

Remembering Another Moment In History

Fifty Years Ago, RHS Grad Was UVa's First Black Scholarship Football Player

There were Confederate flags waved at the stadium and around campus, and he and the other Black players got racist hate mail.

BY JONATHAN SCHWAB

With protests for racial justice going on around the United States since the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis on May 25, a Black 1970 Rockbridge High School graduate reflected last week on how race relations have changed over the last 50 years and how much more work has to be done.

John Stanley Land, who grew up in Fairfield, lived through segregation and integration. He attended Lylburn Downing School through seventh grade, when it was an all-Black school and he was bused in from Fairfield, before going to Rockbridge High School in Fairfield when it was integrated. Land, who goes by Stan, played football at RHS and became the first African American scholarship football player at the University of Virginia. In addition, he was part of the first entry class of Black undergraduate students at UVa. Land, 68, is now semi-retired after working for Dow Chemical Company and lives in Katy, Texas, just west of Houston. For Dow, Land was a salesman and did marketing and product management.

In a phone interview last Wednesday, Land reflected on his life experiences and what can be done to improve race relations.

Growing up in Rockbridge County, Land said he had “no real troubles,” making friends and having a pleasant childhood. He was born in Washington, D.C., but he and his sisters, Betty and Gloria, were raised in Fairfield by their grandparents, Betty and Jacob Halyburton. Land’s mother, Vivian Jeter, worked for the Internal Revenue Service in Washington, D.C., and she decided that having her children grow up with their grandparents in Fairfield would give them “a better home structure.” His father, Johnnie Land, fought in World War II before returning and living in New York City. The

Land children did not get to know their father, who died in his early 40s.

Land said he is grateful to his grandparents for raising him and his sister and instilling the right values in them. “I could’ve grown up as a very angry and resentful person if not for my grandparents,” Land said.

One incident of racial violence shook up the whole family, when an uncle of Land was beaten and then murdered and dragged behind a car. “That incident tends to stick in one’s recall, and when you see something like this George Floyd incident, it only heightens that. I think that society here today is in better position in that it is beginning to talk about these things.

“I think it’s unfortunate that we continue to have these types of incidents in our country in the year 2020,” Land added, noting that the difference today is that these types of incidents are filmed more, and they can be seen by the whole country because of the media. “It makes it more prevalent,” he said. “I think that people are horrified.”

Land recently wrote a letter to The News-Gazette, in which he was responding to the June 17 editorial titled “Reckoning With Our History.” In the same issue in “Out Of The Past,” Land noted that he was struck by a statement attributed to Hermann Lee, the Rockbridge County superintendent of schools in 1970, referencing how those year’s graduates were living during a “complex time.”

In his letter, Land wrote, “Certainly much has changed in the years since that time. Obviously, much has changed from what I and the family and friends I grew up with had experienced from our early childhood in Rockbridge County. From ‘colored’ only bathrooms and water fountains, in ad-

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‘I think one of the biggest things as it relates to relationships between races of people, I’ve always believed and have always been taught by my grandparents, respecting others is all about respecting yourself.’ - Stanley Land

