



Chyna Wormley gets an autograph from Dakota Hughes, quarterback of the Atlanta Steam.



Chyna Wormley takes a hand-off from another camper during a drill at an all-female football camp in Georgia.

# Chyna Wormley is warming up for a future on the gridiron

by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

Chyna Wormley might be little but she’s tough. She’ll take a hit in the pocket when she drops back to pass. She’ll keep the ball and go toe-to-toe with a defensive lineman. She’s a little girl playing a historically male sport.

“As far as we know, or we think, Chyna is the first female quarterback in the area,” said her father, Alexis Wormley of Wicomico Church.

Chyna recently attended a two-day football camp for female players in Canton, Ga. It was hosted by the Legends Football League and conducted by Dakota Hughes, quarterback for the Atlanta Steam.

Chyna, 9, is a fourth grader at Northumberland Elementary School. Last year, she quarterbacked for the White Stone Coyotes junior varsity team. The youth league team, coached by Andrew Wylie III, competed against teams from Richmond, Westmoreland, King George and Essex counties and the town of Colonial Beach. Chyna was under center for all of the JV Coyotes’ games.

“I started playing football in kindergarten [at Lancaster Primary],” said Chyna. “A lot of the boys wanted me to be the quarterback on their teams.

“My second grade teacher at Northumberland was watching me play football during gym every day and she thought I could really throw the ball,” she said.

Someone at the school was so impressed by Wormley’s athleticism they anonymously registered and paid the fee for her to join the Coyotes.

“A lot of the boys said I was a good thrower and my teacher thought I was a good thrower,” said Chyna.

She must be a good passer. Wormley was the overall winner of the rapid fire drill at the Canton camp. She threw 20 five-step drop back passes in 60 seconds.

According to Alexis, Chyna was the only girl at camp outside of the Canton area, where several of the high schools have female flag football teams. She was the only camper to have played in full contact football games with boys, added Alexis.

“When I started playing [with the Coyotes] I had to

ask my coach for all the plays, but he said next season he’d let me call the plays myself,” said Chyna. The Coyotes didn’t have enough players to make a team this year but Alexis said the youth league team is recruiting players for next fall.

Chyna wants to return to Georgia for a second camp in the spring and aspires to play football in high school, hopefully as the first female quarterback in the Northern Neck District.

Her parents are aware of all the recent media attention to head injuries associated with football but right now aren’t holding her back.

“When she said she wanted to play football, I said go for it,” said her mother, Whitney Wormley. “It may sound crazy but I’m not that concerned because she loves it and I want her to play. Now when she gets older that’s when I’ll probably be worried.”

During camp, Chyna concentrated on three-step and five-step drop back drills, along with shuffling, passing and hand offs.

With only 10 girls at the camp, the campers received

individual attention from Hughes, other Steam players and Steam coach Dane Robinson.

“It was definitely a good experience. I’m glad it was a small group and they could focus a lot on each girl,” said Whitney.

The camp was pricey. Along with the camp fee there were lodging and travel expenses. The family held a fundraiser in October to defray the cost.

“We need to thank everyone who supported her and gave us donations,” said Alexis. “Without that I know we wouldn’t have been able to take her.”

For now, Chyna’s been sidelined for about six weeks. She had knee surgery last week to remove extra meniscus tissue she was born with.

“We thought she was playing with an injury and not telling anybody because she wanted to be out there so bad. Turns out it wasn’t an injury,” said Alexis.

The day before the surgery last week she was clutching an autographed football by players with the Atlanta Steam and facing it without fear, just like she does a defensive lineman.





The Red Devils celebrate their state semifinal win over Patrick Henry. Photo by Robyn Saunders

# Red Devils ride best record in school history into championship game to place second in state

by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

Everyone could feel the momentum shift in last Friday's VHSL Class 1 baseball championship when Auburn denied the Red Devils a run then drew first blood, breaking a scoreless tie in the fifth inning. The Eagles eventually shut out Lancaster, 9-0.

