-to-season turnaround in tournament history. This was something to celebrate whether you were a longtime fan or a new arrival.

She transferred to UVA as a junior after spending her first two years at Lord Fairfax Community College to save money and figure out her next move. To continue to save money, she remained at home her junior year and drove 90 minutes each way to Charlottesville for classes. But by her senior year, she was ready to become part of campus life.

Perfect timing. A national championship. A member of the 2019 graduation class that marks the 200th anniversary of UVA's charter. A nice way to finish your senior year.

"No one can say this," she exclaimed 10 minutes before midnight Monday the championship now secured. "History on my bicentennial baby!"

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## PREP BASEBALL, SOCCER, SOFTBALL SCHEDULES APRIL 12-18

### FRIDAY, APRIL 12

#### » SOFTBALL

- » Skyline at Brentsville, 6 p.m.
- » Woodbridge at Colgan, 6 p.m.

#### » BASEBALL

- » Hylton at Forest Park, 6 p.m.
- » Freedom at Park View, 6 p.m.

#### » BOYS SOCCER

- » Woodbridge at Colgan, 7 p.m.
- » Skyline at Brentsville, 7 p.m.
- » Gar-Field at Potomac, 7 p.m.

#### » GIRLS SOCCER

- » Woodbridge at Colgan, 7 p.m.
- » Patriot at Battlefield, 7 p.m.
- » Brentsville at Skyline, 7 p.m.
- » Potomac at Gar-Field, 7 p.m.

### SATURDAY, APRIL 13

#### » SOFTBALL

- » Gar-Field vs. Robinson at Hayfield, 1 p.m.
- » Gar-Field vs. Oakton at Hayfield, 3 p.m.
- » WT Woodson at Battlefield, 10 a.m.
- » Battlefield at Westfield, 2 p.m.

#### » BASEBALL

- » Stonewall at Westfield, noon
- » Stonewall vs. Archbishop Spaulding at

For coverage, go to [INSIDENOVA.COM](http://INSIDENOVA.COM)

Dominion HS, 6 p.m.

» Eddie Hope "Let's Play Two" Spring Tournament

» **At Osbourn Park HS**

» Colgan vs. TC Williams, noon

» McLean vs. Osbourn Park, 2:30 p.m.

» **At Woodbridge HS**

» Fauquier vs. Rock Ridge, noon

» Woodbridge vs. Mountain View, 2:30 p.m.

» **At Hylton HS**

» Marshall vs. Brentsville, noon

» Colonial Forge vs. Hylton, 2:30 p.m.

» **At Potomac HS**

» Stafford vs. Kettle Run, noon

» Potomac vs. Edison, 2:30 p.m.

### MONDAY, APRIL 15

#### » SOFTBALL

» Gar-Field vs. Marshall at Hayfield, 1 p.m.

» Gar-Field vs. Mt. Vernon at Hayfield, 3 p.m.

» Battlefield at Lake Braddock, 10 a.m.

» Battlefield vs. Fairfax at Lake Braddock, noon

#### » BASEBALL

» Eddie Hope "Let's Play Two" Spring Tournament

» **At Osbourn Park HS**

» McLean vs. Colgan/TC Williams, noon

» Osbourn Park vs. Colgan/TC Williams, 2:30 p.m.

» **At Woodbridge HS**

» Mountain View vs. Fauquier/Rock Ridge, noon

» Woodbridge vs. Fauquier/Rock Ridge, 2:30 p.m.

» **At Hylton HS**

» Colonial Forge vs. Marshall/Brentsville, noon

» Hylton vs. Marshall/Brentsville, 2:30 p.m.

» **At Potomac HS**

» Edison vs. Stafford/Kettle Run, noon

» Potomac vs. Stafford/Kettle Run, 2:30 p.m.

» Osbourn, Gar-Field, Forest Park, Battlefield at Mingo Bay Classic, Myrtle Beach, S.C.

» H.I.T. TOURNAMENT in Charleston, S.C.

» Patriot vs. Greenville (S.C.), 5 p.m.

### TUESDAY, APRIL 16

#### » BASEBALL

» Patriot at H.I.T. Tournament in Charleston, S.C.

» Eddie Hope "Let's Play Two" Spring Tournament

» Osbourn, Gar-Field, Forest Park, Battlefield at Mingo Bay Classic, Myrtle Beach, S.C.

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17

#### » BASEBALL

» Eddie Hope "Let's Play Two" Spring Tournament

» Osbourn, Gar-Field, Forest Park, Battlefield at Mingo Bay Classic, Myrtle Beach, S.C.

» Patriot at H.I.T. Tournament in Charleston, S.C.

### THURSDAY, APRIL 18

#### » BASEBALL

» Osbourn, Gar-Field, Forest Park, Battlefield at Mingo Bay Classic, Myrtle Beach, S.C.