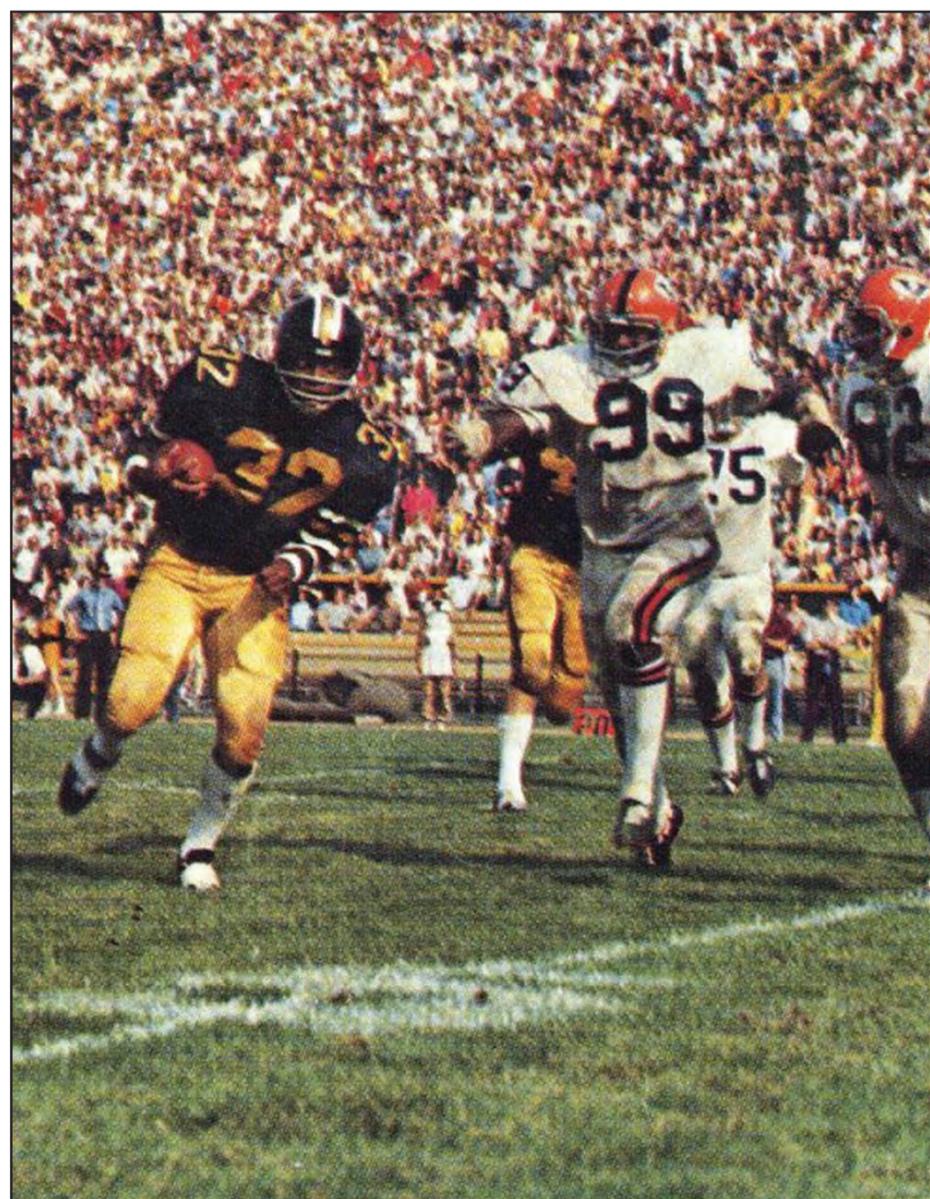


STANLEY LAND (center) joins two of his teammates, running backs John Rainey (left) and Kent Merritt (right) at a reunion at UVa. They were all in the first class of Black UVa scholarship football players. (photo courtesy of John Stanley Land)



IN THE summer before his first varsity football season at UVa, Stanley Land (far left) stands on the field with (from left) running back Kent Merritt, head coach Don Lawrence, running back John Rainey, defensive back Gary Hamm and quarterback Harrison Davis. (photo courtesy of John Stanley Land)

JOHN STANLEY LAND runs down the field during practice for the University of Virginia. Land, a 1970 Rockbridge High School graduate, was a defensive end for the Cavaliers and was the UVA’s first Black scholarship football player. (photo courtesy of John Stanley Land)



IN A game against Missouri, Stanley Land (99) hustles to try to stop the runner with the ball. (photo courtesy of John Stanley Land)

Football

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dition to segregated schools, on through to the desegregation of school and ultimately the University of Virginia. Yet, through all that, with the positive change certainly recognized, we as a society overall still haven't come to grips with equality for all. It's saddening to think that 50 years have passed and we're still talking about this and still faced with some of the same complex problems."

He said that it brings him hope to see how many young people are involved in pushing for change. "Young people are protesting, and hopefully with consistent pushing by younger generations, we'll see positive change," he said.

Looking back on his own youth, Land said it was an adjustment going to Rockbridge High School, where he was "the low man on the totem pole." He made the junior varsity football team in eighth grade. The next year, he moved up to the varsity team and was a running back and defensive end. His head coach was Ted Campbell, who was his coach until Charlie Huffman became the head coach for Land's senior year.

