



Rev. William Lee, pitcher for the 1969 Brookvale Fighting Warriors championship team, throws out the opening pitch Saturday, April 17, for the 2021 Lancaster County Little League season. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

“Brookvale taught us to be good people, good citizens. This is more than the 1969 team, more than baseball...it has to do with Brookvale.”

—Rev. William Lee, Brookvale High School alumnus



Aidan McGuire is so excited about reaching base he wants to share a hug with first baseman Lydia Hudson during a tee-ball game on Lancaster Little League's opening day. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



Dr. Elton Smith accepts his championship ring. Dr. Smith was the principal at Brookvale High School the year the Fighting Warriors baseball team won the state championship. He went on to become the first Black school superintendent in Virginia. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

Opening day fanfare pays tribute to Brookvale

by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

Last Saturday, in a park that was once reserved for only White players, Lancaster County celebrated the accomplishment of a Black baseball team.

It was a powerful ceremony, one that was more than five decades overdue.

Rev. William Lee said as a boy and teenager he would sit on a car hood and see the lights on the baseball field from a distance. During opening day ceremonies for Lancaster County Little League at Dream Fields in Kilmarnock, he was inside that park, on the mound for the first time, addressing hundreds as the guest speaker for a ceremony honoring his high school alma mater.

The 1969 Brookvale Fighting Warriors baseball team, which won a state championship on a field in Petersburg, was finally honored with the fanfare it deserved. The county supervisors and school board came together, along with the Dream Fields board, to celebrate its success. Each player received a championship ring. Rev. Lee threw out the opening pitch.

“What a day,” said Rev. Lee. In 1969, the world and Lancaster County was more divided. Simply, that was the way it was, he said, and he and his teammates accepted that. “But this county has been kind enough to say, ‘we’re going to bring this divide...that world between us, closer together.’”

Before the ceremony, the former players—along with some family members representing the



At left, Lancaster County supervisor Bill Lee congratulates Jessie Davenport last Saturday before presenting him a championship ring at a ceremony honoring the 1969 Brookvale baseball team. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

deceased—stood inside the Lancaster High School baseball team’s home dugout, arms draped over the chained link fence. They waited as the announcer called their names and positions then made their way to the pitcher’s mound. If not for a few wrinkles and slower steps, they looked like a team ready to take the field for play.

“Brookvale taught us to be good people, good citizens,” said Rev. Lee. “This is more than the

1969 team, more than baseball...it has to do with Brookvale.”

Rev. Lee said at the time, he and the other players didn’t really comprehend what the coaches and administrators sacrificed and did for them. The county didn’t provide equipment and the night before the championship game, Brookvale principal, Dr. Elton Smith, went to the local sporting goods store and purchased a ball and a bat. Rev. Lee displayed the ball, which held the fading names of teachers and players. After almost 52 years, he said, it was time to return that ball and walked it over to Dr. Smith. Dr. Smith, 94, became the first Black school superintendent in Virginia.

The year the team beat a school from New Kent, 11-5, in the state championship was the last year of segregated schools in the county. The next fall, the players and students at Brookvale attended Lancaster High School.

“In 1969, we won and lost,” said Rev. Lee. “We won the championship but we lost our school and our name.”

He encouraged the supervisors to find a way to put Brookvale’s name somewhere so that the county’s students know its history and the history of the Fighting Warriors.

Members of the 1969 championship team included first baseman Frank Carter, second baseman Dean Nickens, second baseman Donald Sanders, third base

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From left, machine pitch players **Lawter Marchetti** and **Jamie Mitchell** wait on the batter to hit the ball. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



Players, coaches and school administrators associated with the 1969 Brookvale High School championship baseball team were honored at last Saturday's opening day ceremonies at Dream Fields. The players were called onto the field one-by-one before being presented championship rings. Making his way to the field in the foreground is catcher **Wardell Carter**. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

"In 1969, we won and lost. We won the championship but we lost our school and our name."

