

Sanchez triumphs for state title

Freshman wins VAWA folkstyle 112-pound class championship

By Nick Vandeloecht

Sports Editor

POWHATAN - At first, Natalia Sanchez was really nervous going into her matchups with Caitlin Davis.

At stake was the Virginia Wrestling Association Folkstyle States USA Junior Girls 112-pound championship, and Sanchez saw that Davis – her sole opponent in the bracket – was taller than her. Her broad stance intimidated her.

Sanchez had also overstretched a ligament in the inside portion of her knee a few weeks beforehand, limiting her to three days of practice going into the

see SANCHEZ, pg. 2B



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Powhatan freshman Natalia Sanchez (right) stands as the Virginia Wrestling Association USA Junior Girls state champion in the 112-pound class at Richmond's Arthur Ashe Jr. Athletic Center. At left is runner-up Caitlin Davis.



ANJIE KAY/POWHATAN TODAY

Powhatan senior TJ Gates has committed to attending and playing football for Hampden-Sydney College.

Family legacy lives on

Gates to become third generation football player and student at Hampden-Sydney

By Nick Vandeloecht

Sports Editor

POWHATAN – For Powhatan High School senior TJ Gates, the family legacy runs deep.

One of his grandfathers, Judge Ernest P. Gates, played football at Hampden-Sydney College and later served on the college's Board of Trustees. TJ's grandfather on his mom's side, Dr. Jorge Silveira, was a professor at Hampden-Sydney.

TJ's father, Tom Gates, also played for the college, as did TJ's uncles Bill Moore, Rusty Gates and Caleb Varner, and his three cousins Ben Gates, John Moore and Will Moore.

TJ's mother, Kathy Gates, took classes there while she worked towards her degree at Longwood, and his aunt, The Rev. Gini Gates DiStanislaio, has an honorary doctorate from H-SC.

Three more uncles and five more cousins have graduated from there as well.

So when he begins his freshman year this fall, TJ Gates will become the 18th member of his family to go to Hampden-Sydney College.

"It's truly an honor," he said. "I was raised around Hampden-Sydney and I've known its place for me for a while."

And he, too, will get to continue his football career at the collegiate level, as he has committed to playing for the Tigers.

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Greenhow earns 2nd at states



DAVID LAWRENCE/MECHANICSVILLE LOCAL

Powhatan High School junior Anthony Greenhow dashes to a second-place finish in the boys 300-meter dash in the Virginia High School League Class 4 indoor track and field championships at Liberty University last Tuesday.

Staff Reports

Competing in the Class 4 indoor state track and field championships in Lynchburg on Tuesday, March 3, Powhatan High School junior and multisport standout Anthony Greenhow ran a blistering time of 34.2 seconds to take runner-up in the boys 300-meter dash.

While he narrowly missed out on the gold - Courtland's Matthew Spicer turned in a winning time of 34.1 seconds, a slim 0.1 of a second quicker - Greenhow with his time set a new Powhatan High School record in the 300. He also joined Spicer in beating the previous meet record of 34.95, set by E.C. Glass' Emmanuel Walker in 2018.

Greenhow's state runner-up finish in the 300 followed a regional championship performance in the Class 4, Region B boys 55-meter dash, in which he ran a time of 6.47

seconds to break his own school record and set the new Region 4B record.

Seniors Paris Brown and Arnell Jackson both took on the final indoor track and field state meet of their high school careers. In the girls 55 dash preliminaries held Monday, March 2, Brown ran a 7.64, which was 18th fastest in the event. The top eight advanced to Tuesday's final heat in the 55. Jackson notched a ninth-place distance of 16-6 3/4 out of 18 competitors in the girls state long jump on Monday.

Brown, Greenhow, Jackson and their Powhatan track and field teammates are now turning their attention to the 2020 outdoor season. Greenhow and Jackson both earned placements in last year's outdoor state meet, as Greenhow ran third in the boys 100 dash (11.13 seconds) and fourth in the 200 (22.25) and Jackson took fourth in the girls long jump (17-3 1/2).

Experience-heavy unit preps for 2020

Previewing Powhatan's varsity softball team

Staff Reports

POWHATAN – Last year's core of newcomers stepped up to help Powhatan's varsity softball team deliver a 15-6 season and reach the Class 4, Region B semifinals after losing seven starters from the 2018 state runner-up team.

This year, the Indians return all but three starters (Class of 2019's Briana Hensley, Lindsey Elam and Gabby Moore) and will feature several juniors who contributed to last season's successes.

Four seniors – middle infielder

Maddy Hayden, first base Rileigh De Weese, pitcher/outfielder Madeline Peloke and outfielder Koda Lewis – return to lead the team. Returning juniors include infielder/catcher Kayla Davis, pitcher/outfielder Sarah English, catcher Emmalee Lawson, outfielder Jillian Ratliff, infielder/pitcher Ellie Barton and infielder Bella Lhuiller. Returning sophomores include infielder Joy Johnson and outfielder Savannah Johnson.

New players coming up from the JV team include juniors Autumn McMillen, Courtney Osterman, sophomore Carsen Hogston and freshman Taylor Fitzsimmons.

Pitching will be more experi-



FILE/POWHATAN TODAY

Utility player Sarah English (12) is among the Indians' returners for the upcoming 2020 season.

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C&F BANK'S ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

TRACK AND FIELD ALL-STAR



WHO: Anthony Greenhow
WHAT HE DID: The Powhatan High School junior multisport standout delivered his best state finish to date when he narrowly finished second to Courtland's Matthew Spicer in the boys 300-meter dash during the

Virginia High School League Class 4 indoor track and field state championships, held March 2 and 3, in Lynchburg. Spicer, also a junior, ran a winning time of 34.10, a slim .01 of a second quicker than Greenhow's 34.20. Greenhow earlier in the season qualified for the 300 state event

via time. His state runner-up finish in the 300 followed a performance in the Class 4 Region B boys 55-meter dash in which he ran a regional championship time of 6.47 seconds to break his own school record and set the new Region 4B record.



Indians looking to build on last year's successes



NICK VANDELOECHT/POWHATAN TODAY

Powhatan's Hayden Somerville (26) is picked up and embraced by a teammate after he scored a goal in Friday's home scrimmage versus Benedictine.

By Nick Vandeloecht

Sports Editor

Powhatan's boys lacrosse players have been playing together for more than three years, and the continuity, confidence and camaraderie they've built up with one another have all been visible to their head coach Joe Niles. He wants to see his team be "fast, physical and aggressive," and that's what he saw out of his guys in Friday's home scrimmage versus Benedictine.

The Indians are coming off of their first winning season (10-5) in four years as a member of the Virginia High School League, and they're stacked with talented returners. That group includes: four-year starter and senior Ethan Niles (attack, Alvernia University commit), who leads the team in overall points (goals and assists) and holds the team assists record; four-year players and three-year starters Robbie Williams – who should be a key offensive player and scorer for his team – and Spencer Moran – "the heartbeat of our defense" according to Niles; four-year players Jacob Leynes – who's expected to take on a key defensive role on the team this year – and Hayden Bradbury – "the 'brains' of the defense," Niles said; sophomore goalie Connor Jeffs; face-off specialists and three-year players Chase Mahaney and Ryland Davis; Brandon Palmore; and Hayden Somerville, who showed his toughness in Friday's scrimmage when he took a big hit late in the game, but didn't lose possession, didn't break his rhythm and slung the ball into the net for the goal.

According to Niles, the guys "really have bonded together" and are "a really super tight group."

"It's exciting," he said. "You don't see that all the time, and these guys really are – they're a band of brothers. They're in it to win it, and they work super hard together."