Grateful for Campbell, Land said, "I can say, beyond a doubt, he was one of the greatest influences on me on that time. He was highly vested in my success. Coming out of high school, I initially would not have thought that I would've been able to go to college because we couldn't afford it as a family. If we couldn't have afforded it, I would've gone to Vietnam, but Ted would have none of that. He made videotapes. That was highly unusual. Virginia never recruited Black athletes, and Rockbridge was a single-A school, just 65 kids in my graduating class.

"Ted was instrumental," Land added, noting that the coach felt strongly that Land could be successful both as a football player and in the classroom.

Land was an all-state player in high school and, with the help of Campbell, he got to visit UVa on a recruiting weekend.

At UVa, Land wore No. 99 and was a defensive end. Joining Land as the other first Black scholarship players, all from bigger Virginia high schools, were running back John Rainey from Tazewell, quarterback Harrison Davis from Hampton and running back Kent Merritt from Lane High School in Charlottesville.

Then, first-year players at UVa played for the junior varsity team, and Land's UVa career got off to a rough start. "The very first week of practice, I ended up getting into a scuffle with one of the offensive tackles because he used a racial slur," Land said. "That created some rolling around."

Land added that Black players "were subject to hear[ing] things like that, initially," from other players and the fans. There were Confederate flags waved at the stadium and around campus, and he and the other Black players got racist hate mail. Davis was treated the worst of all, Land said, because he was a Black quarterback replacing a popular white quarterback. Eventually, the poor treatment by the fans led to Davis' decision to transfer to the University of South Carolina.

Eventually, Land said, his white teammates accepted him and the other Black players. "Football is like a fraternity," he said. "Once you establish yourself, the team becomes, more or less, a fraternity."

Land became close to his JV coach, Al Groh, who was a defensive coordinator for the varsity team. Groh would eventually become an NFL assistant coach and, in 2000, the head coach of the New York Jets. Groh then became the head coach at UVa for nine years before serving as the defensive coordinator at Georgia Tech for two years. In recent years, he has served as a college football analyst for ESPN.

Talking about his friendship with Groh, Land said, "He's a great guy. He stays in touch. He sent a text on the Fourth of July." Land said that, when Groh travels, he lets him know when he is going to be near Houston so they can meet up.

For Land, traveling was a big benefit of playing for UVa. Aside from Washington, D.C., he had never traveled outside of the state of Virginia before college. One of the highlights was getting to play at the University of Michigan, which had guard Reggie McKenzie, who would later have a strong career for the Buffalo Bills in the NFL. The Cavaliers lost that game, but being in that environment was a valuable experience for Land.

Another highlight of Land's UVa career was when he was a junior and the team defeated South Carolina, with Davis, the former UVa quarterback, playing for the Gamecocks. The Cavaliers also beat Virginia Tech that year.

Land earned a bachelor of science degree in education from UVa and is about nine hours and a thesis short of earning a master's degree in counseling and administration.

He has been married to Frances Porterfield, a Rockbridge High School alumna, for 46 years, and they have three sons: Kevin, Christopher and Eric. They have a 5-year-old granddaughter, Scarlett, the daughter of Kevin and Shay.

The Lands have lived in Katy, Texas, since 1992. Before that, they lived in Michigan, Missouri and, in Charlottesville, working out of the Richmond area.

Land no longer works for Dow Chemical Company, but he has his own company, doing some brokering and trading.

In addressing racism moving forward, Land said, "There is not one clear solution. I think one of the biggest things as it relates to relationships between races of people, I've always believed and have always been taught by my grandparents, respecting others is all about respecting yourself. You should be able to approach people the way you want to be approached. As long as people are willing to communicate, to respect each other, to listen to each other, I think positive change is possible. If we fail to take advantage, I think we're in for a long struggle."

Virtual Racing All The Rage

Community Of Runners Adapts To Challenge Of Pandemic

BY JONATHAN SCHWAB

With running races canceled or postponed due to the coronavirus, a number of local runners took it upon themselves to complete virtual races instead. This is a way to bring the running community together without being physically together in a race.

Several members of the Buena Vista Run Club were signed up for the Foot Levelers Blue Ridge Marathon, scheduled for this Saturday, April 18, in Roanoke and along the Blue Ridge Parkway. After that race was canceled, club members eventually decided to take on the COVID 19-Mile Social Distancing Run.

