

# Sports

## Appomattox, Town of Champions

### Raiders softball wins Class 2 state title

CHARLES CONRAD  
Times Virginian

In 1979, the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania was nicknamed “The City of Champions” after the Pittsburgh Steelers won the Super Bowl and the Pittsburgh Pirates won the World Series.

In 2021, perhaps the Town of Appomattox could be nicknamed “The Town of Champions” after the Appomattox County High School Raiders softball team claimed Saturday’s VHSL Class 2 Softball State Championship with a 2-0 victory over the Randolph-Henry Statesmen. The softball Raiders join this year’s state champion Raider football team as the elite Class 2 programs in their respective sports.

Courtney Layne pitched her fourth perfect game of the season, and Macee Hargis drove in Kelsey Hackett with a triple to right field in the bottom of the sixth inning to break a scoreless tie and catapult the Raiders to the win at Charlotte Court House.

It is the first softball state championship for ACHS since 1987, when current Raiders head coach Janet Rawes was a member of that team coached by Mary Tolley.

The first three innings Saturday produced only two base runners in a pitcher’s duel between Layne and Danner Allen of Randolph-Henry. The only runner to reach base was Hackett with a lead-off single in the first inning and a double to the left field wall in the third. Ironically, Hackett and Allen are cousins.

The Raiders loaded the bases in the bottom of the fourth inning but couldn’t capitalize on the scoring opportunity. Hargis got on base with a single, and the next two batters — Layne on an infield hit and Abby Wilkerson on a bunt — filled up the bases as the Statesmen defense made no play on both at-bats. However, Hargis was tagged out in a rundown between third base and home plate after a wild pitch, and Carrington Moore grounded out to second base to end the threat.

Raiders right fielder Emily Purcell helped to secure the perfect game for Layne with a spectacular diving catch of a short fly ball in the bottom of the fourth inning.

Hackett led off the top of the sixth inning with her third base hit of the game, a double to center field.

Two batters later, Hargis blasted a triple to right field and slid into third base after Hackett touched home plate for the first run of the game. Layne then grounded into a fielder’s choice to second base that brought Hargis in from third for a 2-0 Raiders lead.

Hackett said that when her foot touched home plate that late in the game, she knew the championship belonged to the Raiders.

“I had so much confidence in Courtney and our defense that I was like ‘We got this. We just did it.’”

Hargis, who had faced Allen two times prior to the game-winner, said she had developed a feel for Allen’s pitching style and knew she needed to be patient until she saw the right pitch come her way.

“I feel like it’s my mental state, kinda like I just tell myself that I’m confident that I can hit this pitch. I got a single on the (at bat) before that, so I kinda knew where the pitch was gonna be. I guess



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian

The Appomattox Raiders softball team poses in front of the scoreboard Saturday with their 2021 VHSL Class 2 State Championship trophy and medals. Kneeling, from left: Haleigh Tweedy, Carrington Moore, Kelsey Hackett, Emily Purcell and Michaela Williams. Standing, from left: Appomattox County High School Principal Poldi Moreno, Assistant Coach Davy Hackett, Assistant Coach Jennifer Hackett, Dixie Gordon, Kelsie White, Abby Wilkerson, Courtney Layne, Abbey Mann, Macee Hargis, Tori Hoffman, Julianna Southall, Assistant Coach Tuesday Van Engan, Head Coach Janet Rawes and Appomattox County High School Athletic Director Chris Dodge.

you could say my eyes do get wide but I was ready for anything she was gonna throw at me. She likes to throw outside pitches, so you have to wait a bit longer on those and I just had to work on my timing and making sure I didn’t swing too fast,” Hargis said.

Hargis said that although she was waved to third base on the play by third base coach Davy Hackett, she wasn’t initially sure if she could make it safely. She feels good coming through for her teammates in the clutch, however.

“It feels great. I really love my team and I’m proud of every one of them, so winning with them is the best feeling ever,” she said.

Layne retired the side in the sixth and seventh innings. The game ended on a fly ball by Statesmen batter Allen to left fielder Tori Hoffman.