The Eagles captured their second state baseball title in three years after winning the Group 1A championship in 2017.

The Red Devils ended its best season in school history with a 21-4 record as the state runner-up, not too shabby for a team that included five underclassmen as starters. Among them were two freshmen in the batting line-up and a sophomore.

"Every team in the state loses their last game, except for one team," said LHS coach Welby Saunders. "It would have been nice to be that team. But we're still proud of this team and the effort they've put out all season. Our young kids did a great job for us and our seniors did what we asked of them."

Heading into the state semifinals and final at Pulaski's Calfee Park last week, the Devils were known as a hitting team.

"Right up through the William Campbell [state quarterfinal] game, we were hitting," said Saunders. "We had 10 or 11 hits against them."

However, against Auburn, the hits would not come.

"We hit the ball hard but just didn't get the big hits when we needed them," said Saunders. "The big hits back-to-back just weren't there."

Auburn pitchers Brady Harris and Reed Underwood combined for a three-hitter with Matthew Kleinfelter going 2-for-3 with a walk and Nick Wohleking batting 1-for-2 with two walks. Lancaster drew nine walks in the game and stranded 12 runners on base.

In the fourth inning, Lancaster had runners on second and third with no outs when Harris got out of the inning after forcing a fly ball to left field and retiring a batter at the plate before Jayden Chapman was



Lancaster shortstop Spencer Crittenden tries to put the tag on an Auburn runner during the championship game. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

thrown out on the attempted steal of home on a passed ball.

The Eagles broke the scoreless duel with a run in the top of the fifth then added four more in each of the final two at bats.

Lancaster left-hander Nick Wohleking had taken Auburn through four scoreless innings and came off the mound after walking the first batter in the fifth. He allowed six hits, walked four and retired five.

"Nicky did all we asked of him and all we needed him to do," said Saunders. "He held them to one unearned run through five innings. You can't ask for much more than that. If we could have put some runs on the board early it may have been different. For us to put no runs up is something that has happened to us all year."

"Both Nicky and Matthew did a great job for us in the last two games," he added. "We just didn't give them the support with hits we needed. Even against Patrick Henry we weren't hitting the ball to support Matthew."

According to the VHSL pitch



At right, Lancaster catcher Adam Wilmore tries to put the tag on an Auburn runner. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

## A bittersweet moment in Lancaster baseball

Tom Hanks' voice echoed in my head last Friday morning. "There's no crying in baseball," according to coach Jimmy Dugan, played by Hanks, in "A League of Their Own."

But as Auburn got the first out, then the second, of Lancaster's final at-bat in the state championship at Calfee Park in Pulaski, silence fell in the LHS dugout. Discreetly, several players started to wipe their cheeks.

For the radio listeners back in Lancaster County, the ones following the play-by-play on Twitter and the 150 or so fans that made the five-plus hour drive to the final, reality started to sink in. Auburn was about to win the Class 1 championship, 9-0.

In 30 years of covering high school sports, I'd seen the joy of victory and a great deal of agony in defeat. But I'd never cried until I saw the tear-filled eyes of the senior players who I'd watched mature from middle schoolers to state championship-caliber ballplayers. And so a lump formed in my throat and the tears fell. I discreetly wiped them away.

At that moment, we were all Red Devils and our hearts were breaking. At that moment, there was definitely crying in baseball.

Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



Matthew Kleinfelter leads off first during the state championship. The all-district and all-region player of the year and James Madison University recruit will represent the Red Devils and Region 1A in the coaches' association All-Star game at JMU on Monday, June 24. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

## Kleinfelter leads LHS standouts

by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

While his friends in Lancaster High School's Class of 2019 are probably still celebrating last weekend's graduation, Matthew Kleinfelter is settling into his new baseball training routine at Division 1 James Madison University.

Kleinfelter, 18, left for Harrisonburg's JMU bright and early Sunday, June 16. He graduated Saturday from LHS and last Friday played in the Class 1 state championship game.