The course the group created was a hilly one, and runners could take it on whenever they chose to. They started at Camden Field, ran up Magnolia Avenue and onto Route 60, going west. They then turned onto Stuartsburg Road and took a right up Forest Grove Road, going 9.5 miles out before turning around to make it 19 miles total.

Buena Vista Run Club member Gregory Chittum said the purpose of the self-supported race was “to inspire a little competition among the club and keep our running fun.” The race times are to be submitted between March 28 and this Saturday, with runners using the Strava app to post their times.

Adam Williams did the 19-mile run on April 3, finishing in 2 hours and 38 minutes (8:18 per mile) and posted a video report on the group’s Facebook page afterward, saying, “It was a doozy, for sure. The first half is worse than the second half, a lot of rolling hills. The course is a lot tougher than I expected, but it was fun.” Williams said he paused a few times to stretch after he started getting cramps at about mile 14. He also ran out of water, so used the river to fill up his bottle. “Desperate times call for desperate measures, so it got me through, but awesome run. I wish you guys that are doing it good luck.”

Jason Mazingo, who ran the course in 2 hours and 30 minutes (7:54 per mile) on April 4, said it was a “tough but fun run.”

Les Gearhart, who also completed the run that day in 2 hours and 53 minutes (9:06 per mile), said, “As always, I’m thankful God still allows me to run! It was a beautiful day and a beautiful course.”

Chittum, who finished the course on April 4 in 3 hours and 14 minutes (10:15 per mile), said it was “a fun and challenging run.”

Another Buena Vista Run Club runner completing the COVID 19-miler that weekend was Chuck Seelke. He finished in 3 hours and 37 minutes (11:25 per mile), and his wife, Teresa, ran 15 miles.

Dave Gearhart, Les’s older brother, who was signed up to run the Boston Marathon, which was postponed from April 20 to Sept. 14, is planning to run Boston in September. “Although I’m not really excited about long-distance training in August,” he said. He said he is also thinking of running the COVID 19-miler this week.

A Chessie Challenge

Another group of runners did their virtual races on the Chessie Trail. Eric Sheffield, who organizes the Chessie Trail races in October, ran a marathon on the trail on March 22, the day he was signed up to run the canceled Yuengling Shamrock Marathon in Virginia Beach.

Sheffield finished in 3 hours, 54 minutes and 36 seconds (8:57), beating his goal of 4 hours. “I found the course to be very enjoyable and fast,” Sheffield said. “It was nice to have this opportunity to run a race on it, as I’m usually tied up when we have our regular races.”

Sheffield got his whole family involved in his race. His daughter Silvia rode her bicycle to lead him and opened gates, his daughter Laurel was his pacer and gate opener, and his wife, Elise, was in charge of logistics, photography and ringing the cowbell.

To encourage other runners to run virtual races on the Chessie Trail, Sheffield noted that members of the Friends of the Chessie Trail marked the turnaround points for the Chessie Trail half marathon course in late March. The course follows the trail except for the third-of-a-mile detour onto Stuartsburg Road where the South River bridge is washed out. The Stuartsburg Road section includes some brief hills.

On April 5, two days before her 24th birthday, Laurel Sheffield, ran a 24-miler from Lexington to Buena Vista and back, at a pace of 7:19 per mile, on the Chessie Trail and on the flood wall in Buena Vista. Eric biked with her, opened the gates, and gave her water and Gu to fuel her. It was the longest run of Laurel’s life.

Laurel Sheffield was the leading distance runner for Rockbridge County High School, graduating in 2013, before running cross country and track for Davidson College and earning Atlantic 10 all-conference honors in cross country. She graduated from Davidson in 2018 and is working at Lex Running Shop, mostly helping with social media since the store has been closed lately. Laurel is working toward a degree in physical therapy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Katie Doar, a staff writer for The News-Gazette, and her husband, Michael, were signed up to run the Charlottesville Marathon, which was postponed from April 4 to Oct. 24. Katie said they both still plan to run the marathon in October, but they went ahead and ran their virtual marathon, mostly on the Chessie Trail, beginning at 7 a.m. on April 4. “It was beautiful,” Katie said. The couple ran a time of 4 hours and 20 minutes (9:55 per mile).