When Hoffman secured the final out in her glove, Raider players and coaches rushed the infield in celebration. Raider fans — who showed up in full force to support the softball girls in their quest to wear to the 2021 state crown — erupted joyfully as yet another Appomattox team brings home a state championship trophy.

Rawes, who was a catcher and utility player on the 1987 Appomattox state softball championship squad, felt “ecstatic” for the 2021 team that overcame the odds — losing six seniors to 2020 graduation and losing a year’s experience due to last season’s COVID-19 shutdown.

“Right now, it’s kinda crazy. You don’t know how to feel. I don’t think it’s really set in yet. You know, these kids got so much taken away from them last year, and to win this year it’s great. There’s no words, I don’t think, that you can put to that,” Rawes said.

Layne, who hurled 15 strikeouts against Randolph-Henry, has held the same mental approach to all of the teams she’s faced in the 2021 regional and state playoffs because she knows every team at this level is capable of winning.

“This entire post-season all the teams that we’ve played, they’ve come out swinging and they’re really aggressive, so I’ve got to take it pitch by pitch and get some swing and miss-



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian

Appomattox Raiders assistant coach Davy Hackett gives a safe sign while an umpire watches Macee Hargis slide into third base and beat a tag attempt. Hargis’ triple on this sixth-inning play was the game-winning hit in the Class 2 State Championship win over Randolph-Henry.

es,” Layne said.

Although Layne was a bit nervous because of the game’s magnitude (which many players likely were), the team bus ride from Appomattox to Charlotte Court House, helped to keep her mentally grounded.

“I was pretty nervous but I had trust in all my teammates. We were having a good time on the bus ride, so they calmed me down,” she said.

Just a few hours prior to the 1 p.m. start of the game, the Raiders were escorted out of town by the Appomattox Volunteer Fire Department, Appomattox County Rescue Squad and Appomattox County Sheriff’s Office. Many well-wishers lined the bus route, holding signs and cheering on the team as they embarked on their journey.

“It was a community effort and we had the whole town backing us,” Layne said of the fan support. “We had a parade that led us out (of town), so I know it wasn’t just a team effort — it took an entire community for this one.”

Moore commented on the competitive nature of the championship game, symbolized on a play she was involved in during the top of the seventh inning. Moore belted a double to left field and later collided with Statesmen third baseman Taylor Trent on a fielder’s choice infield ground ball by Julianna Southall that was thrown to third. Moore was hurt on the play, having gotten



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian

Appomattox Raiders pitcher Courtney Layne, shown here in Saturday’s 2021 Class 2 State Championship game at Randolph-Henry, threw her fourth perfect game of the season to help the Raiders win the championship.

the wind knocked out of her. When she came off the field, she exited the dugout and bent over in pain but returned to the field in the bottom of the seventh.

“The girl bobbled the ball and I thought she was gonna throw it to first ... It just knocked the breath out of me,” Moore said. “I think (both teams) wanted it. It just came down to the hitting, for the most part. They had a pretty solid team, they had some good hitters and some good

players in the field, and so did we. But I think we hit the ball better than they did.”

Moore, a sophomore, said she felt “happy” and “successful” after Saturday’s championship win, but did not make any bold predictions regarding a Raider repeat in 2022.

“I don’t know, we’ll see. We just have to take it game by game,” Moore said humbly in regard to next season.

Michaela Williams, who

split time in right field with Purcell this season, was thrilled with the victory but didn’t sense the magnitude of the game until after play began.

“It’s crazy; I can’t even believe it, honestly,” Williams said about the win. “When we showed up it really didn’t feel like a state’s game at first but when we got to playing it felt awesome.”

Summing up the 2021



# Sports

## Champs

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season with the word “extraordinary,” Williams complimented her right field platoon partner and the rest of her team for the way they’ve interacted with one another.

“She’s a great teammate,” she said of Purcell. “I love the entire team, we get along better than any other team I’ve been with.”

In her last game wearing a Raider softball uniform, Southall — also the 2020/21 Homecoming Queen — said that leaving with a state title was a perfect ending and well-deserved by her teammates. “I couldn’t have had a better outcome for my senior year,” Southall said. “These girls did so good this whole season, we improved so much and we really did deserve this.”

