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## In Gretna, tragedies carve path for courage, growth and the emergence of heroes

Ben Cates  
Jan 25, 2020



Gretna basketball players and close friends sophomore Isaiah Griffin, left, and junior Mekhi Reeves, break out in during practice on Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2020 at Gretna High School.

Emily Elconin

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**G**RETNA — Isaiah Griffin sits in an empty classroom at Gretna High School answering questions, thinking about the fire that destroyed his home.

School has dismissed for the day. In a few minutes, the 16-year-old sophomore will be back in the gym, hoisting up shot after shot to prepare for tonight's varsity basketball game against a rival from the Danville area, Tunstall High.

He's destined for a big night. In a couple of hours the sun will set, Griffin will pour on 27 points and Gretna will win its sixth straight game. But before that, as needles of late-afternoon sunlight pry their way into the classroom, he tells pieces of the story.

He talks about the smoke. He talks about the fire that singed strands of his charcoal hair, and how the heat felt on his skin. He talks about losing everything.

"I'd like to see us get back in a home," he says in a soft tone that underscores the uncertainty of his new situation. "See my mom get back on her feet, even if I have to get a job."

Then the three-sport athlete, a hero on the basketball court for the Hawks the last two seasons, reveals what it's like to have to quickly go from boy to man.

"I'll do anything," he says.

Anything to get back to normal. Anything to take away the pain of losing all he owned.

## **The fire**

Around 1:30 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 13, Griffin was playing games on his phone in his bedroom. Six other family members — his mother Julie Feldt, 11-year-old brother Jordan, older sister Taemisha Granderson and Granderson's three children — were asleep inside the mobile home the family rented in the 1500 block of Millstream Drive in Gretna.

Griffin smelled smoke and then saw flames developing outside his bedroom. He rushed to wake everyone. Panic ensued.

The family ran outside. As they stood staring at the house, Griffin realized Granderson's children were still inside.

He charged through the front door, flames licking throughout the home. He turned right at the front entrance, ran down a long hall and woke the three children, carrying the youngest ones, ages 4 months and 2 years, to safety in his arms as the growing blaze singed his hair and the back of his neck.

“I was just the oldest boy in the house,” Griffin said, “so I figured it was my job to do it.”

The family gathered in the road and watched the home burn. A car stopped and the man and woman inside called 911. The woman gave a disheveled Feldt a pair of shoes.

When she showed up at Gretna High School for her son’s basketball game two days later, Feldt was still wearing those shoes.

## **“Everything’s gone”**

A few days after the fire, a partially deflated basketball lay lopsided in the front yard. Other remains were strewn across the grass or lay in piles.

Birth certificates, clothes, personal mementos and cell phones were some of the things lost in the fire — along with the security a home offers.

Gone, too, are the trophies Griffin won for basketball, a sport he’s played since he was 4. Also gone is the Dogwood District player of the year award he was given last year after he burst onto the scene as a freshman, and medals he’d won for running sprint events on Gretna's track team.

Jordan, Griffin’s younger brother, found a partially burned photo album with pictures of Feldt’s grandparents inside. Feldt walked through the dilapidated home last week and found other odds and ends.

Other than that, she said, “everything’s gone.”

A fire also destroyed the family’s Sacramento, California, home in 2013. Feldt said Griffin woke her up when that blaze started, too. The family moved to Gretna in 2016, just before Griffin turned 13.

“That,” Feldt said of the Sacramento house fire, “is what kind of brought us here a few years after, because it’s hard to come back from losing everything.”

## **On the rise, but leaning on each other**

For decades, opponents feared Gretna’s varsity boys basketball program, led for more than 30 years by Bob Locust, who garnered more than 400 victories in 30-plus years of coaching. Locust died Jan. 17 at age 76.

But the program has suffered through lean years, too. In the late 2000s the Hawks lost more than 30 straight games, a streak they finally snapped in January 2012.

Prior to the hiring of Brian Chitwood ahead of the 2016-17 season, Gretna dropped at least 30-some games again.

The boys basketball program lay in ruins. Chitwood’s job was to rescue it.

Last season he started to see fruits of his labor. Gretna went 13-7 and fell one game short of making a state tournament appearance in the Virginia High School League’s Class 2 division.

This year, the Hawks are 10-4, bolstered by players like Griffin (19 points and 7.8 rebounds per game) and Mekhi Reeves (17.1 ppg, 8.1 rpg).