Newcomers include freshman goalie Jaden Cabaniss, junior midfielder Andrew Bastiansen and sophomore long stick midfielder Dante Evans.

The boys lacrosse scene in the Dominion District should provide the Indians with stiff competition, but they're also coming out of a highly talented Jefferson District, where student-athletes on those teams have been playing lacrosse for a long time. Niles said they did start making gains on those teams, and they're excited to be where they are now in the new district.

"Looking forward to playing Midlo; they're a monster," Niles said. "James River's a monster. Cosby's a monster, so we're the tiny guys, we're the little fish swimming with a bunch of sharks. But I think we'll do okay. We've got our own brand of lacrosse here. These kids are bulldogs – they never give up, they play as hard as they can, they're going to give you the full 60 minutes of lacrosse."

For Niles and his varsity team, a successful season would be to reach the state tournament and win a couple of games.

"But just seeing these boys grow as lacrosse players, become good young men and that sort of thing and be productive outside and off the lacrosse field...in the classroom, that's the most important thing for us," Niles said. "If we can see that happen, that's great. That's a good, successful season for us."

SANCHEZ

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tournament.

"I was so unconfident and nervous and just stressing out for the states coming up," she said, "because I didn't think I had a chance of winning whatsoever just because I had missed two or three weeks of practice."

Sanchez pinned Davis in 2 minutes and 45 seconds.

"After winning the first one, I was very shocked," she said, "but confident, except I didn't want to get overly confident and mess myself up in the second round."

Because Sanchez and Davis were the only two wrestlers in the 112-pound bracket, the champion would be determined through a best-of-three format. Sanchez led 1-0 after the first round, so a win in the second would guarantee her the title.

Sanchez pinned her again, this time in 1 minute and 9 seconds.

That's how she secured her first VAWA state championship at Richmond's Arthur Ashe Jr. Athletic Center.

"Winning that, it just gives me more hope for my future matches," said Sanchez, a freshman at Powhatan High School.

She was dominant in both

rounds. Eleven seconds into the first period of her opening round, she took down Davis for two points, then racked up three near-falls for a 9-0 lead. She added a reversal before securing the pin 45 seconds inside the second period.

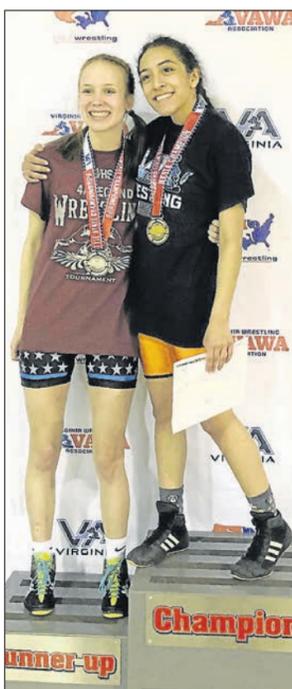
In the second round, Sanchez strung together a take-down and a 3-point near-fall for a 5-0 lead 17 seconds inside the match before pinning Davis in the first period.

She first began wrestling in 2016 along with her sister, Sabrina Sanchez. Their brother was the first one to wrestle, and when they went to one of the practices, they watched and "thought it would be fun to throw each other around since home wasn't the best place to do it," Natalia said smiling.

Their coach at the time, Virginia State Police Special Agent and Blackhawk Gym co-founder Mike Walter, further inspired them. He was the one who got Natalia into wrestling.

She committed to wrestling with her sister for one full year. Then she stopped for multiple reasons. Coach Walter was shot and killed in the line of duty in May 2017. Her sister had also stopped going before her.

But when Natalia found out that there was a girl who was wrestling at the youth



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Powhatan's Natalia Sanchez (right) takes a photo with Caitlin Davis at the Virginia Wrestling Association Folkstyle States championship in Richmond.

club, she was inspired to go back.

She's been wrestling ever since, bringing her total time on the mat to about two-and-a-half years. In addition to competing at the JV level for Powhatan High School, Natalia got to take on a couple of varsity matches at the

120-pound spot this season when Britton Proffitt went out due to a concussion.

"I was very shocked at first. I did not think I was going to end up in a varsity spot," Natalia said. "But it ended up working out at one of my matches. It was our home meet (versus James River and Monacan at Powhatan High School), and I had beat the girl (Monacan's Cameron Huffman in a 5-3 decision). I was very shocked, because it was my first varsity match, too."

Natalia went to states her first year and earned third place, and she's also participated in a couple of smaller youth tournaments. She's thinking that if there are any girls-only tournaments coming up during the offseason, she will look to go to those.

She's also had to wrestle boys in Virginia High School League matches, as the VHSL does not have separate divisions for boys and girls in wrestling.

"Wrestling in the mixed ones, it's harder and scarier because the guys...they have more muscle, and they're bigger, and with the girls, I know I have a chance of winning because we're around the same with muscles," she said. "And plus, I just feel more comfortable with it, too. I mean, guys, it's fine. It's just, I'm a little nervous."

As girls' participation in wrestling grows nationwide, Natalia has been further inspired by "seeing that lots of girls are going into it."

"It's inspiring me to stick with it and to not give up, because there are hard times during wrestling," she said. "But you just have to get past those, because not every day is going to be a hard day for you...you have your hard times, but you get over them."

As she's competed, she's seen her Powhatan teammates and coaches supporting her, and she knows that they're there for her, win or lose. For Natalia, that's been a central part of what's helped her attain the wins and state championship she now has.

"My coaches (Zach Olson, Jonathan Tanaka and Richard Fitzsimmons) are a big part of that, because they're there for me and they inspire me to keep going, and my teammates as well," Natalia said. "They're all brothers to me, and they kind of make me a stronger and better person."

Natalia was very surprised by how her first year on the Powhatan team went. She's proud of her teammates and how they were towards her.

"I wouldn't think they would be inclusive since I was the only girl," she said, "but they were really sweet and kind to me."

GATES

Continued from pg. 1B

"I'm looking forward to it," said Gates, who spoke to wanting to "see what I can do at the next level."

"Not many people get to do that."

Gates started playing flag football around first grade, then moved up to tackle. He's loved the sport from the day he first put the pads on.

In his senior season, Gates, a team captain, delivered 91 total tackles (58 solo, five for loss and three sacks), forced two fumbles and recovered two fumbles across 10 games played in 2019.

"It's really studying the film and it's really working in the weight room and in the offseason," he said. "You've got to be bigger and stronger and faster than your opponent."

The 6-foot-2 senior linebacker on Sept. 20 racked up eight tackles (two for loss) and both forced and recovered a fumble to lead his Indians football team past Midlothian.

They won that game with a rare winning score of 2-0.

Gates' postseason accolades include Honorable Mention All-Metro, Honorable Mention All-Region and the Indian Award (coach's choice for team MVP), and he was chosen to play for the South All-Stars in this past year's Big River Rivalry All-Star se-



Powhatan football's Cameron Arnold (52) and Wyatt Lowe (58) congratulate TJ Gates (44) after he sacked Cosby's quarterback Josh Powell (in photo at right) in an Oct. 11 regular season game. Gates committed to Hampden-Sydney.

nior showcase game. He was a three-year varsity starter at linebacker and a four-year varsity letterman across three seasons at Powhatan and his eighth grade year at Blessed Sacrament Huguenot. As a freshman, he started at linebacker on the Powhatan High School JV football team that went 11-0.

