



COURTESY PHOTO

Fredericksburg Nationals catcher Onix Vega is welcoming the return of minor league baseball, and hopes fans come out to the new 5,000-seat stadium at 1200 Wicklow Drive in Fredericksburg.

DOYLE ASSIGNED TO SPOKANE

Former Kettle Run High baseball star Brenton Doyle will play with the Spokane Indians in the High Class A League this year. Doyle, 22, is considered one of the Colorado Rockies' top prospects. *Baseball America* projects him as the Rockies' starting left fielder in 2024.

GETTING BACK TO BASES

What to know before you go to a ballgame this season

By Jason S. Rufner

SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Are you ready for some baseball?

After a most unusual 2020 season that saw Major Leaguers playing in empty stadiums, a limited college baseball schedule, and the total cancellation of high school, American Legion, collegiate summer ball and the Minor Leagues, the boys of summer are back in 2021.

With the COVID-19 pandemic not over, precautions are being taken. Even so, a return to normality is underway – and nothing feels more normal than taking the family out to enjoy the great American pastime at ballparks throughout our region.

If you have a hankering for the smell of fresh-cut grass and the crack (or ping) of the bat, we've put together some important information you should know before you head out to the old ballgame.

PRO BASEBALL

guidelines of six feet, and standing-only areas are temporarily closed.

All merchandise and concessions will be sold electronically, and can be paid for with a credit card, Apple Pay, or the Ballpark app. Team stores and retail stands are operating at limited capacity.

Fredericksburg Nationals

-**Home field:** New Fredericksburg Ballpark

-**Season:** Started May 4; home opener May 11

-**How to see a game:** The formerly Woodbridge-based Potomac Nationals relocated 30 miles south to become the Fredericksburg Nationals prior to the 2020 season. That campaign was wiped out by the pandemic, so the FredNats make their debut in 2021. Their 5,000-seat multi-purpose stadium has already seen action, as it served as the Washington Nationals' alternate training site in 2020 and 2021.

In accordance with state regulations on outdoor events, capacity for FredNats games will be limited to 50 percent, and fans will be required to wear masks and maintain six feet of distance from others not in their party. Each party will have its own pod in the seating bowl.

"Major League Baseball has implemented a mask mandate at all facilities for the 2021 season, which will remain in effect independent of federal, state or local guidelines," said Erik Bremer, manager of media relations and the broadcast voice of the FredNats. Fans will enter and exit the stadium only through the first-base gate, which will be fully opened for safe ingress and egress. Sales of tickets, merchandise, and concessions will be conducted only via electronic

See **BASEBALL**, page 11

Washington Nationals

- **Home field:** Nationals Park

- **Season:** Underway

- **How to see a game:** With capacity currently limited to 25 percent of Nats Park's 41,313 seats, the Nationals are prioritizing season-plan holders. Individual tickets are available in pods of between one and six persons, and may be purchased online at Nationals.com/tickets2021 or through the MLB Ballpark mobile app. The Nats encourage fans to have their tickets visible in the app prior to entering the park.

Fans must use the entrance gate specified via color code on their ticket, and exit through the same gate. Fans requiring ADA-compliant entry may use any ADA-compliant entrance. All areas within the ballpark abide by physical distancing

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BATTLEFIELD, BRENTSVILLE LEAD WEEKLY FOOTBALL RANKINGS

Battlefield (32.3), Freedom (27.85), Gar-Field (27.0), Patriot (26.6) and Osbourn (25.7) occupy the top five spots in the VHSL Top 20 football rankings for Class 6 Region B. Brentsville (21.3) is the No. 1 team in Class 3 Region B, followed by Meridian (20.6), Goochland (20.3) and Culpeper (19.5).

Prince William Times | October 14, 2021

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PHOTOS BY DAMON MORITZ

Woodbridge won its third consecutive Cardinal District competition cheer crown Monday by 34.5 points over second-place Colgan. Next up is the Oct. 21 region meet and a shot at the Vikings' first-ever state appearance." It's that state tournament we want," says coach Amanda Frase.

'We're not cute sideline cheerleaders. We're athletes.'

Woodbridge cheer wins Cardinal crown, seeks first state berth

By Jason S. Rufner

SPECIAL TO THE PRINCE WILLIAM TIMES

Entering the season, the Woodbridge Vikings competition cheer team's goal was to win the Cardinal District for the third straight year.

The three-peat was happily accomplished Monday when they won the Cardinal crown over second-place Colgan and third-place Hylton.

Now the Viking cheerleaders have a new goal. "I would love to see my girls make states. That has not happened in my coaching career, or at Woodbridge," sixth-year head coach Amanda Frase said. "It's that state tournament that we want."

To make the Nov. 6 state meet in Richmond they need to place first or second at the Region 6B meet on Oct. 21 on Woodbridge's home floor.