They have learned how to win again. And now the Hawks are learning to lean on each other, carrying one another through deep loss.

Prior to the start of the season, on Nov. 26, Chitwood’s wife Laurie died in a car wreck, hours shy of her 45th birthday.

Condolences and outpourings of support streamed in.

“Lots and lots of folks were very thoughtful, have reached out,” Chitwood said. “And it’s a tough time. But I do what I do, and it’s easier to stay busy.”

The coach divides his time between teaching math and coaching sports. In addition to his basketball duties, Chitwood is a defensive line coach for the Hawks varsity football team and a track and field assistant.

He is, admittedly, tough on his players. Chitwood demands their best, holds them accountable and disciplines them when necessary. But he's also encouraging, and he uses basketball as a metaphor for life.

“At the end of the day, this game stops for everybody,” he told players shortly after taking the job. “It’s just a matter of time. It happens for some sooner than others. So when you leave here, you have to be able to stand tall.”

The players seem to have a genuine love for their coach.

“He’s a strong man,” Griffin said. “He fights through a lot of stuff. The team and the community have been there for him. He’d go out of his way for anybody, so he’s a wonderful coach.”

Chitwood has mentored Griffin in the last two years, so the two spend a lot of time together both outside of school and on the football field, basketball court and track.

“I’m very proud of the transformation,” Chitwood said of Griffin. “He has come a long way. He’s got a heart of gold. Just like most kids his age he still makes a few mistakes here and there and we have to address them. But his future is limitless at this point.”

## **The aftermath**

The family went separate ways after the fire — Griffin and Jordan to stay with friends in Gretna, Granderson to Martinsville and Feldt initially to Danville until she decided to check into a hotel in Gretna to be close to her sons.

“Don’t know what’s gonna happen next,” Feldt said. “I know it’ll all come together; it’s just gonna be a minute. It’s not all gonna happen right now.”

The fire's cause is undetermined, Pittsylvania County Fire Marshal Terry Kelly said. Feldt said she had noticed electrical problems inside the home since moving in and was searching for a new place to rent.

One Hawks fan, Burt Pickeral, started a fundraiser for the family on Facebook. It has raised roughly \$1,200 so far, Pickeral said. A GoFundMe page organized by Brooke Pope has raised \$350.

Griffin, meanwhile, is providing stellar play on the basketball court. After scoring 27 against Tunstall, he broke loose for 30 points in last week's loss to Dan River.

And in the hallways of the high school, Griffin was hailed a hero, although he sort of shrugs off that label.

"I don't know," he said. "I don't feel like I'm a hero. I just feel like it was part of my job."

Then the youngster is off to prepare for a game. He stretches, reels off a couple of shots from beyond the 3-point line, shuffle-steps into the lane and then takes flight a few times, delivering dunks that either bounce off the rim or rattle home.

Chitwood walks by. He's setting up chairs, getting public address equipment ready and performing the multiple duties coaches with small staffs at small schools regularly take on to make the night a success.

He'll be here, in the gym or his office, until well after midnight — helping clean up, pouring over what went right or wrong during the game and thinking about his players.

This scene — a coach mentoring a young man who saved his family from a burning home — makes one thing clear: heroes don't always don capes or show up in major metropolises.

Sometimes they wear jerseys. Sometimes they're math teachers moonlighting as basketball coaches who hunker down in small towns and go quietly about their business.

And sometimes, they come to the rescue when no one else can.

Ben Cates covers high school sports for The News & Advance. Reach him at (434) 385-5527.

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## “Part human, part robot”: E.C. Glass’ Rayvon Graham is back on the court despite an injury that threatened to derail his career

Ben Cates  
Feb 7, 2020



E.C. Glass grad Rayvon Graham drives to the hoop against Heritage on Feb. 3, 2020. Photo by Lee Luther Jr.

Lee Luther Jr. /FOR THE NEWS & ADVANCE/

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**R**ayvon Graham stood in the gym last week and hoisted up shot after shot. The sun had set in midtown, and E.C. Glass’ varsity basketball team had just started practice.

“Basketball is my first love,” Graham said. “If I didn’t have basketball, I don’t know what I’d do.”

That he’s here — practicing and playing, actually able to shoot and dribble and pass and catch — might be some sort of minor miracle, or at least a testament to what can happen when one refuses to give up.

The regular season is coming to a close, which means Graham has entered the twilight of his high school career, because he’s a senior.