He and his varsity Indians went 7-3 in 2018, and he's gotten to learn from two head coaches with storied careers: Jim Woodson, who at the end of that 2018 season retired as the winningest

head football coach in the Richmond area (282-106-1 with 16 district championships, eight regional titles and state championships in 1996 and 2003), and Mike Henderson, who led Blessed Sacrament Huguenot to five VISAA state championships, led Douglas Freeman High School to six winning seasons in seven years and took the helm of Powhatan's team this past fall.

From both coaches, Gates has learned how to be a better person and football player both on and off the

field.

He's also been around the Hampden-Sydney coaches for a while through his cousins. He described them as good people.

"And the players, they're people like me," he said. "I'm looking forward to being part of that group."

Gates is one of two siblings. His brother, Josh, also went to Powhatan High School. Josh played on the 2007 and 2008 varsity baseball teams and was part of the Indians' 2008 state championship-winning season.



FILE/POWHATAN TODAY



Board of Supervisors dives into budget process

By **Laura McFarland**
 Editor

POWHATAN – The Powhatan County Board of Supervisors took its first look at the county’s fiscal year (FY) 2021 operating budget in a session that was less about balance sheets and more about familiarizing themselves with the process.

With three new supervisors experiencing their first budget as board members, county staff made the initial budget workshop held on Monday, March 2 a broad introduction to the proposed budget.

Interim county administrator Bret Schardein gave an overview to the upcoming budget, which is currently proposed at \$64.8 million, a \$415,534 increase over the FY 2020 adopted



PHOTO BY LAURA MCFARLAND

The Powhatan County Board of Supervisors took its first look at the county’s fiscal year 2021 operating budget in a March 2 workshop.

budget of \$64.4 million. These numbers do not yet include the full proposed budget from Powhatan County Public Schools, which the supervisors

will not see until Monday, March 16.

The county saw an overall increase of about \$2.1 million in estimated revenues from real estate taxes, personal property taxes, other taxes, and other revenues, said Charla Schubert, director of finance. The net increase of the budget was reduced by the one-time use of capital maintenance reserve from the FY 2020 adopted budget to fund capital projects and recycling costs. The capital maintenance reserve will be evaluated during the review of capital improvement plan at a later workshop.

While the board hasn’t adopted an official budget policy yet, Schardein explained that the staff went into the process with a goal of revenue neutral expenditures.

see BUDGET pg. 8 ▶

Primary sees 14.63% turnout

By **Laura McFarland**
 Editor

POWHATAN – Powhatan County saw a slightly higher than expected turnout for the Democratic Presidential Primary last week with 14.63 percent of registered voters turning out to cast a ballot.

As he did in Virginia as a whole, Joe Biden earned the most votes in Powhatan, with 1,812 choosing him as the democratic nominee for president. Of the other five remaining candidates, Bernie Sanders

see PRIMARY, pg. 6 ▶



PHOTOS BY LAURA MCFARLAND

Above, John and Tracy Chowanski check in at the Powhatan Courthouse precinct in the Village on March 3 to cast their ballots in the 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary. Right, Pamela Boatwright votes at the Smith Crossroads precinct.

Local student-athlete continues family’s mission of outreach

By **Nick Vandeloecht**
 Sports Editor

It was a passing of the torch.

Jordan Krauss’ older brother Ethan had been going with their parents, John and Kelli, to help villages in the western part of Honduras for the past four years. But after Ethan began attending college at West Virginia University, the time had come for Jordan, a sophomore at Powhatan High School, to take part.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KELLI KRAUSS



Jordan Krauss gives a lacrosse stick to Kelion in Honduras.

She kind of knew what to expect. She knew what the days were going to look like when it came to working with the school in the village they’d be going to – Santa Rosita – and the trench line that they’d be digging for the PVC pipe that would be bringing water directly to the community. She had been seeing pictures of her parents’ time and work there since she was a little girl.

But she didn’t expect to feel the way she felt when she first saw the children.

How some of them didn’t have shoes. How excited they were to do just the simplest activities with her, like blowing bubbles, for an hour.

How grateful they were for those little things, like the tennis balls and lacrosse sticks that they brought for them to play with and have.

“It’s so amazing to just be able to give that to them,” she said, “and make them happy and just play with them all day.”

She had a Polaroid camera with her, and so the boys and girls would come up to her, asking: can she take a picture with them?

She loved just hanging out with them – really just doing anything with them, because they’ll do that one activity with you all day.

“They will never get bored with doing anything.”

see MISSION, pg. 6 ▶

Three men rescue woman before vehicle catches fire

By **Laura McFarland**
 Editor

POWHATAN – Three men who came across the scene of a wreck where a woman drove off the side of a road in Powhatan and hit a tree pulled her from the wreckage moments before the vehicle was engulfed in flames.

A nearby neighbor and two men who were driving by responded to the single-vehicle accident, which occurred shortly after 7 a.m. on Friday, March 6 in the 4900 block of Old Buckingham Road, according to Pat Schoeffel, assistant fire chief. They found the driver conscious but dazed in the vehicle and pulled her from the vehicle when they noticed the motor compartment had started to smoke.

Although fire and rescue arrived only six minutes after the 911 call was dispatched at 7:12 a.m., the car fire was fully involved, Schoeffel said.

“When we got there, it was burning from end to end so she definitely wouldn’t have been alive by the time we got there,” he said.

The woman was taken by Medflight from the scene of the accident.

John Moir, who lives near where the accident occurred, said he was loading his Jeep to head to a drill weekend with the Tennessee Air National Guard and was walking back to his house when he heard the accident happen.

He ran over and found the driver leaning against the door, so he

see RESCUE, pg. 3 ▶

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PHOTO BY LAURA MCFARLAND

Bob Flynn wrote ‘Ain’t No Such Thang as a Purdy Good Alligator Rassler.’

Local author Bob Flynn cautions people not to settle for ‘pretty good’ in life in new book

By **Laura McFarland**
 Editor

POWHATAN – Warning: no alligators were harmed in the creation of this life philosophy.

But when reading Powhatan author Bob Flynn’s new book, “Ain’t No Such Thang as a Purdy

Good Alligator Rassler,” the one thing the author hopes readers do go a few rounds with is their sense of complacency.

Early in the narrative-based self help book, a character name Clyde explains this colorful phrase to others around him. Alligator wrestling is a challenging under-

taking where trial and error won’t cut it. If a person doesn’t do all they can do to prepare for that kind of steep challenge in advance, when it’s actually time to take on the task, the results probably aren’t going to be favorable.

In his book, Flynn points out

see FLYNN, pg. 7 ▶



PHOTOS COURTESY KELLI KRAUSS

Top right, Jordan Krauss takes a photo with the children at the school in the Honduran village of Santa Rosita. Some of the children hold up a sign that says "Welcome Mission of the Water." Top center: Jordan helps dig the trench line for a PVC pipe that will bring water to Santa Rosita. Top left: Jordan introduces the game of lacrosse to children in Pierdas Coloradas, Honduras.

MISSION

Continued from pg. 1

And when she introduced them to the game of lacrosse – told them what it was and that there was a boys game and a girls game, showed and taught them some passing and stick tricks – they were eager to learn.

She would bring a couple of sticks to wherever they went each day, and after she gave some of the sticks to the school the first couple of days, she and her family saw that a couple of the children were really picking up the game.

So she brought individual sticks for each of them the next time they came back.

A couple of the boys, Ever and Mario, got really good at it as they were throwing the ball with each other, flipping their sticks and doing stick tricks.