Randolph-Henry finished the season at 15-1, a record that head coach Mike Adams said was widely unexpected after a three-win season in 2019. Adams attributed his

team’s turnaround to “hard work and young players still listening to you.”

Even though the Statesmen fell short in the championship game, Adams said the future looks bright for the young team and congratulated Appomattox for their victory.

“It was great ballgame; two very, very good pitchers,” Adams said. “We were just not able to put the ball in play today. But we feel good, we started four freshmen and they played most of the year so we’ve got a good group coming back and we’re excited about that. But Appomattox deserves all the credit in the world. They were well-coached, well-prepared, and they looked very good.”

Likewise, Appomattox, which finished 2021 undefeated at 15-0 (one game against Gretna was called due to rain with Appomattox leading 1-0 after one inning), returns most of their starters in 2022, losing left fielder Southall, center fielder Abbey Mann and pinch runner Kelsie White to graduation.

No matter what happens next season or in the future, the 2021 softball team has left a legacy that will be remembered in the Appomattox community for ages to come with their name to be listed on the Louise Martin Field scoreboard and the two Raider championship signs at opposite town entrances.

“It’s great,” said Rawes in expressing what the championship means to the community and the current status of Raider athletics. “It just shows the caliber of athletes that Appomattox has right now, and the hard work that they’re putting in when nobody’s looking.”

Southall will be able to tell the 2021 softball state championship story to others well into the future, and is grateful to be a part of placing the Raider program on a higher level at ACHS as well as earning statewide recognition.

“I feel like it really put softball in one of the (ACHS) sports that’s big now,” she said, “and really puts Appomattox on the map.”



Charles Conrad/  
Times Virginian

Right columns, top to bottom: Kelsie Hackett beats the throw to first base in the first inning; Macee Hargis (#13) steps on first base to record a defensive putout as Julianna Southall backs up the bag; Tori Hoffman cracks the ball (seen at top center of photo) into the outfield for a base hit; Carrington Moore waits for a pitch in the batter’s box; Kelsie Hackett slides safely back to first base on a pickoff attempt; and Tori Hoffman celebrates after catching the final out of the game in left field.



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian

Top: Appomattox Raiders fans erupt in cheers after the softball team won the Class 2 State Championship. Second from top: Raider players rush the infield in celebration after the final out of Saturday’s championship game. Third from top: Raider player Michaela Williams (center, facing forward) hugs senior teammate Kelsie White following the game. Bottom row, left: Raiders head coach Janet Rawes (right) poses with her former Appomattox County High School 1987 State Champion softball coach Mary Tolley. Bottom row, right: Raider player Kelsie Hackett (facing forward) hugs Randolph-Henry opponent Taylor Trent in a show of good sportsmanship at the conclusion of Saturday’s battle between the two squads for the Class 2 State Championship.



# Sports

## Softball wins state semifinal over Lebanon

**CHARLES CONRAD**  
*Times Virginian*

The undefeated Appomattox Raiders softball team (14-0) earned a chance to claim Appomattox County High School's first softball state championship trophy since 1987 with a 2-0 win over the Lebanon Pioneers on Wednesday, June 23, in the VHSL Class 2 State Semifinal game played in front of a packed crowd at Appomattox County High School.

The game was essentially a pitcher's duel and defensive battle. Both teams were held scoreless until the bottom of the sixth inning when Raiders senior Abbey Mann struck a two-RBI base hit into left field, driving in pinch runners Kelsie White and Haleigh Tweedy for the game-winning single.

White was brought in to run for Courtney Layne, who had singled to lead off the inning. White had replaced Layne as a pinch runner all season long in an effort to protect Layne's ace throwing arm.

Tweedy was on base for Abby Wilkerson, who had also singled. Both runners had moved up a base due to a passed ball by Lebanon, placing them at second and third before Mann's big-time base hit.