He’s spent almost the entire season riding the pine, the result of a horrific injury. But two weeks ago, out of nowhere, Graham suited up and played for the first time in his senior year, determined to make the most of the time he has left.

And he’s making his presence known.

## **Part human**

It was an October afternoon and the beginning of the 2019-2020 basketball season was less than two months away. Graham was lifting in the E.C. Glass weight room, performing squats, when he dropped the weights.

They fell on his right thumb, smashing it.

“The tip of my thumb was hanging off,” he recalled. The injury was to his shooting hand.

Graham had put in countless hours of practice in the offseason. He’d gained weight, perfected his shot and worked on every facet of his game. Suddenly, all that work didn’t seem to matter.

Glass athletic trainer Jen Armstrong performed first aid on Graham before rushing him to the hospital. Graham is a quiet and reserved player, someone who rarely gets rattled, which is exactly what coaches want from their point guards. “And even during the injury,” Armstrong recalled, “he was calm. He really took it well.”

Graham underwent two surgeries over the next three months: one to put his thumb back together and one to remove the tip of his thumb. Doctors told him he wouldn't play his senior season.

He'd been playing basketball since he was 5 years old and couldn't imagine doing anything else. So Graham, understandably, was heartbroken. He had been a major contributor as a junior, playing in 26 games, averaging 9.69 points, 3.2 assists and 4.19 rebounds per game while shooting 81% from the free throw line and commanding the point.

But he wasn't available when Glass began the 2019-2020 season on Dec. 2 with a 69-58 loss at Roanoke's Patrick Henry. It was a rough opening night, but the Hilltoppers then caught fire and reeled off six wins in a row.

But even with other capable ball handlers, like guards Savion Austin and DreSean Kendrick, they missed their point guard. That much was obvious during a rough stretch that followed in early January, when Glass dropped four of six games.

Graham watched it all from the sidelines.

"It was horrible," he said of sitting on the bench, unable to help his teammates. "Probably the worst two months of my life."

Not having Graham was a blow to the Hilltoppers, who have endured numerous injuries and weathered sickness this season. In January, Glass lost another starter and a strong producer, senior Reashawn Spaulding, who suffered a broken wrist. The team also has played short-handed, as many other area teams have, because of flu viruses circulating the school.

Through up and down times, head coach DJ Best kept an eye on Graham.

"I'm gonna talk about his character for a second," Best said at a recent practice. "That kid couldn't play, and we had no idea if he was even gonna play at all this season. But he never missed a practice. He never missed a game. So his character just speaks volumes from that standpoint."

But Graham was determined to play again. To do so, he'd have to endure a long process of recovery and then make some tough decisions.

## **Part robot**

While his thumb was healing, Graham wasn't allowed to perform any physical activity. Then, gradually, he started with cardio exercises.

Then he started dribbling. After smashing his thumb he'd started performing tasks left-handed, "and that's kind of made him ambidextrous on the court," Armstrong added.

Then there were talks about whether it was smart to return.

"There was definitely talk part-way through [Graham's recovery] about is it a real possibility?" Armstrong added. "We, his family, everybody said your thumb and your health are most important. You need that thumb for the rest of your life, and you don't want to risk injuring it coming back, so we just took proper precautions."

There was risk of infection and a chance he could re-injure his thumb during practices or in games.

But Armstrong noted, "He made a remarkable recovery."

It's showed on the court. In his first game back, against Liberty Christian on Jan. 24, Graham doled out six assists. Four nights later against Liberty in Bedford, he unloaded nine assists.

In six games, some of which included playing on restricted minutes, he's averaging 9.6 points, 4.8 assists, 3.8 rebounds and 1.3 steals per game. That included a 19-point performance against Heritage High this week as Glass got revenge on the Pioneers for a loss earlier this season. Graham also finished that game with six assists, six rebounds and four steals. Glass, 13-7 overall, has won four of the six games in which he's appeared.

Armstrong said Graham followed doctors' instructions and worked hard to return to the court. "He's done everything the right way," she added.

Then the athletic trainer leaned inside her office, where Graham sat last week awaiting treatment. He wears a protective covering over his thumb when he's on the court.

"Did you tell him why you healed up so fast?" Armstrong asked Graham. "What do you always say?"

"Oh," Graham answered. "Because I'm part human, part robot."

**"I'm back"**

The dark days of sitting on the bench are behind him.