—Rev. William Lee, Brookvale High School alumnus

Opening day fanfare pays tribute to Brookvale championship team

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man Melvin Harris, catcher Wardell Carter, catcher Stanley Faunteroy, shortstop Elwood Henderson, shortstop Ronald Smith, left fielder Wilbert Lee, centerfielder James Carter, right fielder Jessie Davenport, outfielder Bradell Thompson, outfielder Wardell Venev, outfielder Irvin Coleman, pitcher

Mozell Carter, pitcher Theodore Thomas, pitcher Stanley Gas-kins, pitcher Rev. William Lee, trainer Carroll Jones, assistant coach Walter Webb, assistant coach Richard Ruffin and coach Maurice Savoy.

Opening day

After over a year of social distancing and limited interaction, 165 anxious and happy young ball players paraded onto the high school field at Dream Fields last Saturday for the opening day of Lancaster County Little

League's 2021 season. The 2020 spring season was canceled and the fields saw limited play in the field during an abbreviated fall season.

"We're happy to be back the

field," said league president Tif-fany Wolfe.

Saturday marked the first day of play on Dream Fields' new Jessie Ball duPont Softball Field, which will serve as the home

field for the Lancaster High School junior varsity and varsity softball teams.

The complex has undergone massive transformations over the last two years with the addition

of the field and a new parking lot configuration. The projects were part of a long-term comprehensive plan for the park and have been in the works for over a decade.



Sara Forrester sprints across the field with a big smile on her face when her machine pitch softball team is called to the field. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



The 1969 Brookvale High School baseball team players, coaches and the school principal were each presented this state championship ring last Saturday. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



Jackson Rasmussen (center) leads his tee-ball team on the field during the parade of players at last Saturday's opening day ceremony. It was obvious from the smiles and happy faces that the kids were happy to be back on the field. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



Landon Jones (left) and the rest of his tee-ball team sprint onto the field. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

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CONTACT the Rappahannock Record 804.435.1701

Jessica ext. 13
JessicaBell@rapprecord.com

Susan ext. 15
SusanGraves@rapprecord.com

Marilyn ext. 11
Marilyn@rapprecord.com

LHS golf team wins state championship

by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

Coach Rob Pittman took the casual approach with his team in his pre-state tournament motivational speech last week.

"I got them all together on the practice green and said 'there's a reason you're here and when you get to that first tee and they say representing Lancaster in front of 200 people, you're gonna be nervous. But you can't win the championship with the first swing. So don't try. And don't worry about that first swing. Go out there and have fun and let's win a state championship.'"

And that's exactly what his six overachieving underclassmen did, posting a team low score of 342 to claim the Virginia High School League's 2021 Class I state golf championship.

There was a seven-hour gap between that initial rah rah, go-get-em speech and the final score being tabulated Monday, October 11, at the mountainous Olde Mill Golf Resort course in Laurel Fork. In between, there was a lot of stress.

"Hole #10 was so funny," said LHS junior Eli Pittman. "I was watching coach Rob pacing back and forth and back and forth in the background. He hung out to watch all of us play through. He must have walked back and forth about a mile."