At the water celebration held at the village in which Jordan's family worked last year - Pierdas Coloradas – Jordan got to teach the children there about lacrosse as well, and one of the girls, Claudia, was really picking it up. She was so determined in those couple of hours – she had that stick in her hand the whole time – and every time Jordan would give her another stick trick to do, she would get it in 10 minutes and go over to show Jordan, wanting to demonstrate what she had learned. When Jordan and her family went back to the village a couple of days later to work on the school, Claudia wasn't there, but Jordan had brought a stick for her to keep. She and her family gave the stick to the Pierdas Coloradas water system's manager, who said he would give the stick to Claudia.

"They learn so quick," Jordan said of the children, "and they want to learn." They weren't there because they had to be there, she said. "They're there because they want to do that, and they pick up everything so quick."

All of Jordan's lacrosse donations were collected through her Powhatan lacrosse team, her club team, the Richmond Strikers Lacrosse organization and her church, St. Luke's Episcopal.

When they go back – because next year they'll visit Santa Rosita after the water system has been put in – Kelli is certain that some of the kids are going to be running down the mountain road in their flip flops, carrying their lacrosse sticks, excited to reunite with the young woman who happily spent that first week with them as their teacher, coach, and friend.

Fulfilling a need

John and Kelli Krauss were living in Leesburg when they went on their first mission to Honduras through their church 10 years ago. They've been going with the same core group of people every year, but after the trip kind of fell off of the church's calendar a few years in, they weren't willing to give up this work that they had grown to love so much.

"Every village we went to," Kelli said, "we would become so connected to them."

So after going on its own for a year or two, the group decided to create the nonprofit Partnership for Clean Water and Education (PCWE/www.pcwe.org).

The nonprofit now has 10 board members and for years has been working in villages in the western part of Honduras near Copan. It's mainly focused on bringing clean water to those communities. Each project consists of finding a water source, tapping into it with a headwall that captures the water, linking the headwall to an underground PVC pipe that stretches all the way to the village, and putting in a cistern through which the water is supposed to be purified.

From there, the water is distributed to spigots located outside

each and every home serviced by the pipe. Kelli said there are about 40 homes benefiting from the water system in Santa Rosita.

PCWE works with Agua Para el Pueblo (Water for the People of Honduras) and Cornell University, who look at different ways to install the clean water systems. All of the systems they've helped install are gravity fed; there's nothing else you need to do except install it, because the water source is usually higher up than the village, and even if it has to go up and down the mountain, there's so much pressure in that pipe that it can then feed into the village.

PCWE does a couple of fundraisers each year to try and at least fund one water system for one village every year.

"In 10 years now, we've been to so many village celebrations where they can't even almost put into words their gratefulness and how thankful they are that people from thousands of miles away think of them and want to do this for them," Kelli said. "Some of these villages, we had a village last year – there was a guy, 65 years old, had never had water in his village. I mean this was the first time they were getting fresh, clean water funneled into the village. Otherwise, it's going to a dirty water source with a pot, filling it up and bringing it back."

As they continue their mission, one of the possible courses of action Kelli said they're looking at is making sure that the villages in which they've previously worked are properly maintaining the water systems they now have, and that they're keeping on top of the purification process.

But they have noticed changes when they've gone back. People just look a little healthier now that they're drinking clean water.

"Even just in the one year, you do notice a change, and in the villages too, a lot of the times the kids can't go to school because

they have to walk to these water sources," Kelli said. But now that they have the fresh water right there in their community, they're freed up to attend school.

Fostering educational opportunities for Honduras' youth

While bringing clean water to the villages remains the main focus, the mission's commitment to education in Honduras is steadily growing.

For many children, the highest level of schooling they can attain in their villages is sixth grade, unless their families can afford to send them away to high schools, or schools with higher education in larger villages and communities.

The teachers in the schools are very dedicated, Kelli said, but the classes are being taught in very, very bare conditions. The schools are made of cinderblocks – sometimes even mud blocks – and Jordan one day was teaching a boy who didn't have a chair, meaning he had to stand as he did his work.

In the last couple of years, PCWE started looking at schools and ways to help them. While John and Kelli funded a school for a village they worked in 10 years ago as individuals, last year was the first time that the nonprofit committed to building one. The people of Pierdas Coloradas had approached John, Kelli, and their group with a handwritten letter asking for a school.

The board voted right there on the spot and said that, yes, they would do it.

That's part of why they returned to Pierdas Coloradas with Jordan: to work on the foundation for the new school.

And on the first day they reached Santa Rosita, Jordan was told that she could work in the school with the children. She helped with bringing in supplies and teaching the students about sanitation so that, when the new water system was installed, they would know about washing one's hands, what brushing your teeth means, and how to use a lavatory properly. She helped the students with lessons in which they learned about numbers and colors. She ended up giving one of her la-

crossed sticks, as well as a Powhatan Lacrosse shirt, to a boy named Kelion, who was one of the students she taught.

Jordan was also a physical education teacher, and the children got to go outside with her and play, blow bubbles, jump rope, and learn lacrosse, which they loved.

Kelli thinks that, while they were happy to receive things like a tennis ball or a lacrosse stick, it means so much more to them to know that people care about them. "There are these strangers showing up every day for a week, wanting to be there, wanting to spend time, wanting to work on the trench line, to do this for them."

Jordan loved that first trip to Honduras – "it's a memory I'll never lose" – and she's looking forward to returning next year.

John and Kelli's son, Ethan, started going to Honduras his freshman year and went every year until he graduated from high school because he fell in love with the project. But Kelli did say that, after she and John had been going for a decade, "you kind of forget what it is for someone when they go for the first time and see this."

Seeing it through Jordan's eyes brought it all back.

"And I don't want to say we're desensitized, because we go there and we understand the magnitude of what we're doing. But you get used to it. You know what to expect when you go," Kelli said. "So seeing it through her eyes this year was really special and engaging to me, and then seeing how much she embraced it – because it's a project that we love so much – to see her jump right in and really embrace it and love it and want to go back just makes me extremely proud as a parent, and hopefully we've set her on a good path to knowing that she has a lot to give."

Getting to partake in her family's mission for the very first time – being part of their work in Honduras and a part of the lives of the children in the villages – helped Jordan to see that people shouldn't take things like playing a sport – or even something as essential as access to clean water – for granted.

"Because those kids there have nothing," she said, "and they're so grateful for so little."

PRIMARY

Continued from pg. 1

drew 699 votes; Michael Bloomberg, 324 votes; Elizabeth Warren, 272 votes, and Tulsi Gabbard, 47 votes.

Director of elections Karen Alexan-

der said she was hoping to see at least a 10 percent turnout for the primary on March 3, so the 3,223 ballots cast was a nice surprise. The figure was still higher than the 2016 Democratic Presidential Primary, which had an 8.4 percent turn-

out. In that same election, the county had a 33.2 percent voter turnout for the Republican Presidential Primary.

Speaking about 70 minutes before the polls closed, Jean Cable, election chief of the Smiths Crossroads precinct at PCC, said it had been a steady day. At that point the precinct was only about 25 votes away from its final tally, which was the highest percentage of voter turnout (18.38 percent) of any of the precincts.

"We have been steady all day. We have not had long periods of time where nobody shows up. We would have a rush and then a little bit of down time and then a few more people," she said.

While the election in Powhatan was smooth and drama free, Alexander said poll officials did report confusion among some voters.

"There were a lot of voters who weren't familiar with the fact that it was a Democratic Presidential Primary only. And a lot of Trump supporters came out to vote for Donald Trump and were confused when they saw the sample ballot and realized they weren't going to have that opportunity. But some people still voted," she said. "I believe a lot of republicans came out hoping to support republican candidates and just went ahead and voted anyway with whatever angle they had in mind."