"My family kept me motivated," Graham said of the months he couldn't play, "especially my coach and Ms. Armstrong."

But he also learned a lot from the experience.

"I've always studied the game, but sitting on the bench showed me a lot more," he said. "Showed me what I can do on the court to help my team out."

Best, who has inserted Graham back into the starting lineup, agreed.

"He's so much more effective on the floor because he was sitting down and seeing the game from a coach's perspective," he said.

Glass is near the top of the Seminole District standings. More importantly, the Hilltoppers once again are a force in the VHSL's Region 4D. In a few weeks, they hope to break through in region play and then make the state tournament for the fourth time since 2013.

But there's work to be done before thinking that far ahead. For instance, Glass plays its regular-season home finale tonight against Brookville. It'll be Senior Night, a time of celebration for the team's 11 seniors. It'll be especially sweet for Graham, who just a

few months ago, was told he wouldn't play on such a special occasion.

"It feels great," Graham said when asked what it was like to be back and contributing, "just to be with my teammates. I push them to be better and they push me to be better every day."

On Monday, after helping Glass survive an overtime thriller against Heritage with his mammoth performance, Graham stood at the bus that would carry he and his teammates back to Hilltopper Country.

"Ever since I missed that last one," he said of the game between the two rivals in January, "I've just been waiting."

He's normally reserved and stoic, but those mannerisms dropped away momentarily, and Graham smiled.

"I'm back," he said through his grin.

Two simple words that belied the painstaking process of getting back on the court.

Then he repeated: "I'm back," and this time, those words took on greater significance.

They meant overcoming the odds. They meant a kid from midtown willing himself back onto the court for one last go-around with his friends.

And they meant that sometimes, there are hoop dreams that refuse to die.

Ben Cates covers high school sports for The News & Advance. Reach him at (434) 385-5527.

[https://newsadvance.com/news/the-final-gaels-a-team-a-school-and-the-end-of-an-era-at-holy/article\\_131a4d0b-d2f0-5a18-a084-39a1f74d2064.html](https://newsadvance.com/news/the-final-gaels-a-team-a-school-and-the-end-of-an-era-at-holy/article_131a4d0b-d2f0-5a18-a084-39a1f74d2064.html)

## The final Gaels: a team, a school and the end of an era at Holy Cross

Ben Cates  
Mar 14, 2020

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Holy Cross varsity girls coach Gerry Harter looks at his players while getting a hug from assistant coach Steve Luther during player introductions before facing Carlisle in the final regular season home game in school history. (Photo by Lee Luther Jr.)

By Lee Luther Jr./ The News & Advance

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**T**he girls basketball players at Holy Cross Regional Catholic School were just six days away from opening the season when they received startling news: Their school forever would close its doors in June.

That November afternoon, coach Gerry Harter gathered his team inside the nearly 60-year-old gymnasium. He looked into the eyes of his nine basketball players and saw worry. Maybe a little shock, too.

“All right, ladies,” the affable coach began. “At the end of the day, whatever you guys want to do, we’ll do. If you guys don’t have the stomach to play basketball, we won’t do it.”

But the girls, realizing this would be the final season anyone would wear a Gaels uniform, had no intention of throwing in the towel. The decision would set the course for the next three months.

“To their credit,” Harter said while he stood inside the gym recently, “they said, ‘Hey coach, not only do we want to play basketball, we want to make this the best season Holy Cross has had in a long while.’ And they did that.”

## **The final season**

The girls in the gym that day were surrounded by history.

Dark green banners hung high on the walls, telling stories of both athletic success and long, unfortunate dry spells through the decades.

The old maple court beneath their feet, which had weathered its share of thrilling victories and painful defeats, was waxed and ready for the approaching season.

Trophies watched from one of the gym’s walls, while others listened closely from the hallway, locked away in large cases also housing the faded jerseys of former standout players.

With the announcement of Holy Cross’ closure, the nine players suddenly had become the last girls basketball team in the school’s 140-year history. They were the final Gaels, and they wanted to go the distance.

“Once everybody realized the school is actually closing, they were expecting a lot out of us,” said Mariah Mrad, a 5-foot-10 senior from Lebanon. “They were like, ‘You guys are the last team. You’ve got to close the school with honor and show what you’re worth.’”

“Everyone was expecting us to fail because the school is closing, so they didn’t expect us to be motivated to play. But actually, that was one of the biggest reasons that motivated me and my teammates.”