Ultramarathoner Helen MacDermott was signed up for the Terrapin Mountain 50K near Big Island on March 21 and the Bull Run Run 50-Miler on April 4 in Clifton. After those races were canceled, she decided to go for 50 miles on the Chessie Trail on April 4. She made it 45.5 miles. The race director of the Terrapin Mountain 50K gave runners the option of earning a finisher’s shirt and mug.

“Many of us chose to run on the actual race day,” MacDermott said. “We dropped aid on

our own and some folks were kind enough to come out to offer water/snacks, but we staggered our start times so we wouldn’t be in a big pack. I actually ran a decent time, not my fastest nor my slowest, though I didn’t feel motivated to race.”

Forrest Wheelock of Buena Vista ran the Personal Peak Ultra on April 4, running 4.167 miles each hour for as many hours as possible. With the help of his children to run with him and his wife for doing all the technical work with Zoom, Wheelock worked through foot problems to get in 33.5 miles. “Absolutely beautiful day to spend running,” Wheelock said.

Iana Konstantinova, professor of Spanish and Division Chair of Social Sciences at Southern Virginia University, did her virtual Charlottesville Ten Miler on the Chessie Trail in under 2 hours on March 29. Konstantinova is the social director of the Lexington chapter Team Red, White and Blue, which has a mission of enriching the lives of America’s veterans by connecting them to their community through physical and social activity. On March 19, Team RWB suspended all in-person events but encouraged its members to continue following the mission individually and virtually.

Konstantinova had followed a training program provided by her running friends, Christine Blackshaw of Maryland and Katie Pugh, who coached the Western Albemarle High School girls cross country team to the Jefferson District and Region 3C titles last fall, followed by a runner-up finish in the Class 3 state meet. Last April, Pugh ran her first Boston Marathon.

Challenging Ourselves

Several friends and I had signed up for the Charlottesville Ten Miler, scheduled for March 28. I had run this race when I was a freshman at the University of Virginia 20 years ago, and I was looking forward to the challenge.

After it was cancelled, I ran a 10-miler on the Chessie Trail on April 4, starting in late morning and finishing in early afternoon. My time was 1:42:30 (10:15 per mile) about 35 minutes slower than when I ran the Charlottesville Ten Miler 20 years ago, when I was leaner and my high school racing days were fairly recent, but I met by ultimate goal of completing the race.

Without other runners physically present, the true competition for those of us who took part in these virtual races was ourselves against the clock. As George Sheehan, renowned physician, author and runner, once wrote, “It’s very hard in the beginning to understand that the whole idea is not to beat the other runners. Eventually you learn that the competition is against the little voice inside you that wants you to quit.”

Running is a voluntary exercise that is fun and keeps us healthy, but it also takes effort. We may not have won any medals for our efforts, but we beat that little voice inside of us who wanted us to quit – that little voice that said our legs were too tired or the breathing was too difficult. We persevered, and we can take pride in the accomplishment of completing these virtual races.



ABOVE, Laurel Sheffield displays her finishing time on her Garmin watch after completing her 24-mile run two days before her 24th birthday. (Eric Sheffield photo) BELOW, Iana Konstantinova and Jonathan Schwab take selfies on the Chessie Trail after completing the virtual Charlottesville Ten Miler.



ABOVE, Eric Sheffield runs along the Chessie Trail while his daughter Silvia follows him on her bicycle. Sheffield completed his virtual marathon in place of the canceled Yuengling Shamrock Marathon, in 3 hours, 54 minutes and 36 seconds. AT RIGHT, After finishing, Eric and his daughters Laurel (left) and Silvia (right) celebrate his sub-4-hour marathon. (Elise Sheffield photos)



'Obviously, nothing is normal. We were trying to be cautious about the use of equipment. In all reality, there's only so much you could do.' - Reeves Whitmore

The Boys Of Summer

Four RCHS Alums Return To Diamond In Stuarts Draft

BY JONATHAN SCHWAB

Seizing the opportunity to play baseball at a time when sports are scarce due to the coronavirus pandemic, four Rockbridge County High School alumni played for the Stuarts Draft Diamondbacks of the Rockingham County Baseball League this summer.