Appomattox had created a serious scoring challenge in the bottom of the first inning by loading the bases against Pioneers pitcher Adrienne Morrison on a walk by Tori Hoffman, infield hit by Macee Hargis, and Layne beating a throw to first base on a fielder's choice. However, the next two batters, Wilkerson and Carrington Moore, were unable to



**Top: Abbey Mann of Appomattox takes the game-winning swing that drove in the Raiders' two runs for a 2-0 win over Lebanon in the Class 2 State Semifinal. Middle: Kelsie White (#4) and Haleigh Tweedy (#10) score for Appomattox in the sixth inning on Mann's base hit. Bottom: Appomattox players perform "The Worm" dance move after winning the Class 2 State Semifinal; shown left to right are Emily Purcell, Carrington Moore and Tori Hoffman.**

bring their teammates across home plate. Appomattox left seven runners on base during

the course of the game. The Pioneers made the

## Baseball season ends in regional final at Chatham

**CHARLES CONRAD**  
*Times Virginian*

The 2021 baseball season for the Appomattox Raiders came to an end on Saturday, June 19, with a 5-2 loss at Chatham in the VHSL Region 2C Championship.

For Appomattox (10-5), it was their third loss to the Cavaliers this season, the first being a 10-4 defeat at home on May 12, and the second a 3-1 loss at Chatham's on June 7.

The outcome of the Region Championship was still up in the air as late as the fifth inning, with neither team scoring until Chatham put three on the board.

Henry Hurt singled to lead off the inning for Chatham and later scored on a sacrifice bunt to Raider pitcher Alex Caruso. Chatham loaded the bases when Dixon Erwin was hit by a pitch. With two outs, Jacob Moore singled to center field to drive in two runners for a 3-0 lead. Matthew Arnold's RBI double drove in Erwin for a 4-0 lead.

Appomattox responded with time in their season running out, scoring two runs in the top of the sixth inning. With one out, Caruso drew a walk from pitcher Carrington Aaron. Mannix Wilhoit stepped in to pinch run for Caruso, and advanced to third on a single by Carter Berry. Wilhoit then scored on a single by Matthew Napier, and Berry would score on a single by Colten O'Brien.

Chatham added an insurance run in the bottom of the sixth when Hurt scored

on a line drive base hit to left field by Alexander Van Pelt.

The Raiders managed one base runner in the top of the seventh when Trey Shrock singled, but could not generate any more runs off of Aaron.

Arnold had pitched the first four and two-thirds innings for Chatham, giving up just two hits and two walks while striking out five. Aaron allowed four hits and two earned runs in his two and one-third innings of relief.

Hunter Garrett was the Raiders' starting pitcher, working four innings and allowing two earned runs while fanning three batters. Caruso gave up three earned runs in his one relief inning. Zach Dillon pitched the sixth inning and gave up one base hit.

Napier led the Raiders with two of the team's six base hits. The Raiders offense left six runners on base during the course of the game.

### Region Semifinal

On a happier note, Appomattox came away from Floyd County on June 17 with a narrow 9-8 win in the Region 2C Semifinal.

Floyd had jumped out to a 5-2 lead in the fourth inning after trailing 2-1. But the Raiders bounced right back, pounding out five runs in the fifth inning and two in the sixth to recapture the lead at 9-5.

In the fifth with Jake Maner and Kyle Davis on base, Shrock singled to right field to score Maner. New Floyd pitcher Davis Goff intentionally walked the next batter, Caruso, to load the bases in hopes

of a double play possibility. However, Goff hit Dillon with a pitch and Davis scored from third. Berry then walked to score Shrock and Garrett walked to score pinch runner Wilhoit. Napier's ground ball fielder's choice brought home Dillon.

Moving on to the top of the sixth, Shrock blasted a two-run homer to right field with Davis on first base due to a walk to give Appomattox the 9-5 lead.

Floyd mounted a comeback in the bottom of the seventh inning. Caruso began the inning on the mound for Appomattox but was replaced by Maner with one out and Tanyan Sutphin on first base after a single.

Caruso had pitched three innings, allowing one earned run after replacing starter Wyatt Sisk, who gave up five earned runs and struck out seven in three and one-third innings.