The campaign didn’t start off so well. HC lost its first two games, both at home. In fact, the early season was defined by dramatic swings: a 30-point victory, a one-point overtime loss, a 44-point defeat.

But by February, with the end of the regular season approaching, the Gaels had rallied to win five straight. A shot at the postseason was suddenly within reach.

## **Memories of Holy Cross**

The Gaels used to be homeless.

For years, the basketball teams practiced and played wherever they could — the City Armory, Virginia Episcopal School or Lynchburg College.

That changed when the school added a gym to its Langhorne Road location in late 1963.

It often was filled to the brim in those early days. Over the years, the gym has seen it all: forlorn times when the Gaels couldn’t draw crowds, state title runs in boys and girls basketball and one particular electric three-year period, when the stands were so full people lined the walls to watch.

That was the case in 2005 when Roy Roberson coached Holy Cross to its most recent boys basketball state title in Division III of the Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association before moving on to E.C. Glass and eventually becoming a men’s assistant at N.C. State in 2018.

Roberson recalled several times over the years sometimes crowds were so thick students would sit inside the narrow coach's box to get a glimpse of the action. Randy Turille, who spent 17 years as Holy Cross' boys soccer coach and nearly a decade as the school's athletic director, remembers that time well.

"I loved the gym there," Turille said. "It was always packed in our good days. It was such a small gym and always super loud — just a great sports atmosphere."

Turille, currently varsity boys soccer coach at E.C. Glass High School and AD at Linkhorne Middle School, was drawn to Holy Cross when then-principal John Jones hired him under a two-year provisional contract when Turille was still in school at Lynchburg College. Turille remembers promising Jones, "As long as you're here, you'll get the best I've got."

Turille took the Holy Cross boys soccer team to the state final four on three occasions and to the championship game twice. In his tenure, the Gaels advanced to the state tournament eight times. They never won a state title with Turille, but the Gaels do own eight state soccer titles (seven from the now-defunct State Catholic League and one from the VISAA).

Between the two leagues, Holy Cross boasts state titles for boys basketball (nine), girls basketball (seven), softball (four) and volleyball (one).

At one point during Turille's tenure as AD, roughly 75% of students played at least one sport. "It's a long, storied history of sports at Holy Cross," Turille said. "And that's one reason I enjoyed it so much."

Some of the athletes' names still haven't gone away. There's Ted Delledera, a 1981 grad who scored a school-record 127 career goals; Bobby Stewart, who led HC to the 1953 Catholic League AAA state title before going on to play for Al McGuire at Belmont Abbey; Amy Gillis, a 2003 grad who pitched her way to more than 100 softball victories; John Lesniak, the only other 100-plus goal scorer in school history; and Nick Gravely, who this past season became the last Gael to reach the 1,000-point plateau.

Van Porter helped guide the Gaels girls basketball team to back-to-back state titles in 2006 and 2007. Those were years of high-octane basketball. Porter, currently head cross country coach and a track assistant at E.C. Glass, combined with head coach Charles Sprouse to create something unprecedented for girls hoops in the area. They helped bring in players from Lithuania looking to eventually play college basketball in the U.S. and also benefited from players rising through a strong JV program.

Suddenly, after losing in the state championship game in 2005, the Gaels were blowing out the competition, backed by quick, tall and talented players, six of whom went on to sign Division I scholarships in a two-season span.

“These girls were better than a lot of DI programs, as a team,” Porter recalled, noting the team was nationally ranked in ’05 and ’06.

Porter remembers traveling to Dominion High in Loudoun County in ’06 for a game. Dominion, which boasted an enrollment of more than 1,000 students, dwarfed Holy Cross in terms of available players. But Holy Cross had height — players that measured 6-foot-5 and 6-foot-2 — and experience on its side. After the first quarter, the Gaels led 24-2.

“I hate to see it go away like that,” Porter said of the school and its sports history. “It really is sad.”

Harter, the current girls head coach, has learned about the history in his three years at Holy Cross, the first two of which he spent as boys coach. He’s looked back through pictures of standing-room-only games, so, like Porter and Turille, he knows the past means something.

And Turille, who spent a good part of his adult life in Holy Cross’s hallways and athletic fields, hates to see the end drawing near.

“We had something special going on for a long time,” he said. “We had a great run.”