On Monday, June 24, he'll represent LHS and Region 1A in the Virginia High School Coaches Association (VHSCA) East-West All-Star game, playing for the East team. Ironically, that game's going to be held on Kleinfelter's new home field, JMU's Eagle Field at Veterans Memorial Park.

Kleinfelter is the Northern Neck District and Region 1A Most Valuable Player and fills two spots as a pitcher and third baseman on each of the all-district and all-region first teams. He and four JMU incoming teammates will play in the all-star game.

He is taking a summer school class at JMU as mandated by the university for all freshman athletes. His new schedule is grueling with a 6-9 a.m. workout, 11 a.m. class, a 2-4 p.m. study hall and a second workout from 5-9 p.m. He'll play a fall ball season, then an inter-squad season before spring baseball begins.

"I'm gonna be busy," said Kleinfelter, who has literally been preparing for a career in baseball since he was in Little League. He received a lot of college-scout exposure with his travel ball team, the Richmond Braves, traveling multiple times to Florida and Georgia.

Kleinfelter was a sophomore when he became the youngest athlete in LHS school history to verbally commit to a Division 1 school. He was JMU's first recruit for the 2019 graduating class.

He helped lead Lancaster to its best

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Lancaster's Nick Wohleking dives back to first in last week's state final. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

count rules, Kleinfelter wasn't able to pitch in Friday's championship because he had pitched on Thursday. When Wohleking came off the mound, shortstop Spencer Crittenden finished the game.

Lancaster committed five errors including three in Auburn's final two trips to the plate.

"This has been one of the biggest error seasons we've ever had," said Saunders.

Unfortunately a quality team like Auburn will take advantage of them. The Eagles first run of the game, and what turned out to be the winning run, came on a throwing error.

Auburn, which had one error against LHS, had committed only 19 errors in 25 games this season. They finished with 13 hits in the championship and turned a double play for the final two outs of the game.

"It's not how any of us wanted to end the season," said Kleinfelter, who's pitched in some high profile travel ball games in Florida and Georgia. None had the stakes of this one.

"This was definitely different. It



Lancaster's Tahlik Redmond takes a lead off first during the state final. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

was more important because it was for my hometown. That's why we all wanted to win," he said.

It was the final high school game for Lancaster's Kleinfelter, Crittenden, Koonce, Tahlik Redmond and Tucker Vanderpool, all of whom wore their jerseys under their graduation gowns at last Saturday's LHS commencement.





Nick Wohleking (left) and Spencer Crittenden jump for joy after last Thursday's state semifinal win. Photo by Robyn Saunders

# Seventh-inning surge lifts Lancaster over Patrick Henry in state semifinal

by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

When Lancaster coaches Welby Saunders and Scotty George needed the clutch hits, the freshmen pulled their weight in one of the biggest games of their young high school baseball careers. Designated hitter Brendan Walker broke a 1-1 tie and drove in the winning run in the top of the seventh last Thursday as Lancaster triumphed 3-1 over Patrick Henry in the semifinals of the VHSL Class 1 state baseball tournament at Calfee Park in Pulaski. The win advanced Lancaster to the championship game Friday against Auburn. It was the second straight year Patrick Henry had lost in a close semifinal game. The semifinal pitted two evenly-matched teams and pitchers against each other. The Rebels came in at 18-6 and Lancaster 21-3. Both pitched dominating seniors. Matthew Kleinfelter went a full game for LHS and southpaw Isaac Eldreth went the

distance on the mound for PH. Eldreth held the Red Devils to five hits, two coming in the seventh inning. Kleinfelter, who came into the game with 29 straight scoreless innings, gave up six hits. He struck out seven, didn't walk a batter and allowed one unearned run. That run was the only one scored on the James Madison University signee in his final 36 innings as a Red Devil. PH took the early lead, 1-0, in the bottom of the first inning when Josh Presley, who'd reached on an error, scored on a Colby Taylor RBI ground out. Lancaster tied the game in the top of the fourth when Adam Wilmore drove in Nick Wohleking on a sacrifice fly. Wohleking had led off with a double to the warning track in right field and moved to third on a passed ball. Although Eldreth only struck out one in 6.2 innings, he had the Devils hitting right to the gloves. "He did a great job and my hat's off to him," said Saunders. Walker broke the tie with one out in the top of the seventh,