Cody Bartley, Dalton Benson, Brandon Minter and Reeves Whitmore all reunited to play for the Diamondbacks, whose season ran from June 27 through Tuesday of last week. The RCBL, founded in 1924, welcomes college players and other former high school players looking to get more experience, and it's one of the oldest continuous baseball leagues in the country.

Although wins were hard to come by for the Diamondbacks – they went 4-18, losing both games (4-2 and 14-0) in a best-of-three series in first round of the playoffs to the Broadway Bruins – there were many highlights and great experiences along the way for all four Wildcats.

With the threat of the pandemic, players and coaches took precautions to keep themselves safe. They didn't sit in their home dugout because it was too tight a space to fit all the players and socially distance. Instead, they sat in chairs by the field, with six feet between players. They were able to use the big dugouts when playing games at James Madison University. Each player brought his own water bottle.

"Obviously, nothing is normal," Whitmore said. "We were trying to be cautious about the use of equipment. In all reality, there's only so much you could do."

Bartley, a 2017 RC graduate, made the Diamondbacks' starting lineup as a designated hitter, and he was named to the All-RCBL Team. During the regular season, he had a batting average of .438, trailing only two players: Chase DeLauter of the Broadway Bruins, who had an average of .545 and plays Division I baseball for James Madison University; and Stuarts Draft teammate Tanner Morris, a University of Virginia player who batted .462 this summer. Bartley also hit 10 home runs and recorded 32 hits and 30 RBIs this summer.



MINTER

Assessing the summer, Bartley said, "Individually, it went better than I expected."

An all-conference pitcher for RC, Bartley has played for the Diamondbacks for the last four summers. However, he stopped pitching after last summer because he had Tommy John surgery in October to repair a torn ligament in his arm.

Bartley said he enjoyed being able to play with former RC teammates. Both Benson and Minter were Stuarts Draft teammates with Bartley last year, and Whitmore was Bartley's teammate two years ago. "It's nice," Bartley said. "There will probably come a point when we don't get to play together anymore."

Bartley noted that the RCBL was more competitive this year because a lot of other leagues had shut down due to the coronavirus.

After graduating from high school, Bartley worked at Dynovis Inc., a manufacturing facility in Fairfield, until his surgery. He said it's been a long road to recovery, but he was going to tour the West Virginia Tech campus last week and has been in touch with the baseball coach about playing for the team.

Bartley's parents, Penny and Richard, came to a lot of his games this year, as did his younger sister, Kelby.

Praising Bartley was Justin Wenger, who was the Wildcats' head coach from 2014-2019 before stepping down, with Travis Roadcap replacing him. "I love Cody to death," Wenger said. "Great kid, a joy to have on the baseball team."

"When Cody was locked in, when he was in the zone, he could be dominant on the mound, and Cody could carry your lineup at the plate," Wenger added.



BARTLEY

"One of the beauties of Cody was he was very good at reading the atmosphere and the mood of the dugout, and he always knew the situation," Wenger continued. "He was good at knowing when to pull the prank. He was also very good at knowing now's the time to lock in, now's the time to focus. Now's not the time to joke around."

On the mound, Wenger said, Bartley "didn't show that he was frustrated with the atmosphere. One of the best ways to describe Cody was Cody was a battler. When he went on the field, he went on the field to compete, and he did it quite well."

Whitmore was the one Division I player of the four RC alumni on the Diamondbacks. A 2018 RC graduate and a rising junior first baseman and third baseman at Virginia Military Institute, Whitmore was the starting third baseman nearly every game for the Diamondbacks. A pitcher and shortstop in high school, Whitmore also had one inning of relief pitching for Stuarts Draft. At RC, Whitmore earned all-conference honors three times, and he was named to the all-region first team after his senior season. He holds RC's school records for hits, runs scored and RBIs.

After graduating from RC, Whitmore played for Stuarts Draft for a summer. He played in six games for VMI as a freshman, with one start, but battled a thumb injury. He started this year by getting two hits in three at-bats before the season was suspended in mid-March due to the coronavirus.

Last summer, Whitmore played for the Roanoke Rails of the Carolina-Virginia Collegiate League. This summer, that league wasn't going to have baseball at first, but later it did. When it didn't look like



BENSON

the Rails would have a team this year, Whitmore contacted the Diamondbacks and was grateful to get a spot on the team.