Pamela Boatwright of Powhatan said she voted for Biden because of his work with Barack Obama. She said she has a 20-year-old and it is vital for her "to show it is important to vote to make changes."

Katrina Bell, another Powhatan voter, also supported Biden, whom she

liked when he was vice president and was her favorite of the remaining candidates.

John and Tracy Chowanski declined to say who they voted for but said they came out on March 3 to have a voice in the democratic process. Because of timing, they picked up their two children from daycare and brought them to the polls, explaining along the way what they were doing. Tracy Chowanski said she was excited for her children to see their parents vote.

"This is their first time seeing it. Just for them to be a part of the process and see how it works. We were talking about it in the car on the way here and they were excited to be involved," she said.

With the Virginia Democratic Presidential Primary over, Alexander will be turning her sights to the General Election in November. She anticipates it will be hectic, so she urged voters to prepare early.

"We are expecting a massive turnout for the presidential election in November, so I really hope people will take the opportunity to start updating their voter registration status and doing their research on candidates prior to the close of books in October so that things can run as smoothly in November as they did (March 3)," she said.

Alexander added that she is still waiting to hear more details about the implementation of no excuse absentee voting, especially how many days it will be open.

Laura McFarland may be reached at LmcFarland@powhatanoday.com.

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For Shenk, a perfect final year

Collegiate senior, tennis standout from Powhatan goes unbeaten this season

By Nick Vandeloecht
Sports Editor

Having grown up playing tennis in the Richmond-area, Kayli Shenk has known Helena Huff and Nora Willett since they were all little, and even though they're the same age, she's always looked up to them talent-wise.

And that was: before Shenk joined Collegiate in 2019; before the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the globe; before Huff returned to the school from Atlanta; before Huff, Shenk and Willett got to be teammates on the same Cougars varsity tennis team this year; and before the three seniors played in every single team match of this fall's condensed, conference-only season.

"I love being able to be a part of a team with them, and the other amazing seniors, and we've had such a great time together this year, despite the restrictions," Shenk said. "We were able to have an awesome senior night, and I have classes with the girls, so our friendships haven't been hurt by the new guidelines."

"It's sad that we didn't get a chance to play doubles, but we're all just so happy we got to even play in the first place."

This season was no guarantee going in. The pandemic led to the cancellation of all spring sports statewide, and also to many organizations altering their summer leagues or cancelling them outright. The Virginia High School League ultimately postponed its fall seasons to the early spring. The League of Independent Schools private school conference, which includes Collegiate, announced that it would hold its girls tennis and cross country

see SHENK, pg. 2B ▶



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO BY ANTHONY RUMLEY
Kayli Shenk during the 2020 season.



FILE PHOTO BY BILLY FELLIN

Jim Woodson (left) and Ernie Henderson (right) are honored in their final home game as Powhatan High School varsity football coaches in 2018.

'It's about the kids'

Remembering Coach Ernie Henderson

By Nick Vandeloecht
Sports Editor

POWHATAN – Ernie Henderson was a man of few words. But when he talked, people listened, and the longtime Powhatan High School assistant football coach's order to "Drive! Drive! Drive! Drive!" on the sled in practices still resonates with those who played for him.

That command spoke to who he was, how hard he worked, how hard he pushed others to get the best out of them.

And the best of what they had – more than what they thought they had – was what they gave. What they wanted to give. Because they knew he'd do anything for them.

He was tough but fair. Someone you'd run through a brick wall for. A brilliant defensive mind.

A father figure. A true friend.

Those outpouring of remembrances and many others, both written and spoken by the community over the last 12 days, helped paint the portrait of a man and coach who made a difference in countless lives.

They recaptured the brilliance of an offensive line coach who turned players weighing less than 180 pounds into state champions – of a defensive coordinator who made Powhatan a tall task for opposing offenses to overcome.

They recalled the life lessons that he impressed on multiple generations of student-athletes through the hard work he modeled and the love he had for them.

When Ernie Henderson died on Friday, Nov. 13, 2020 at 61, a pillar in the Powhatan County community was lost.

But to that same community that loved and remembered him well – to those whose lives he touched and shaped – his legacy lives on.

"He was truly a life coach for anybody that came in contact with him," said Gwendolyn Henderson, Ernie's wife of 29 years. "He'd do anything he could to try to enrich their lives and try to help them to go on a better path."

"Coach Henderson made a major impact in all of our lives. He instilled many qualities in all of us that make us who we are today," Jason Campbell, who played for Coach Henderson for four years and was on Powhatan football's coaching staff alongside him for 25, said via social media. Whether Ernie was coaching football, basketball, track or baseball or monitoring the weight room, Campbell said he was always there.

"He gave endless hours to the community and helped all of us through it all," Campbell said. "We in Powhatan are so blessed to have such great leaders."

Like an older brother

Those who knew and loved Ernie described him as genuine, as authentic. He loved the game and he loved the kids. That passion for helping others carried over to his work with youth in the juvenile justice system.

"He always said: it's about the

see HENDERSON, pg. 2B ▶

Helping a family in need

Powhatan 9u competes in fund raising tourney for family fighting cancer

By Nick Vandeloecht
Sports Editor

MIDLOTHIAN – In a crazy year when life got turned upside down by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, just being able to play an entire youth season of football seemed like a tall task.

The Powhatan 9u Chiefs team not only did just that, but they also got to participate in one more tournament – a charity fund raiser for a family battling breast cancer – after it initially seemed like the season would end with the Chesterfield Quarterback League playoffs in early November.

"To able to have this one last tournament, get out here, get the boys together and do this was just phenomenal," said Powhatan 9u coach Bobby Cook. "Coming out here win, lose or draw – it's for the family we were doing it for, but also, getting the players together, they love seeing each other, so it was just awesome in this weird year we're having just to have a little extra overtime."

While the Chiefs took losses in Saturday's double-elimination tournament against Salem Church and the Evergreen Eagles, they did score two touchdowns overall against their high-powered opponents, and they did so with several 7u players stepping up to join the team – thus ensuring they had enough players to compete in the tournament – and help their older teammates.

Charlie Jamerson caught both touchdown passes from Mason Cook, and Hunter Freeman caught a two-point conversion. On defense, Aiden Kilbourne and Michael Gibbs each caught an interception, and Dylan Strickland defended several passes

see FOOTBALL, pg. 3B ▶



NICK VANDELOECHT/POWHATAN TODAY

Charlie Jamerson catches a touchdown pass in the Powhatan Chiefs 9u team's game versus the Evergreen Eagles in Saturday's charity tournament at Salem Church Middle School.



C&F BANK'S ATHLETES OF THE WEEK

FOOTBALL ALL-STARS

WHO: POWHATAN YOUTH FOOTBALL

WHAT THEY DID:

With fall high school sports getting pushed back to early spring due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Powhatan youth football teams helped make sure that

fields in the Richmond-area were not devoid of referee's whistles blowing, or of fans cheering in response to a caught pass in the end zone or an athlete holding up an opponent's flag inches before they could cross the goal-line.

Powhatan completed its 2020 Chesterfield Quarterback League fall seasons in the 7u,

9u, 11u and 14u age divisions, with two 14u teams competing. The 7u team won its opening game in the season-ending CQL tournaments, and the 9u team, featuring players from 7u, was slated to compete in this past weekend's fund raising tournament, with all proceeds supporting a CQL-community family fighting breast cancer.