smacking a triple down the left field line that allowed Jayden Chapman to score from first base. Chapman had reached on a fielder's choice, beating out an attempted double play. Spencer Crittenden added a security run, hitting a two-out double to score Walker for the 3-1 lead. Kleinfelter came in to wrap up the win but not before PH put runners on the corners with two outs. LHS right fielder Ashton Hollingsworth, who'd ended the quarterfinal game with a sliding catch in the outfield, came through with a third-out grab to save the win. Hollingsworth had the fans on their feet as he slipped and almost fell on the wet grass before pulling in a fly ball to end the game. "Patrick Henry had us a few times in bad spots but we were able to get out of it because of Matthew's pitching and making good plays," said Saunders. The Rebels left two runners on base in the second, third and seventh innings. "The freshmen came in and hit the ball when we needed it," said Kleinfelter. Chapman and Walker went 1-for-3 each with Walker hitting a triple for an RBI. Crittenden was 1-for-4 with a double for an RBI and Wohleking and Chris Cunningham had a hit each.



Lancaster's Jayden Chapman was out on the steal of home after a passed ball in the state final. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



From left, Lancaster's Nick Wohleking, coach Scotty George, third baseman Jayden Chapman, shortstop Spencer Crittenden and second baseman Chris Cunningham have a meeting on the mound during the state final. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



Lancaster's Hunter Koonce looks solemn as he waits to take the final bat of his high school career. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



Ashton Hollingsworth makes the catch after almost slipping down on a wet field for the final out in the state semifinal. Photo by Robyn Saunders



Lancaster pitchers Nick Wohleking (left) and Matthew Kleinfelter shared an emotional hug and tears following the Devils' loss in the state championship. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

LANCASTER RED DEVILS		
2018-2019 Season: Overall Record 21-4		
Lancaster	Opponent	
10	West Point	0
12	Middlesex	0
15	Northampton	0
12	Mathews	4
5	King William	4
17	Arcadia	4
1	Rappahannock	0
6	Essex	0
10	Colonial Beach	0
10	Washington & Lee	3
1	Northumberland	5
4	Rappahannock	2
6	Northampton	1
4	Essex	2
3	Colonial Beach	0
1	Washington & Lee	0
1	Northumberland	10
5	West Point	2
Northern Neck District Tournament Semifinals		
6	Northumberland	7
Region A Tournament Quarterfinals		
4	Mathews	0
Semifinals		
7	Essex	3
Championship		
6	Colonial Beach	0
Class I Tournament Quarterfinals		
5	William Campbell	0
Semifinals		
3	Patrick Henry	1
Championship		
0	Auburn	9



The Auburn runner was ruled safe on the force at third. Lancaster third baseman Jayden Chapman had fielded the ball and raced to tag the bag. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

## Kleinfelter leads

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record in school history, 21-4, and back to the state championship game for the first time since the spring of 2015. Kleinfelter batted .389 this season with six doubles, two home runs, 17 runs scored and 20 RBIs. The right-hander set a new single-season strikeout record with 109. He went 11-1 this season with 69 innings pitched for a .404 ERA. He allowed only 42 hits, less than one per inning, and only four earned runs. **Lancaster's honorees** Junior Nick Wohleking also garnered all-district and all-region honors as a first-team pitcher on both squads. Wohleking led the team at bat with a .397 average. He hit five doubles, four homers and drew 11 walks for 37

RBIs and 5 runs scored. He had an 8-2 record, pitching 56.2 innings for a 1.6 ERA. He allowed 37 hits, fanned 88 batters and gave up only 13 earned runs. Wohleking is already being heavily recruited by college scouts, according to coach Welby Saunders. Senior shortstop Spencer Crittenden was named to the all-district first team as a designated hitter and received all-region honorable mention. Crittenden batted .391 with four doubles, one triple, 14 RBIs and 26 runs with 15 stolen bases. Senior Hunter Koonce earned second-team all-district honors as an outfielder with a .300 batting average. He hit two doubles, one home run, had 12 stolen bases, 14 RBIs and 18 runs scored.