Frase believes this team can make it to the prestigious state meet at Virginia Commonwealth



Woodbridge's senior captains are Maliyah Burrus, Eliza Vanegas, Sarah Wood, Summer Smith and Kayla Petrakis.

University.

Nine of Woodbridge's 20 cheerleaders are seniors, and six have been on the varsity squad all four years. Some are considering cheering at the collegiate level.

"I knew coming in if we do what we're supposed to do, things would go great," Frase said.

Led by senior captains Maliyah Burrus, Eliza

WHAT'S NEXT

The Class 6 Region B Championship is Oct. 21 at Woodbridge Senior High School starting at 6:30 p.m. \$10 admission. The top two teams move to states.

Vanegas, Sarah Wood, Summer Smith, and Kayla Petrakis, the Viking performers focused on crowd involvement, sharp stunts, time-synchronized tumbling, and a "strong, clean, seamless transition of our routine."

Seniors Veronica English, Gabrielle Gilbert, JaLynn Ralph, and Sarah Ringwood have also been dependable leaders.

"It's been incredible to see them develop and grow as cheerleaders and as young ladies," Frase said.

From the beginning of her tenure, Frase sought to change the mindset of cheerleading at Woodbridge.

"We're not just cute sideline cheerleaders, we're athletes," she said. "We're here to compete, and we're going to do what we need to do to win."

PRINCE WILLIAM GOLF REPORT

BRENTSVILLE GOLF CONTINUES RUN OF GREATNESS

Battlefield sends two to states; Gainesville flies high in first year

By Jason S. Rufner

SPECIAL TO THE PRINCE WILLIAM TIMES

Several Prince William County golf programs holed out their seasons in style.

With a hole-in-one on the 155-yard 16th, Battlefield's Will Harley earned all-state recognition, shooting a two-under 70 to tie for fifth overall at Tuesday's Class 6 tournament at Williamsburg National Golf Club.

Harley's teammate Tate Corbett, a fellow senior and the only other local golfer in the field, tied for 29th with a 78.

The day before at Monday's Class 3 tourney in Abingdon, the entire six-golfer Brentsville lineup scored 87 or better, led by Alex Bae's 79, giving the Tigers fifth place.

There's still some golf to be played, with the girls local zone qualifier Oct. 18 in Front Royal before the girls state championship Oct. 25 in Harrisonburg.

Tigers toll to district, region crowns

It was a banner season for Brentsville, winning both the Class 3 Northwestern District and Region B titles. Consistency throughout the lineup drove the Tigers to first-place team scores of 310 in the districts and 313 in regionals.

"We had a great season," third-year coach Gina Butler said. "My top four golfers played solid golf, while my fifth, sixth, and seventh continued to get better each week."

See **GOLF**, page 26

STATE GOLF RESULTS

Prince William Finishers

Class 6 at Williamsburg National GC

Individual: 5, Will Harley, Battlefield, 70; 29 (tie), Tate Corbett, Battlefield, 78.

Class 3 at Glenrochie CC

Team: 5, Brentsville, 41-over.
Individual: 17 (tie), Alex Bae, Brentsville, 79. 22 (tie), Addison Butler, Brentsville, 80. 32 (tie), Reid Sanders, Brentsville, 84. 38 (tie), Barrett Butler, Brentsville, 86. 40 (tie), Franco Allegro, Brentsville, 87; Jack Cundiff, Brentsville, 87.



PHOTO BY RUSS FRICKE
Battlefield's Will Farley took fifth at the Class 6 meet and was Prince William's top finisher.

TOP 8 MAKE THE FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS

Battlefield (8-0, 33.25) leads the Class 6 Region B football power rankings. Patriot (6-2, 29.62) is next, followed by Freedom-Woodbridge (7-2, 29.22), Gar-Field (5-3, 27.5), Osbourn (6-3, 26.44), Unity Reed (3-5, 24.87), Champe (4-4, 24.62), Colonial Forge (3-5, 24.62), Forest Park (3-5, 24.0) and Woodbridge (3-4, 23.71).

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Prince William Times | October 28, 2021

FIT TO BE ON THE CRIMSON TIDE

Athleticism, hard work, passion have Unity Reed linebacker Shawn Murphy bound for 'Bama

By Jason S. Rufner

SPECIAL TO THE PRINCE WILLIAM TIMES

When you find what you're really good at, stick with it. You never know where it'll take you.

Shawn Murphy fell in love with football the first time he played it, when he was eight years old. Less than a decade later, the Prince William native is a 5-star blue-chip linebacker recruit, gearing up to play for the Crimson Tide of Alabama in 2022.

"I see football as another life," said Murphy, who committed on July 15 over finalists Ohio State, Penn State, LSU, and Florida.

"It helps you grow. It grooms you in a way that you won't get in a lot of other sports. It's more than just a game. Obviously, you can see how it can change your life just like that, with just one scholarship," said the star senior.