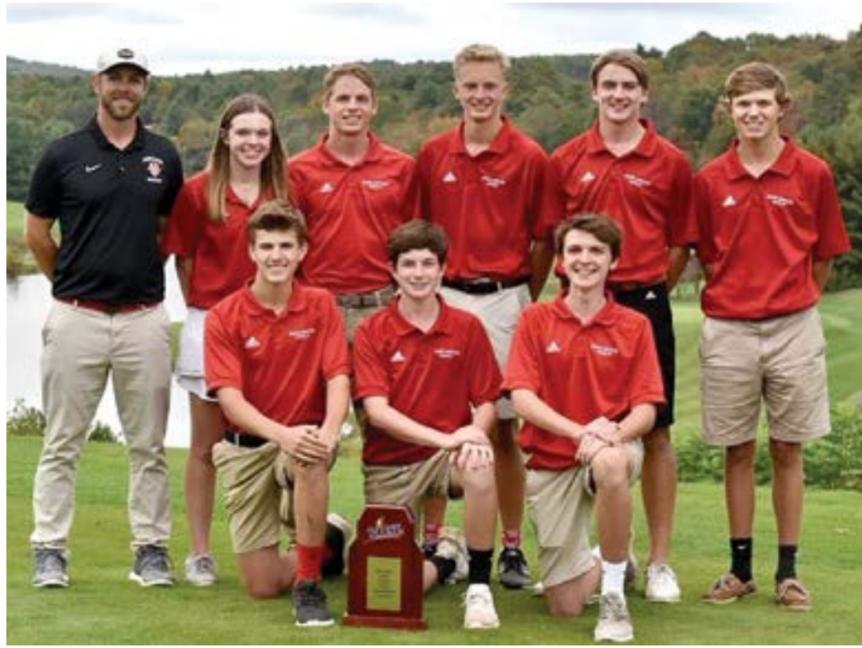
Lancaster was seven strokes better than runner-up Galax, which had a team score of 349. Castlewood was third with 352 and Giles fourth with 363. Northumberland's team shot a cumulative 365 for fifth place. Both the Devils and Indians advanced to the eight team tourney. Lancaster was the Region A champion and Northumberland the regional runner-up.

George Wythe's Benson Blevins, qualifying for the state round as an individual, fired a one-under par 71 to claim the state medalist honors. The junior was five shots better than Lancaster's dynamic duo of juniors Claire Beitel and Ben Pittman, who carded a four-over par 76 each for a second place tie. Both were one over par on the front nine and three over on the back.

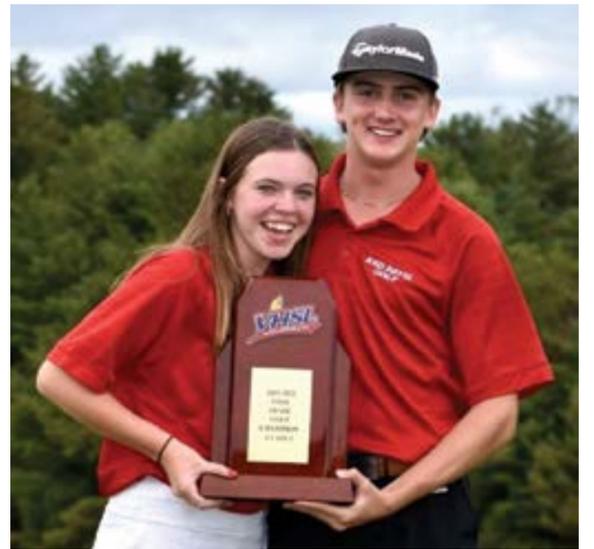
The two have led the Red Devils all season with Beitel winning five regular season matches and the Northern Neck District tournament while B. Pittman won one regular season match and was the Region A medalist.

Sophomore Leyton Dew shot a 90 and junior Eli Pittman a 100 as the four scorers for LHS. Sophomores Creston Saunders and Pierson Long also played in the tourney with senior Carter McGee attending as an alternate.

"In this tournament, I got to see all their individual personalities really come through," said R. Pittman. "Claire was in tears before it started. She said I can't do this. This is so much pressure. And I told her the reason you have that



The Lancaster High School golf team brought home the Class I state championship last week from Olde Mill Golf Resort in Laurel Fork. From left, with the championship trophy are (front row) Creston Saunders, Pierson Long and Leyton Dew; (next row) coach Rob Pittman, Claire Beitel, Carter McGee, Eli Pittman, Ben Pittman and manager Colin Payne. Alex Posey also is a member of the team. Photo by Sarah Pittman



Claire Beitel and Ben Pittman each shot a four-over-par 76 to tie for second place among individuals at the 2021 Class I state championship. Photo by Sarah Pittman



Lancaster's Eli Pittman is the grandson of the late Fred Swaffin, who coached the LHS golf team to its first state title in 1998. Pittman was one of Lancaster's four scorers in the Class I tournament last week. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

Follow through...