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Legendary coach was also phenomenal athlete

By Nick Vandeloecht

Sports Editor

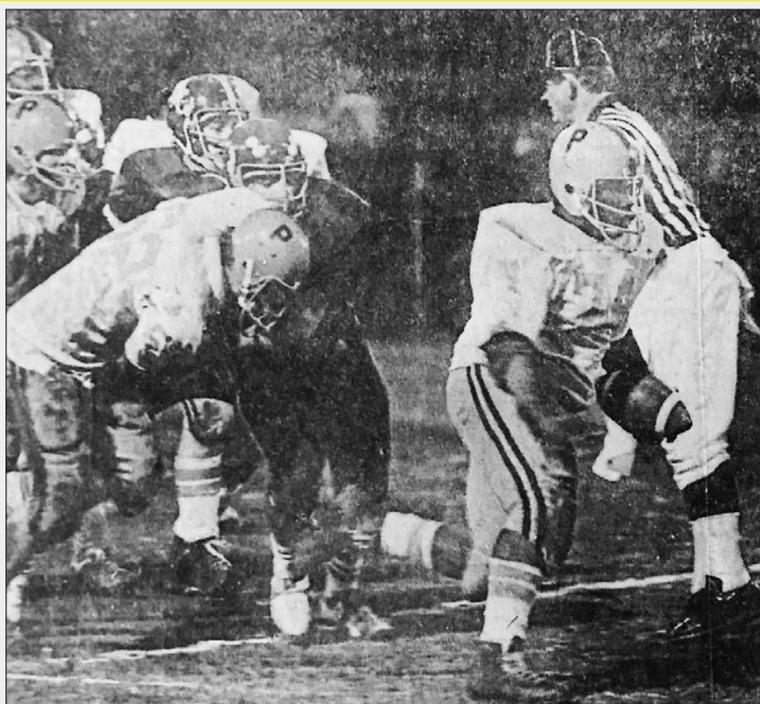
Before he became a legendary football coach, Ernie Henderson carved out his legend as a competitor. It wasn't just because the 1976 Powhatan High School alum played in the 1974 state championship game, then proceeded to become one of PHS' most accomplished athletes by starting all four years at Appalachian State – two as a nose guard, two as an offensive guard – while also throwing the hammer on the college's track and field team.

It was also because, when he stood at 5'7 and weighed between 230 and 240 pounds – 260 when he played in college – Ernie didn't look like the type of player who could run a 4.7 in the 40.

But he did.

"His quickness was just unbelievable, had great speed for somebody that size," said longtime Powhatan coach Bob Baltimore, who knew Ernie ever since the latter was in elementary school and coached him in football. "As good as he was athletically, he had a bigger heart. When the ball was snapped, he gave it 100% until the whistle blew every play, every down, and he didn't like getting beat by a man or team."

After the state's winningest high school football coach – the legendary Mike Smith from Hampton – first saw Ernie when Baltimore checked him in for the Virginia High School League All-Star game, Baltimore recalled him eventually sharing that his first thoughts were: How in the world did this kid get nominated for a high school all-star game?



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO (ORIGINAL SOURCE: THE DAILY PROGRESS)

The original cutline reads: "ERNIE 'THE STUMP' HENDERSON LEAVES HIS LINE AND THE DEFENSE BEHIND ON TD GALLOP; Powhatan Blocking Back Breaks Free Behind Block From Teammate Eddie Crump (52)."

Smith saw why in that first practice. They put Ernie in at nose guard on defense, but after 10 minutes, they had to stop practice because Ernie was so quick off of the line on the snap that he was rushing into the backfield before they could get a play off. Smith and his coaches had to get Ernie off of defense just so they could learn the offense.

Before that, in a high school regional championship game against Madison

High School at Albemarle, Baltimore's coaching staff called a play for Ernie, who was then a junior and a blocking back in Powhatan's double wing, to run the ball. He went 50 yards untouched, outrunning the entire Madison team, its secondary included, until he reached the 5-yard line.

That's when one of the defensive backs jumped on his back, wrapping his arms around his neck.

to me, he was always open and honest with me."

"He would do anything for you, which he did for me," said Paulette Bowman, who knew Ernie since she started working at Powhatan back in 1984, was asked by him to help him coach the JV boys basketball team and became good friends with him. "He was always there if I needed him."

Bowman, who went on to coach both the track and field and girls basketball teams, learned the ropes of coaching through working with him; she saw how he related to the students, how he handled himself.

"He always put the kids first," she said, "that's what he taught me: put the kids first, let them know that you're there for them."

The players saw he would do anything for them. If a player needed food, he made sure they had food. Bowman said that if they needed sportswear, he'd pay for it.

Every day throughout his coaching career, Ernie would go out of his way and give players rides to practices and track meets, even after working night shifts at his job. That inspired Jackson to give rides as well.

If one kid had something, he'd make sure the other kid had something. If the parents wanted to talk to him, he would make the time.

"He made the time for everybody," his wife Gwendolyn said. "He was happy to do it, he wanted to do it and he cared."

He made sure nobody was left be-

hind. And because the kids knew he'd do anything for them, Ernie got that from them in return.

'You'd run through a wall for a guy like that'

Powhatan coach Nathan Mullins, who played both offensive and defensive line under Ernie from 2004 to 2007 and coached with him from 2015 to 2018, recalled preparing for his second-ever start on varsity against what was then an unknown team in Monticello his sophomore year. He was going up against a senior, who had earned Region Player of the Year honors the year before, and he spent the whole week watching film and studying his matchup.

He remembered Ernie pointing to his upcoming opponent and talking him up as being really good, but then telling Mullins: You can take this guy. As long as you watch him and study him, you can take him.

That whole week of practice, Ernie was constantly building him up in "a quiet way," as Mullins put it – "he didn't have a whole lot to say, but when he said it, it carried a lot of weight to it" – and when game time came around, Mullins leaned on the things that his coach told him about his opponent's tendencies.

After the game, Coach Henderson said he did well.

"As a guy who's only played – that was my second varsity start – it showed me that he believed in me," Mullins said.

Ernie carried both the ball and the player into the end zone to cinch the 55-yard touchdown.

"He just was probably one of the toughest competitors I ever saw," Baltimore said. "He just loved to compete against anybody in anything, but he did it in his own quiet and reserved way, not vocal. He didn't do a lot of rah-rah stuff on the field. He just let his play do the talking."

He was athletic across the board; although he didn't play on the high school team, he could play basketball well. He was also a good baseball player – in fact, Baltimore started him at catcher on varsity, and he recalled how, in one game at the old Goochland High School baseball field, Ernie hit a moonshot over top of the left field fence.

Ernie's homer landed on the gymnasium roof.

"It was one of the longest balls I ever saw hit," Baltimore said. "Top five."

When she would play Ernie in tennis, former longtime Powhatan multi-sport head coach Paulette Bowman thought she was going to hit the ball from side to side and "run him to death."

"He ran me to death," she said. And on the first day of practice when they were playing fall softball together, she was playing shortstop when Ernie came up to bat, and she heard, "Hey, you better move back." She moved back to the edge of the grass, but the response she got was: "Nope, that's not far enough."

"If he made contact, he was going to make it to first," Bowman said. "If anybody was on base, he brought them home because the ball was hit so far . . . it was a rocket, every time. Every time."

"That meant a lot as a 15-year-old."

As a player, you'd know that Coach Henderson would put so much into it, it'd hurt you to feel like you let him down, Linwood Jackson said.

"You don't want to be the reason why the play failed," Ernie's cousin Tony Henderson said. "You don't want to be the reason why he's not seen as a fantastic defensive coordinator because of something that you did."

Win or lose, you were going to give it your all for him.