» Patriot at Charleston S.C. Spring Break Tournament

PREP STANDINGS (through April 9)		
<b>BASEBALL</b>		
Cardinal	District	Overall
Potomac	6-0	8-1
Hylton	5-1	6-3
Colgan	3-3	5-4
Forest Park	2-3	3-5
Woodbridge	2-3	2-4
Gar-Field	1-5	2-7
Freedom	0-4	0-7
Cedar Run	District	Overall
Battlefield	2-0	8-0
Patriot	1-0	7-0
Osbourn Park	2-1	6-3
Osbourn	1-1	4-3
Stonewall	0-4	3-8
Class 3 Northwestern	District	Overall
Brentsville	2-0	6-0
Manassas Park	0-0	1-2
<b>SOFTBALL</b>		
Cardinal	District	Overall
Hylton	5-1	10-1
Colgan	5-1	8-3
Woodbridge	4-1	6-6
Gar-Field	2-4	4-5
Forest Park	2-3	4-7
Potomac	1-4	1-9
Freedom	0-5	0-5
Cedar Run	District	Overall
Osbourn Park	3-0	11-0
Patriot	1-0	4-6
Battlefield	1-1	3-5
Osbourn	1-1	7-3
Stonewall	0-4	3-7
Class 3 Northwestern	District	Overall
Brentsville	0-2	1-8
Manassas Park	0-0	2-2
<b>BOYS SOCCER</b>		
Cardinal	District	Overall
Hylton	5-0-0	9-0-0
Gar-Field	5-0-0	8-1-0
Colgan	3-2-1	7-2-1
Freedom	2-3-1	2-3-2
Woodbridge	1-3-2	1-5-2
Potomac	1-5-0	1-7-1
Forest Park	1-5-0	2-8-0
Cedar Run	District	Overall
Osbourn	2-0-1	5-3-2
Battlefield	2-0-1	5-3-0
Stonewall	2-2-0	5-3-0
Patriot	0-1-2	2-7-2
Osbourn Park	0-3-0	2-5-1
Class 3 Northwestern	District	Overall
Brentsville	1-0-0	1-3-0
Manassas Park	0-0-0	1-3-0
<b>GIRLS SOCCER</b>		
Cardinal	District	Overall
Woodbridge	5-0-0	6-2-0
Colgan	5-1-0	6-2-1
Forest Park	3-2-0	4-5-0
Gar-Field	2-2-0	4-3-1
Hylton	2-3-0	2-6-1
Freedom	1-4-0	1-6-0
Potomac	0-6-0	0-8-0
Cedar Run	District	Overall
Battlefield	2-0-0	8-1-0
Osbourn Park	2-1-0	3-5-0
Patriot	1-0-0	5-2-1
Osbourn	1-2-0	6-3-1
Stonewall	0-3-0	1-8-0
Class 3 Northwestern	District	Overall
Brentsville	2-0-0	4-0-1
Manassas Park	0-0-0	0-3-0

# Matthews sees college interest grow from start of season

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Tavon Matthews began the season with one offer. Now the Woodbridge High School senior offensive lineman is up to 11.

Matthews has zeroed his focus in on four schools: St. Francis, East Tennessee State University, Duquesne and Rhode Island.

Matthews visited St. Francis before Christmas break and visited ETSU this past weekend. He plans to visit Duquesne this weekend and Rhode Island the following weekend.

"They showed me the most attention," Matthews said in reference to why he scheduled visits with those schools. "They told me I could be a big part of their program. I wanted to show them my attention."

Matthews likes ETSU and Duquesne as well because of their sports management programs.

Matthews also has offers from Navy, Sacred Heart and Howard, among others. Howard was the first school to offer him. Sacred Heart is the only school to offer him as a defensive lineman.

Navy intrigues Matthews, but he is weighing that against the military commitment following graduation from

the academy.

Matthews played one season at Woodbridge after transferring from Freedom. He was a three-year starter at Freedom. This season, he was a first-team all-Cardinal District selection on the offensive line.

## HARRIS HAS OPTIONS

Woodbridge High School senior cornerback Taylor Harris is planning to visit Appalachian State this month. He and the school are looking to schedule a time.

Harris said he has also been talking with UMass, Buffalo and Maryland.

Harris was committed to East Carolina, but re-opened his recruiting after the school pulled his scholarship offer when he decided to hold off signing during the Dec. 19-21 early signing period and sign instead Feb. 6, the first day of the National Signing Period.

Harris committed to the Pirates April 19 and made an official visit to the school the weekend of Dec. 8.

ECU changed head coaches late last year, announcing the hiring of Mike Houston from James Madison University Dec. 3 to replace the fired Scottie Montgomery.

## VIRGINIA OFFERS WILLIAMS

Tyleik Williams received his first offer Jan. 11 when the University of Virginia



Woodbridge lineman Tavon Matthews (far right) has received 11 college offers.

BILL KAMENJAR | FOR INSIDENOVA

extended one to the Stonewall Jackson sophomore linebacker.