By winning the 2021 Virginia High School League Class 1 state championship, the Lancaster High School golf team has earned an invitation to the 2022 High School Golf National Invitational. Only the best high school golf teams and individuals receive invites based on state championship performance.

The invitational, which includes over 300 schools from across the country, is a 54-hole tournament that will be played July 11-13 at Pinehurst Golf Resort in North Carolina.



Leyton Dew shot a 90 to score for LHS and finish 18th among 54 golfers. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

pressure is because you're the best darn player on this team and you got this."

Beitel has been competing in Virginia State Golf Association (VSGA) and Junior PGA tournaments for about three years.

"Those helped prepare me [for the pressure]," she said. "But in those I play as an individual. This was different. You have to play to help your team and if I play bad, well, that hurts the team."

Beitel bogeyed the first hole then threw in a birdie on hole 7 and 16 before she said "the 18th ate me up."

She shot three-over on 18 and B. Pittman shot a double bogey on the hole.

"My second shot ran behind the hole and I had to regroup," said B. Pittman, who finished fifth in the Class I tournament last year as a sophomore. He was happy with his move up the leader board.

"Ben hit a gap wedge two feet behind the hole on number three and it swung back on him and went in for a two on a par four and that I think really got him going," said R. Pittman. "And when Ben's wedges and putters are going, I know he's gonna have a good day."

R. Pittman spent the days before the tourney preparing his team for the Olde Mill course by putting the players in some awkward lies at their home course, Golden Eagle Golf Course in Irvington. There was a 200-foot drop off the first tee to the fairway at Olde Mill, an eye-opener for Region A players used to flat ground.

"I took them to every strange lie I could find at the Eagle," he said. "I wanted to mimic the mountain course. I had them hitting balls on a lot of uneven ground."

There were eight teams and 18

different schools represented in the tourney including the champions and runners-up from Class 1's four regions along with the top three individuals in each region not on those teams.

"It was an incredible experience just to get to take part in the state tournament and then to finish on the top was really something," said Dew, who had missed playing in the district tournament because of a bad qualifying round that week. He made up for it in the region tourney and came away as one of Lancaster's four scorers in the state championship.

"I wasn't nervous until I put my ball on the ground on the first tee then it hit me. But after that I was okay," he said. "My driver and tee shots were on that day. I had so many shots on the top of hills and one time the ball was about three feet above my feet. I felt like I was taking a baseball swing at it but that was actually one of my best shots."

For E. Pittman the win was even more meaningful. He is the grandson of the late Fred Swaf-



Lancaster sophomore Creston Saunders lines up a putt. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

fin, who led Lancaster to its first and only other state golf title in LHS history in 1998.

"As soon as we won I saw mom and she was tearing up and I knew what it was gonna be about. And the first person we called was grandma. It was definitely emotional but in a good way."

"Eli didn't have a good front nine," said R. Pittman. "But I told him to stay positive and keep doing what he was doing. When I was checking on them at different times, it wasn't as much about the scores at the time but more about

where they were mentally and if they were sticking to the game plan they'd mapped out."

B. Pittman and E. Pittman were both part of Lancaster's 2019 state qualifying team. Four freshmen represented LHS that year.

Three sophomores, including Dew, Long and Saunders were part of this year's young state qualifying team.

"It was an unfamiliar course and I think I had a bad day," said Saunders, who shot a 104. "I actually feel like my best tee shot of the day was the first tee shot. I actually play better under pressure."

Long shot a 111 but made a 10-foot putt for a par "that was pretty cool," and something to remember from his first state appearance.

"I think our goal next year is to get back there and win again," said Long. "We're going to have an even better team because we're getting a few new, really good players."

McGee played in all of the matches this season except regionals and state but attended as an alternate. R. Pittman said McGee was his co-pilot in the post-season events and although player Alex Posey never traveled with the team "he would send out inspirational and motivational messages to the team."

"It was a full team effort," said R. Pittman. "In fact, we were the only team hanging out on 18 waiting for our teammates to come in. We were acting like a team."

The night before the state championship the team gathered for a steak dinner and some pre-tourney bonding, said R. Pittman, which is when B. Pittman presented Beitel with his Region A player of the year award.