# YOUNG & DETERMINED

1969 Brookvale High  
Warriors baseball team  
stands out among championship teams

**T**he year was 1969. Astronauts Neil Armstrong and “Buzz” Aldrin landed on the moon. Members of a cult led by Charles Manson murdered five people in California. More than 500,000 music lovers gathered in New York for the epic Woodstock Festival. And across the country, states worked to dismantle segregated school systems.

In the Northern Neck, where blacks and whites still attended separate schools and the racial divide was apparent, a group of young, determined baseball players won the state crown, a feat that hasn’t been accomplished since.

“We did what we had to to become champions. The boys put in overtime to accomplish what we’d been trying to do for a lot of years,” said assistant coach of the team Richard Ruffin. “It was a time when we felt like we could do anything.”

It was on May 21, 1969, 50 years ago, that 16 young men and their coaches captured the state trophy on a baseball diamond in Petersburg. They took a 7-2 record into the state tournament at Virginia State University, where they beat Central of Charlotte, 5-4, in the semifinal and captured the state Group II, District IV baseball championship, 11-5, over G.W. Watkins.

“We had the hitting, the base running, everything just came together. All of us pulled together,” said Stanley Gaskins of Weems. Gaskins was a freshman pitcher for the Brookvale Fighting Warriors and combined with William Lee for “some brilliant pitching” in the championship game, according to a May 29, 1969, article in the Rappahannock Record.

“We were jumping up and down and hollering. It was something,” said Gaskins. “And all of our parents were there, too.”

The win marked the end of an era as Brookvale closed its doors for good that year. Full integration took place in the 1969-70

by Lisa  
Hinton-  
Valdrighi



Wardell Carter was the starting catcher as a sophomore on the 1969 state championship team. That inspired him to embark on a career in recreation. He continues to work with children as the unit director at the Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Neck. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi





From left, members of the 1969 Brookvale High School baseball team, which captured the state championship, were, (front row) Wardell Carter, Melvin Harris, William Lee, Elwood Henderson, Frank Carter and Donald Sanders; (next row) Theodore Thomas, Mozell Carter, Stanley Gaskins, Dean Nickens, Ronald Smith and Irvin Coleman; (next row) assistant coach Richard Ruffin, trainer Carroll Jones, James Carter, Jesse Davenport, coach Maurice Savoy, Bradell Thompson, Wilbert Lee, Wardell Veney and assistant coach Walter Webb.



Stanley Gaskins reads an article about the Brookvale Warriors baseball team that appeared in the Rappahannock Record 30 years ago. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

## Championship season marked by teammate accomplishments

*The following appeared in an article in the May 29, 1969 Rappahannock Record regarding the Brookvale Fighting Warriors baseball team.*

**B**rookvale High School, with brilliant pitching from William Lee and Stanley Gaskins, and timely hitting by Frank Carter, Jesse Davenport, Melvin Harris and James Carter, captured the State, Group II, District IV baseball championship by defeating G.W. Watkins 11 to 5, Wednesday, May 21, at Petersburg.

Brookvale advanced to the final by eliminating Central of Charlotte 5 to 4. In this victory, William Lee tied a state record by striking out 16 batters. In the finale, Stanley Gaskins overcame some early inning control problems and coasted to an 11 to 5 verdict.

Brookvale was led during the regular season in hitting by James Carter (.429 batting average), Frank Carter (.400 batting average, 2 homers, 20 runs batted in), Melvin Harris (.391 batting average), and Jesse Davenport (.346 batting average).

Defensively, the Warriors were led by Dean Nickens, Wardell Carter, Bradell Thompson, Ronald Smith and Elwood Henderson.