Williams was the Cedar Run District Defensive Player of the Year. He joins fellow linebacker Shawn Murphy with offers from the Cavaliers. Murphy, a freshman, also has an offer from Virginia Tech.

Virginia signed Stonewall senior Chayce Chalmers in December.

## BROWN NARROWS LIST TO THREE

Freedom senior running back Tyquan

Brown is planning on visiting three schools over the next three weeks: Central Connecticut, Buffalo and James Madison.

Brown finished with 6,768 rushing yards, making him Prince William County's top career rusher.

The four-year starter topped the old mark of 6,607 yards set by Woodbridge graduate De'Antwan Williams (2005-08). Brown rushed for 2,584 yards this season.

# Brentsville girls basketball team rallies around Emily Seigel in her battle with cancer

Emily Seigel sat down to watch the Brentsville High School girls basketball team play at home Jan. 4 with no intention of drawing attention to herself.

But as the 2016 Brentsville graduate talked with another woman, it was hard to miss Seigel's crutch and the brace on her right leg.

When asked what happened, Seigel told the woman she had a tumor removed. Although Seigel refrained from providing more specifics, she had revealed enough for the woman to make an immediate connection.

"Oh my God, you are Emily!" the woman exclaimed before turning to another woman behind her and sharing the news.

No further explanation was needed. No last name was required. "You are Emily" summed it up.

If you are a member of the Brentsville community, especially one involving girls basketball, chances are you have heard of 21-year-old Emily Seigel and her battle with cancer.

On April 29, Seigel was diagnosed with

Stage 2b Osteosarcoma, a rare, but aggressive type of cancer that required a full knee replacement surgery in August and a lengthy recovery time, chemotherapy and physical therapy. The news upended her world.

Seigel was a sophomore at Virginia Commonwealth University at the time. After feeling severe pain in her leg, she went to the emergency room during the middle of finals week. A number of tests and a biopsy later revealed a tumor that was eight centimeters in length in her right knee.

Seigel still finished the spring semester with a 4.0 grade point average, but instead of returning to VCU in the fall, she came home to Bristow.

As word spread of her condition, the girls basketball team, among others, looked for ways to bolster her spirits. The team made Seigel a voluntary coach and dedicated the season to her. They also wore warm-up shirts with her name on them during shootarounds.

But knowing her story and recognizing her were two different things. Bridging that gap was a big reason Seigel was inside Brentsville's gym Jan. 4.

If she felt up to it, Seigel planned on coming to a basketball game to put a name to a face. Seigel played basketball

felt good. That night, Seigel entered the Brentsville gym for the first time this season.

"I wanted them to know this is who I am," Seigel said.

She was a welcome sight.

"I was happy to see a smile on her face," Baltimore said.

Once she walked in to Brentsville's gym, she was right at home. Seigel arrived just before tip-off with her parents Walt and Anita and stayed for the whole game. Despite wearing a white beanie on her head to cover the hair loss caused by chemo and using a crutch, Seigel never felt self-conscious.

"Coach Baltimore always tells me that once you are part of the Brentsville family you are always a part of it," Seigel said.

Seigel said her chemo treatments should end early February, at which point she will then have time and better stamina to do more physical therapy. She plans to take two online classes this spring and then re-enroll at VCU in the fall.

"I've gained a new perspective," Seigel said. "I see the world differently. I'm figuring out my new normal."

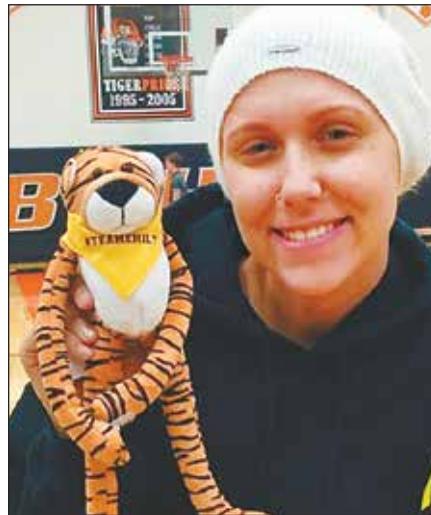
Part of the new normal was her day with the girls basketball team. After the Tigers won to improve to 11-0, she met with them in the locker room. They talked briefly and then she left, tired, but grateful for her support network.

"I slept very well that night," Seigel said.

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DAVE FAWCETT



Brentsville graduate Emily Seigel was diagnosed with cancer April 29.

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for four years at Brentsville, but outside of the seniors, head coach Eugene Baltimore and assistant coach Larry Burke, no one else on the team knew her that well if at all.

Seigel wanted to change that. With chemo treatments suspended, Seigel texted Baltimore Jan. 3 to say she would come to the Liberty game. Baltimore kept it quiet, in case Seigel was unable to attend.

The next morning, Seigel said she