"He'd do everything to get the best out of you, but he loved you, too, and he praised you as much as he got on you when you didn't do things right," Tony said. "That's all you'd want out of a coach. You'd run through a wall for a guy like that, and most of the guys did."

And Powhatan's linemen went to work, said former longtime Powhatan head football coach Jim Woodson, whom Ernie Henderson coached alongside for four decades.

"They go down the hill and they go to all the sleds and all this stuff, and they come back, they're dripping wet . . . you can tell they're working their tails off," Woodson said. "That's just the way it was. If you were a lineman, you were tough."

Among the players Ernie worked with were the three Christovich brothers – Andrew, UVA walk-on Collin and Derek – who weighed between 285 and 320 pounds and, much like

see HENDERSON, pg. 3B ▶

HENDERSON

Continued from pg. 1B ▼

kids," Gwendolyn said. "That's the kind of person he was – and he loved his family."

To both Ernie's cousin Anthony "Tony" Henderson, and to Linwood Jackson – who played for PHS from 1989 to 1992 and would go on to become one of Powhatan's longtime coaches – Ernie was like an older brother.

As Tony grew up, Ernie was one of the people he went to for advice about everything.

"I kind of patterned myself as a young kid after all the things he did," said Tony, who played for Powhatan from 1991 to 1994, was part of the team's coaching staff from 2000 to 2004 and is now Senior Associate Athletics Director at William and Mary. "He was very influential in a lot of the things that I did and a lot of the decisions that I made as a youngster and growing up."

Jackson was among the players whom Ernie would pick up and take to practice. And that wasn't the last of the rides over which Jackson and Ernie would bond. Every Sunday for 26 years, Ernie would pick him up and drive them to the Powhatan football coaches' meeting when Jackson was part of the staff.

"He always shared his wisdom with me," Jackson said. "Whether it was about life lessons or just football,

SHENK

Continued from pg. 1B ▼

seasons this year, but it wasn't confirmed. Sherk and her teammates practiced halfway through the summer as usual, and they were hoping for the best, but it wasn't until shortly before their first scheduled match was supposed to begin that the season was green-lighted.

"I was shocked to say the least – I was sure we'd be out of school and tennis within the first month of school," Sherk said. "But Collegiate has done exceptionally well maintaining our health procedures, and it's definitely paid off!"

Just for the team to be able to complete this year's 10-match season is a huge achievement on its own, given the ongoing circumstances. But the Cougars did more than that. They stayed healthy and avoided major injuries. All 14 players got to participate in a sanctioned match. They all improved in something throughout the year.

They also went unbeaten.

Collegiate assembled a 10-0 team season and won 94% (66-4) of its sanctioned individual matches. Sherk,

Huff and Willett all went 10-0.

"I was ecstatic to have an undefeated season!" Sherk said. "For both the team and myself, and especially my senior year, I thought it was an awesome way to finish up my tennis career!"

Sherk knew that, with Huff returning and two of their top-four players, Willett and freshman Elizabeth Mendoza, no longer facing injuries, they "would be a force to be reckoned with."

"And I was definitely right!" she said. "Our lineup was stacked this season and I have no doubt that if we had been allowed to have the states tournament this year, we would have taken home the title."

Her first match against Veritas and her last one against Trinity were her personal favorites from 2020.

"Those were the matches I feel like I played my best," she said. "I'm really proud of myself for all the effort I put in throughout the season."

In the Veritas match, Sherk, putting away a ton of shots and utilizing her serve, delivered a 30-minute victory on line No. 4. At Trinity, she played No. 3 and felt like her shots were more confident and powerful.

Her favorite moments go beyond

the scheduled matches on the court. She loved how, in their practices, they split up into two equal intra-squad teams and had friendly competitions through games and drills.

"That was a really fun aspect of this year," she said. "I think the coaches are going to keep it up in future seasons!"

There was also Senior Day, a day that, like the season, was no longer a guarantee going in. But she was able to share that day alongside Huff, Willett, Kylee Sanderson, Sarina DePalma and manager Rebekah Wright.

To her team, Sherk was known for always smiling and laughing on the court – her teammates said her energy bounces off and brightens everyone else's day – and she was praised for her good sportsmanship and strong commitment to the sport.

"Kayli's awesome – her spirit, fun-loving, just out there wanting everybody to have fun and still competing," said her head coach Allyson Brand.

With her senior season in the books, Sherk closed out her high school tennis career having played in the starting lineup all four years. She quickly emerged as a leader for Powhatan High School her freshman and sophomore seasons, then continued to showcase that leadership on the court in the

top four for Collegiate both this year and last year, when they reached the VISAA state semifinals. She was named to First Team All-LIS and Second Team All-State in 2019.

"It's such an honor to be part of this team, but to be able to play in the starting lineup freshman-senior year has been so cool for me," Sherk said. "Coming to tryouts junior year had me worried about where I would be in the lineup, but I've worked really hard to play strong, and I'm so grateful I've gotten to play as a starter."

Looking ahead to college, Sherk recently got accepted to Coastal Carolina and was waiting to hear back from a couple other schools on Nov. 12. She's really excited to pursue Marine Sciences.

"I'd really like to focus on my academics at first," she said, "and then, if my schedule allows, maybe find some tennis clubs just to play for fun."

She feels fortunate to have played four varsity tennis seasons across her high school career at Powhatan and Collegiate.

"I'll be so sad to leave the amazing friends and teammates I've acquired over the years. I wish every one of them the best of luck in their futures, and I'll forever be grateful for the experiences both schools gave me!"

'If I know it, I can stop it:' a brilliant defensive mind

By Nick Vandeloecht

Sports Editor

With a chuckle, Jim Woodson recounted one of the first games he and Ernie Henderson ever scouted four decades ago, back when they started out as assistant coaches together: a matchup between Hermitage and Thomas Dale, the latter of which was Powhatan's next opponent.

They headed to Thomas Dale High School, but they found no game. The contest, in fact, was all the way over in Hermitage. They got there at halftime and gave "the best scouting report we could give in one half," Woodson said with a laugh.

But, from there, the two coaches more than found their way together.

From 1985 to 2018, with Woodson helping the team as the head coach and Henderson leading the defense, Powhatan secured 16 district championships, eight regional titles, two state runner-up finishes, state championships in 1996 and 2003 and the winningest record (282 wins against 106 losses and 1 tie) by a head football coach in the Richmond-area in that 34-year span.

They weren't alone. When he took the helm in 1985, Woodson brought former PHS head coaches Jerry Ward and Bob Baltimore onto the coaching staff. Ernie picked up a lot of his knowledge about defense from Ward, as well as from Virginia coaching legend Bill Mountjoy, who was a great reference for him on defenses covering the Wing T, single wing, double wing and veer offenses.

Linwood Jackson and Jason Campbell, who both played under Woodson and Henderson, also coached alongside them for at least 25 years each, adding to the legendary coaching tenures that have helped make Powhatan formidable across multiple sports and seasons.

For Woodson and Henderson, a



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Powhatan High School's 1985 varsity football coaching staff. From left: Jim Woodson (head coach), Bob Baltimore, Ernie Henderson and Jerry Ward.

typical postgame Friday night included washing uniforms, evaluating their team's performance and planning for the next team. They'd stay up after the clothes got done, hanging up all of the uniforms, and a lot of the times, they wouldn't even go home until after (and sometimes well after) 1 a.m.

With Ernie in the role of defensive coordinator, Woodson said it was like they had two head coaches.

"He was awesome at his job, and everybody knew it," Woodson said. "The players knew it. The other teams knew it. When they came to Powhatan, they knew they were going to be in for a long, hard night."