At 3-5, the Lions are on pace to make the Class 6 Region B playoffs. They rank sixth with winnable games left against Freedom (South Riding) (3-5) and Osbourn Park (2-6).

The attention on Murphy, rated as the No. 1 inside linebacker in the Class of 2022 by rivals.com, has brought attention to the other student-athletes at Unity Reed, a school Murphy chose to attend to keep some of his closest friendships.

"Shawn is a super-nice kid who can turn on the switch of 'intensity' in competition, yet carry himself with humility off the field," said Kevin Turner, Unity Reed's director of student activities. "His athletic talent will take him a long way. His personality and character will take him even farther."

"I watched him learn and grow as a freshman," Unity Reed head coach Carroll Walker said. "The way he reads the game and takes control of the defense, it's tremendous. He brings the work ethic to the table, and other kids see how determined he is to make it to the next level. They follow in his footsteps, seeing the hard

THE SHAWN MURPHY FILE

-Favorite food: Chicken Alfredo, especially reheated.

-Favorite restaurant: Musashi Japanese Steakhouse in Gainesville. "I like to order chicken and shrimp on fried rice."

-Favorite video game: Mortal Kombat X, Fortnite, Modern Warfare. He's only now getting into Madden NFL.

-Favorite football player: "Any linebacker."

-Favorite non-football athlete: "Kobe Bryant. Nobody had a work ethic like him."

-Movie genre: Likes horror movies. "But only with friends so I can watch them get scared."

-Favorite rap artist: NBA YoungBoy.

-Workout regimen: Enjoys weightlifting, footwork, agility. "I just like to work out, period."

-Favorite sports drinks: Gatorade White Glacier, Body Armor Strawberry Banana.

-Uniform number: No. 5.

-Superstition: None, but has worn his Alabama gloves in all but one game this season.

work it takes to get what you want."

Getting ready for Unity Reed

Eight-year-old Shawn had no experience in organized sports as he stood on the sideline, watching his friends play 7-on-7 football on a Manassas field.

He caught the eye of some Manassas Mutiny coaches, who invited him to sign up for the travel squad. The course of his young life changed.

"My first year was just learning how everything goes," he said, "but the second year, I just got way, way better."

Naturally tall, he was put at offensive lineman and defensive end. He spread out to other positions, like safety and outside linebacker. His affinity for football was immediate.

He's never played any other orga-

"He brings the work ethic to the next level," says Unity Reed coach Carroll Walker about Shawn Murphy. Although Murphy, who has a 3.2 GPA, is on a path to a pro football career, he is also interested in business or the fitness industry.

COURTESY PHOTO



PHOTO COURTESY OF RIVALS.COM

Hard work and athleticism have helped Unity Reed's extraordinary Shawn Murphy become Virginia's No. 2-ranked senior football player and a University of Alabama recruit. Raised in Manassas, Murphy has stayed true to his school, sticking with Unity Reed when he could have accepted offers to play at private high schools.

nized sport.

"It was just so much fun. I even loved the work that came with it," Murphy said. "Especially being around other kids who want to play football and work. I just loved the whole atmosphere."

Having newly learned the game of football, the nine-year-old began to bring his natural aggressiveness to bear on the gridiron.

"I played a lot harder once I knew what I was doing," he said. "Once I started getting into it, I started falling in love. That's where the passion began."

By the time Murphy was set for high school, he'd played six seasons for three travel-level football teams, including two years apiece with the Mutiny, the Fredericksburg Yellow Jackets, and the Manassas-based Metro VA Raiders.

Playing travel football prepared Murphy for the high school level.

"The competition I played against in travel ball, I felt like the talent was at least as good as high school," he said. "In travel ball, a lot of kids are going to private schools like DeMatha and Gonzaga and IMG Academy. I felt like who I was about to play in high school wouldn't be any better than them."

Getting set for Alabama

Despite his confidence, Murphy

took some early lumps as a raw freshman. He came to Unity Reed in 2018 with the quickness to compete, if not the size.

He wasn't 220 pounds like he is now. He weighed 155 pounds, and could only bench-press 135 pounds twice.

"And the second one was hard," he quipped.

On the practice field, Murphy felt a bit like a punching bag.

"It was hard at first, because I was so small then and taking all these blows. I mean, a lot."

Still, his aggressive drive took over, accelerated by a one-game stint on the junior varsity.

"I was mad. I came in with the mindset that I don't want to play JV, I want to start varsity," he said.

Coming hard at the ball carrier on every play, he racked up nearly 20 tackles in that lone JV contest. He's dressed out for varsity ever since.

Still, Murphy was undersized as a freshman. At first he saw limited action as a reserve outside linebacker and safety, hanging close to the coaches to get noticed.

"I made plays when I got in, whether I was trying to hit somebody or whatever I could do to show I could play with these boys, regardless of how small I was," he said.



"Really, I just play with a lot of animosity."

-SHAWN MURPHY

See MURPHY, page 21