"At least when I go back to VMI, it won't have been four to six months since I was able to step onto the field," he added. "I was able to see a lot of pitching this summer. The purpose was served for me."

Whitmore said playing for Stuarts Draft was also ideal for what he was doing this summer. He did an internship with Kellstrom & Lee Construction. The company is based in Richmond, but Whitmore mostly worked from Lexington, shadowing a project manager and superintendent at Washington and Lee University. "It was a bit of a mix, some office work, doing proposals and estimates, making phone calls and working with the W&L construction team," he said.

Whitmore is a business and economics major, and he was "getting my feet wet in my industry," but he is undecided on his career goals. He has done well academically, and he was named to VMI's Cadet-Athlete Scholar Society.

Looking back on his high school career, Whitmore said he learned a lot from Wenger, Roadcap and hitting coach Nick Perlozzo. He keeps in touch with Wenger and said it helped with the transition from high school to college baseball. "He was always available to talk if I needed to," Whitmore said.

Wenger praised Whitmore as "quite possibly the most compete high school baseball player I've ever coached. I say that because he was a very good athlete. Not an eye-popping athlete, but a very good athlete. He had the baseball IQ, he had the mind for it, he had the work ethic that was



WHITMORE

absolutely second to none. When I see him play at VMI now and when I hear him talk about the game even today, all of that is still there."

Wenger added that Whitmore is "a quiet leader" who would make "an amazing coach" if he chooses to do so. "He is a leader by example."

During practice, Whitmore would push himself hard, and then he asked Wenger if he was going hard enough. He also asked what he could be doing better during a game, Wenger recalled. "He was always thinking ahead," Wenger said. "Everything he thought about was from the perspective of, what can I do to help the team win? I can count on one hand the number of players that thought that way."

Supporting Whitmore through the season were his parents, Wilson and Terry, and his older brother, Will, a 2015 RC graduate who also played baseball for the Wildcats. All three, along with several friends, were in attendance for the final game of the season, played at the Diamondbacks' home field.

Benson, a 2018 graduate, played for the Diamondbacks for some of the season. He had a shoulder injury last summer while playing for Stuarts Draft, but he came back and pitched some this summer. "Playing in one of the only leagues still playing was fun because everyone was itching to get back to playing," Benson said. "The RCBL had some very great teams this year."

Benson originally signed to play Division III baseball at Wilmington College in Ohio, but he recently completed his freshman year at Potomac State College of West Virginia University, a junior college where he is a pitcher and made the All-Academic

Third Team. Benson said his time playing at RC "has definitely helped and built me up for playing college baseball, showing me that you need to put the work in to have positive outcomes."

Benson, who earned all-district honorable mention honors as a senior pitcher at RC, said the Wildcats "played at a high level and had really good teams all four years." He said that, under Wenger, "We weren't allowed to slack off at all, and I appreciate the way he did things because it [was about getting] ready for the next level. It's no playing around at the college level, and he showed us how to carry ourselves as well." Benson said Roadcap has stayed in touch with him and has helped him stay focused, talking him through some rough times when he was injured as a college freshman.

Wenger said Benson "definitely had a love for the game and a commitment to the game. ... Whether it was a starting pitcher who needed someone coming in to pitch. ... He was a role guy. He was very successful at it."

Benson's parents are Fred and Whitney Benson.

Minter, a 2017 RC graduate, was a right fielder for the Diamondbacks this year and last year. In a reserve role this season, he played in 12 games, had two hits and scored a run. As a high school senior, Minter was named to the all-conference first team.

Wenger said Minter was a quiet, stoic player who blossomed as a senior as the eighth player in the batting order. Minter ended up being second on the team in RBIs that year and hit in the high .300s. He made a few assists in the outfield.

As a batter, Wenger said, Minter struggled early on, but he worked hard and became a leader as a senior. "He was getting the fastballs, and he wasn't missing. It was really a testament to the work he put in. ... He never wavered. We always knew he was going to be a good ballplayer."

Perhaps Whitmore summed it up best what playing summer baseball meant to all four players in the midst of a pandemic. "I was just thankful to be able to play, given the circumstances and everything looking so bleak," he said.