Ernie embraced the challenge of overcoming opposing offenses, and in 1996, the challenge in that road to the championship looked steep. The Indians opened the playoffs with a win against the pass-oriented Madison County, coached by legendary Eddie Dean, then matched up against a Randolph-Henry team that ran the veer, "which is very, very difficult to stop," Woodson said, because it's assignment football on every play. Randolph-Henry had also beaten them earlier in the year.

Not this time. Powhatan came out on top, but then, the Indians had to face a Northumberland team that ran the no-huddle spread offense, which in

1996 was way ahead of its time.

Powhatan won again. But in the championship game, they "had to turn around and go back 40 years in time," Woodson recalled with a laugh, and try to defend Giles County's single wing offense. Powhatan's coaches said that Harry Ragsdale, the father of Giles' head coach at the time (Steve Ragsdale), had written a book about the single wing.

Ernie read that book.

Linwood Jackson recalled saying to him: "Man, you're going to know this offense backwards and forwards!"

Ernie told him: "If I know it, I can stop it."

Powhatan stopped Giles 20-8 to win that game – and the state title.

Seven years later, Powhatan had given up a slim 100 points all season when it went into its state championship matchup with William Fleming, a powerhouse that at the time featured multiple future Division I players.

That total stayed at 100.

The Indians fended off Fleming 6-0 for their fifth shutout triumph in their perfect 14-0 season. The Indians had to play that game without their all-state 6'4, 225-pound linebacker and tight end Eric Byers, who in the game before dislocated his collarbone. It took two sophomores to replace him at both positions, and the sophomore who

played at linebacker, Jonathan Marshall, reeled off 15 tackles in the final.

But before the Indians won those grand titles, they did "the impossible" during Jason Campbell's senior year as a player.

They took down one of the toughest teams, the Central Lunenburg Chargers, 33-21, and they did it with the help of Ernie's decision to run a 52 full house defense. The formation countered Central's full house T offense, which featured two tight ends and everyone else behind the line in the backfield. Powhatan's players covered the two ends, and Ernie had everyone else attacking, putting a lot of pressure on the Chargers.

"When he turned around to go throw a pass," Woodson said, "we had a guy right in his face making a tackle."

He added: "When we installed that full house defense, we didn't lose to Lunenburg again."

The bottom line, to Woodson, was that Ernie just loved what he was doing.

"And he was going to try to get the kids in the best position to win," Woodson said. "His preparation was outstanding – astonishing, really – to get all that done, and . . . it's great for the coaches to know all this stuff on the sidelines, but the bottom line is, the kids have to know it, and they have to execute it out on the field, and he had them ready."

"All the switching gears like that is very, very difficult," Woodson said, "but the passion was there, and it was contagious. The kids picked up on it . . . when he came out there, every word he was saying, they just soaked it up. They got it."

"Those defensive kids that he coached believed in him, and everything that came out of his mouth, to them, was gospel," said Baltimore, who coached alongside Ernie from 1985 to 1996. "If Coach Henderson said it, it was going to work, and we're going to do it the way he says to do it."

HENDERSON

Continued from pg. 2B

their coach, didn't do a whole lot of talking – just a lot of action.

There was Skip Carleton, who went on to play at VMI, as well as Brandon Adams, who played on the '96 championship team and worked just as hard in practices as he would in games. Ernie was so proud and would always mention to Woodson, even years after, how Adams – when he hit one of the defensive sleds they used in practice (you had to hit it five times in a hit-and-roll sequence) – he'd bottom it out every time.

Most of the time, Powhatan did not have the big, physical guys who could overpower people; Woodson remembered one of their centers, Bobby Oglesby, was about 5'10 at best and weighed 180 pounds, yet he played both sides of the ball. Zach Stell, who weighed 156 pounds, helped Powhatan win a state championship at offensive guard in 2003.

Tony Henderson said you didn't have to be a superstar football player; what mattered to Ernie was that: 1) you loved the game; and 2) you gave everything you had when it was your time to play.

Ernie also inspired his players with his own strength. In fact, he was literally known as the strongest man in Virginia in the 1980s.

In weight-lifting, he bench pressed 602 pounds and squatted 1,000. They say people would see him on the sign-in list for weight-lifting competitions and drop out. Clarence Craddock on social media remembered when Coach Henderson was in the weight room on the bench and Coach Bowman needed him

to sign something; he rested the bar on his chest (which had 315 pounds on it), signed the paper and finished his set.

"I think Ernie's stature and the way he was built and looked was a great motivator for him," longtime Powhatan coach Bob Baltimore said, "and I think it was a great motivator for the kids who played for him – who saw this guy who was not real tall – that, 'Hey, I don't have to be a giant, I don't have to be this, that or the other. I just have to play hard, just like Coach Henderson.'"

Never thinking about himself

Ernie's consistency is a trait that stands out to Nathan Mullins.

"It didn't really matter if he was sick or . . . I know he probably had some tough days at work and days where he only got three or four hours of sleep, but he was always there," Mullins said. "There was never a time where it was like, 'Coach Henderson can't make practice.'"

When Ernie suffered a stroke two years ago, the coaches wondered if he'd be able to make it out for football.

Mullins said Ernie was there on Day 1, doing everything he could.

Even when Ernie's health was declining, Linwood Jackson recalled him talking about coaching again.

Jackson replied: you gave this county more than enough; you need to get healthy.

"Kids need me," was Ernie's response. "Kids need me." He was never thinking of himself, Jackson said – he was always thinking of the kids.

He loved his community – he loved Powhatan High School. And to say Ernie was beloved in return "is kind of an understatement," Baltimore said; he was admired by everybody, from the players

far side of the CQL region here and just take it personal, again having a parent step up and cover all the costs [for our players to compete in this tournament] and then other parents saying, 'We want to donate,' it's just been phenomenal," Cook said.

He appreciated the players and parents who sacrificed one more week this close to Thanksgiving to partake in this tournament "for the right reason, for the charity."

"I think it was just phenomenal for the players, parents, association, the league," Cook said. "It just shows character to everybody to step up for somebody in need."

to the parents to the community.

"The way he lived his life made him somebody that people look up to," Baltimore said. "When you leave this Earth, if people look up to you, you had a great reputation, but I think somebody once said that your reputation is what people think of you; your character is what counts. Your character is what you do when people aren't looking."

To Baltimore, Ernie not only had the great reputation – he was also a man of character.

He taught the players the importance of preparation – of being a great teammate, of not wanting to let your teammate down. It was about building accountability – building young people to be better brothers, husbands, fathers and significant people in the community.

When you got a little older, Jason Campbell pointed out, you realized that

Coach Henderson was getting you ready – not just for football, but for life in general.

"He changed a lot of kids' lives, definitely," Linwood Jackson said. "I know he changed mine."

"I wouldn't be where I am today without his influence," his cousin Tony Henderson said. "He was a big-brother type to me, provided a lot of guidance just by the way he lived and also always being available to bounce ideas off of and talk things through."

"Besides my dad and my grandfather, he's another one I owe pretty much everything to."

"Ernie certainly is an example of hard work, dedication to what you do, of commitment to what you do, to do it right – never take a shortcut," Baltimore said. "He just was special, and he will be missed by many."

FOOTBALL

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with just one hand due to playing with a soft cast.

The tournament raised more than \$3,000. Coach Bobby Cook said quite a few parents from Powhatan voluntarily made donations via cash, check and Venmo for the family, who is part of the CQL community.

"It's special to see just, in our county alone, Powhatan people step up, because we haven't always been part of CQL, so to see them step up and [help] a family that's all the way in the other

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