Wyatt Chafin, who had gone four innings on the mound for Floyd, was the first batter Maner faced and drew a walk. Maner struck out Emery Chafin for the second out but Floyd extended the inning as Mitchell Thompson walked to load the bases. The next batter, Garrett Greenman, cleared the bases with a 3-RBI double to center field to come within one run of the Raiders.

With the tying run, Greenman, on second base, and 2-2 count on Goff, Maner caught Goff looking at strike three to end the game and advance Appomattox to the Region 2C Championship at Chatham.

## Hunt Smart -- Fish Hard



By Leon Mettler

### Fort Pickett Crappie

I used to put magazines into stores. That was my job back then. One of the perks was I got to talk with a lot of people. I was in the Rite Aid store working putting up magazines when I ran into an older gentleman, and we got into a big-time crappie conversation.

As I am putting up the magazines I told him hang on a little bit; I got a magazine I want to show him. He waited and then I pull out the Crappie World Magazine. On the cover of it was a huge two-and-a-half-pound white crappie. His eyes lit up like a Christmas tree. He took the magazine and said he can't wait to go fishing.

We talked about crappie fishing until I was done putting up the rest of the magazines. We went outside and we talked a bunch. He told me he fishes Fort Pickett. He told me he has plenty of places to fish the river. He told me it cost \$10 for a permit. He then asked me if I wanted to fish the spot. I asked him if I could bring Adam with me. He then told me about his boat and he had plenty of room. Then he asked me where I lived. I told him Appomattox. I told him if what you said about catching a five-gallon bucket full of crappie is true, the drive will not be a problem. We made plans to meet at Rite Aid at 6 a.m. the next morning.

I shook his hand and told him I would see him in the morning. I couldn't wait to get home and tell Adam.

hometown Raider fans a bit nervous in the fifth inning, placing two batters on base — Haley Finney on a walk and Emma Musick on a double to center field. Layne got out of the jam by giving up a pop fly out to catcher Wilkerson before fanning the last batter of the inning on one of her 13 strikeouts.

Lebanon threatened once more in the top of the seventh inning with a two-out double by Finney, but Layne struck out the final batter, Musick, to seal the victory.

The Raider players took to the field after the game, celebrating by blasting music, dancing, performing a few acrobatics, and several even doing "The Worm" dance move on the Louise Martin Field infield dirt.

"It felt really good," Mann said. "I'm glad that I could be able to hit a line drive to be able to score the last two winning runs."

Mann, a senior veteran, said she wasn't focusing on the enormity of the moment as she stepped into the batter's box in the sixth inning with a trip to the state championship possibly on the line.

"Honestly, I'm not thinking about it at all," she said. "I just go up there and do my thing; I was relaxed and I was just super excited."

Mann said the pitch was a fastball thrown to the middle-outside, and expressed that she was overwhelmingly thrilled while running to first base after the big hit.

Right fielder Emily Purcell overcame pre-game jitters rather quickly, feeling early on that the Raiders would come out on top.

"The first part, I went

out there and I just felt all nervous. But then after the first inning I was like 'We got this in the bag.' I just kept telling myself, 'Hit it to me, this is my game. We got it already.' I just had that confidence in me," Purcell said.

"When we see a crowd like this, it just keeps us pumped up and not as dead," she added. "And when we have a pitcher like Courtney, we already know (the opponent) might have good hitters but they haven't seen her yet."

Purcell, in her first year of varsity play, was feeling a full gamut of emotions while thinking about her outgoing teammates and the possibility of winning the school's first state softball championship in more than three decades.

"Right now I'm overwhelmed with emotions," she said. "I want to cry because it's the seniors' last home game but I'm also excited because I've never felt this experience before."

Lebanon head coach Dennis Price commended Appomattox for winning a tough ball game and was also proud of his own team's efforts after finishing 2021 with a 17-1 overall record.

"I'm just proud of our team, we fought until the end," Price said. "Anytime you lose this time of the year it's very difficult and it's heart-breaking. But the girls don't have anything to hang their heads about, they came out here and they played a great game. When you get to this point you're gonna face good teams. (Appomattox) had an excellent team — they did a great job, and congratulations to them and best of luck to their team."