## **Two final goodbyes**

It was Feb. 13, the final night of the regular season, and Harter's team was destined for the playoffs. They would enter ranked sixth overall, but Harter wasn't sure the Gaels would play again in their home gym. So this game, he knew, could be the final one at home.

The opponent that night was Carlisle, a team from Martinsville that HC hadn't defeated in a dozen years.

With middle school teams and the varsity boys team also in action that night, staff members pulled out both sets of bleachers. People flooded into the gym, kind of like it was in the old days.

The girls were victorious, with sophomore guard Kenadi Knight scoring 20 points as part of a 10-game stretch in which she finished in double digits, and Mrad hauled down 13 rebounds. The boys won, too, and so did the middle school squads. It was a clean sweep of the former heavyweights from the south.

"We played as hard as we could," forward Emma Luther said.

Next stop for the Gaels varsity girls: conference play. They won once, outlasting Covenant by two points as Mrad collected 17 rebounds, then lost to Charlottesville-based Miller School two days later. The team regrouped and waited for the state tournament, a round they hadn't advanced to in 13 years.

The first round of the VISAA Division III state tourney, comprised of 12 teams, kicked off Feb. 25. Holy Cross, the No. 6 seed, hosted No. 11 Brunswick Academy. Game day rolled around, making for a bittersweet moment, Harter noted.

"Sweet in the fact that we're in the state tournament, but obviously it's the last game here, so that can be sad," he said.

The night before the game, Harter showed his players old pictures from the early 1960s. The gym was packed.

"We were hoping that we could fill the stands the next day," Mrad said, "which we did."

And that wasn't all. With a 41-36 victory over Brunswick, Holy Cross notched its first state tournament win since 2007, the year of its most recent girls state title, and accomplished that feat in its final home game ever.

"I think this was the greatest team I've been on," Knight said. Then she backed up her teammates' story: "It's sad that [the school] is closing, but it just motivated all of us to push forward and do our best."

The team drove to Richmond the next day to play the defending state champs, mighty Richmond Christian, in the Division III quarterfinal round. Richmond romped to a 30-point victory, ending the Gaels' season. On paper, they finished with a 17-11 record and a trip to the state tourney. But the season was about much more than that.

"We closed it the way we should," Mrad said, "and I think we exceeded everybody's expectations."

## **What's next?**

No decision has been made about what will happen to the Langhorne Road building once Holy Cross closes in June, according to Deborah Cox, communications director for the Catholic Diocese of Richmond. Should anything change, she added, the Diocese "will let the community know."

Harter stood in the gym recently and looked around. At the wooden floor from a bygone era, at the banners on the walls, at the space itself. Behind him, the lights on the old green and white scoreboard officially have blinked off for the final time.

"I'm a sports guy," he said, "so you look at this gym and you're like, 'I hope this gym just doesn't sit empty.' Gym space is hard to find."

Just like the building, players' futures are somewhat up in the air. Like some of her classmates, Luther hopes to attend the new Holy Cross Academy, which is a parent-driven upstart hoping to begin holding classes at Centenary United Methodist Church on Rivermont Avenue on Aug. 17. The academy will offer traditional educational

services for Pre-K through eighth graders, while high school students will be a part of the Collaborative Catholic Learning Community, a homeschool and co-op hybrid. Knight said she may attend the academy as well.

The academy may offer sports, said Cara Stephens, a parent helping structure the new school. “We’re hoping to,” she said, “but it all depends on the numbers. If we have enough [students], we’ll try to save the Gaels and have our own teams.”

Older students who want to participate in sports, she added, could join the Lynchburg Patriots, a home school association that offers multiple levels of competition in sports like basketball, soccer, cross country and volleyball should the academy not have enough interest to field its own teams.

After one year at Holy Cross, Mrad hopes to remain in the U.S. and play college basketball next winter. She’s looking at colleges in California.

It’s possible some Gaels could wind up at nearby E.C. Glass, since there’s a long history of athletes transferring between the two schools.

Harter hopes to find a new coaching gig. Individuals come and go, he knows, cycling through secondary institutions like Holy Cross.

Many, like Turille, coaches before him and former athletes, are trying to make the most out of the time they have. That’s also the philosophy that pushed the girls’ team onward back in November.

“I was just a very small part of a long history,” Harter said. “So it’s humbling and awe-inspiring.”

Then, as the late-afternoon sun began its journey below the horizon, he smiled and walked through the gym. A few of his players lingered around, their laughs bouncing off the walls inside a school where, soon, voices will give way to silence.

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