On the mound, William Lee finished with 5 victories and 1 loss. Stanley Gaskins, along with breaking the school record with 15 strikeouts, also won 4 games and lost 0. William Lee also broke a school record with eight consecutive strikeouts in a regular season game.

This was the first time that a VIA school had won the state baseball crown from this group and district.



school year, replacing freedom of choice, and schools were consolidated countywide. Brookvale High School became Mantua Intermediate and now still serves the county as Lancaster Primary School.

The baseball field behind the school, where the successful Warriors played their games against teams from Richmond County, King George, Essex, Westmoreland's AT Johnson, Northumberland Central and Colonial Beach, is no longer.

"I don't believe we had any seniors, maybe one on the team, to my recollection," said Ruffin of Connecticut. He's a retired science teacher who now has a ministry with his wife and runs a summer camp for at-risk youth.

"It was a very young team," he added. "But I think that's one of the reasons we were so successful. They were willing to work hard and put in that extra effort."

Gaskins had a 4-0 record that season and broke the school record for 15 strike outs in a game. His record was short-lived, however, and was broken by teammate Lee, who won a state playoff game with a 16-strike-out effort. That tied a state tournament record.

Calling the pitches for Lee and Gaskins was sophomore catcher Wardell Carter.

*"We did what we had to to become champions. The boys put in overtime to accomplish what we'd been trying to do for a lot of years. It was a time when we felt like we could do anything."*

—assistant coach Richard Ruffin

under the leadership of first-year head coach Maurice L. Savoy.

"He was about discipline and leadership," said W. Carter. "He was just out of college and was a hard-nosed guy. There was no talking back, not even a funny look at the coach."

According to W. Carter, Savoy and assistants Ruffin and the late Walter Webb never emphasized the state championship as a goal. But it was evident after the state final.

"After every game, he would have us holler, 'it shall be done' and when we came back from Virginia State, when we went to yell that, he said 'no, it has been done!' And that was the first time we realized he had a goal."

When Brookvale closed, most of the players continued to play baseball at Lancaster High School under coach Boyd Kidd.

When Carter and his brother were young, blacks weren't allowed to play at the local Little League park. That was hurtful, he admits. It led him to defy the stereotypes of the period and he said he learned to swim, and to play golf and tennis.

"I tell kids all the time, don't be defined by stereotypes. For me, coach Savoy had a major effect on me more than anybody in my life except my parents," said W. Carter. "He was a very strict disciplinarian with a tough work ethic but we had fun afterward."

W. Carter made recreation his career and has served as the Lancaster County Parks & Recreation director, a volunteer Little League coach and a volunteer high school baseball and softball coach. He continues to mentor youth as a unit director for the Boys & Girls Club of the Northern Neck.

"Working with the Boys & Girls Club is like a dream come true," he said. "It's so important to give everybody an opportunity."

Only a few things have brought most of the players back together: funerals, a reunion six years ago and a recent 50th anniversary celebration at Sharon Baptist Church in Weems, where the trophy was displayed and commemorative medals distributed. But when there is an instance for a reunion, it's more like a family reunion than a gathering of former teammates.

"That bond is still there even after all this time," said W. Carter.

"We were like a big family," said Ruffin.

Recently, Ulysses Turner, teen director at the Boys & Girls Club of the Northern Neck, reached out to the Virginia High School League to right a wrong. According to Turner, the Brookvale team has not been recognized with inclusion in the state annals for its championship. The team will soon be listed in the championship records, said Turner.



Players of the 1969 Brookvale team came together a few years ago at the funeral of a teammate. From left are Wilbert Lee, James Carter, William Lee, Jesse Davenport and Stanley Gaskins.



Lloyd Hill places a commemorative medal around the neck of Wilbert Lee at Sharon Baptist Church during a recent ceremony honoring the 1969 Brookvale baseball team.



The state championship trophy won by the Brookvale baseball team was on display recently at Sharon Baptist Church.