"She had the golf grind. She had it all year," he said. "She was in the flow and playing junior events and practicing hard for it. And she carried our team all year."

Beitel was overwhelmed by the gesture but says she'll probably return the plaque to B. Pittman.

"Ben doing that gave me a lot of motivation," she said. "That was the sweetest thing anyone's ever done for me."



Sophomore Pierson Long hits a fairway shot. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



Lancaster's Ben Pittman puts his shot on the green at Olde Mill Golf Resort during last week's state championship. Photo by Sarah Pittman

How other Region A players fared...

Northumberland's Tre Booth shot an 85 to finish 12th out of 54 players and led the Indians. Chase Fisher shot an 88 to tie for 16th, Amanti Starks a 93 and Cooper Haynie a 99.

Middlesex High's Garrison Robins shot an 84 to place 11th and Peyton Lambert shot an 86 to finish 13th.

West Point's Blake Williams shot a 118.



Lynn and Troy Smith celebrate with daughter Hailey following her Class 1 state race. Photo by Robyn Saunders

Running with confidence, Hailey Smith proves she is a cross country champion

by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

Everything sorta fell into place the morning of the biggest race in Hailey Smith's cross country career.

"I was stretching and just looked down and there it was, a four leaf clover," said the 17-year-old Lancaster High School senior. "And when I used to visit my grandpa, we had to pass train tracks and trains always reminded me of him. Right before the race started, the train whistle blew. I'd also had a heartfelt talk with coach [James] Timm before the race. Everything felt right."

The lucky clover and all those positive vibes certainly didn't hurt, but more than likely it was years of dedication to the sport and countless hours of training that led Hailey to claim the Class 1 state cross country girls championship November 13 on a 3.1-mile course in Virginia's mountains. She beat two-time medalist Morgan Dalton of George Wythe by 13 seconds, which is pretty significant in the running world.

Hailey was the individual champion of the girls state race with a time of 20:09.10 at Green Hill Park in Salem. She is Lancaster High's first cross country champion.

"Mentally, I felt really strong and ready for this year. My coaches and teammates all said this was going to be the year," she said.

Hailey qualified for the state meet and finished sixth as a freshman, then placed fourth in both her sophomore and junior seasons. Morgan was favored to win her third state medal but Hailey had a different plan.

"I didn't worry about her," she said. "I actually had a sense of peace. I knew going into it I didn't want to leave it to the final stretch. I knew I had to have a lead on her early."

Hailey passed Morgan a half mile in and maintained the lead.

"She said my move to pass was gutsy, which I guess is a compliment" from a two-time champion, said Hailey.

"Hailey is probably the most dedicated and hard working athlete I've ever coached," said LHS coach Joanne Webb-Fary. "She has been running on a high level for more than four years, winning almost every race she has ever run. She has had the physical ability to win the state meet the past two years, but this year she had the mental toughness and confidence to bring it home."

Hailey says she got hooked on running in third grade after winning a mock Olympic race. Her brother, Devin, had run cross country for Lancaster and so in sixth grade she joined the junior varsity cross country team. She ran two-mile races in sixth and seventh grade then the full 3.1-mile runs in eighth grade. Even then, she was blowing by the varsity competition.

Joanne said she always knew she had something special in Hailey. She's dominated district and regional meets for four years, running a per-



From left, Hailey Smith and teammate Michael Foulkes relax and have fun after Smith's win in the state cross country race. Photo by Robyn Saunders



Hailey Smith gets a congratulatory hug from an emotional coach Joanne Webb-Fary after she won the Class 1 state cross country meet. Photo by Robyn Saunders

sonal best time of 19:52 her freshman year.

A quiet and modest student-athlete, Hailey leads by example. She's a dedicated trainer, taking about two weeks off in late spring when school ends "because your body needs that" then continues with easy runs all summer "to get the miles in." During the season, she pushes herself, usually training with the boys team. She's a four-time Northern Neck District and four-time Region A champion.

"I set this goal my freshman year, so it was really rewarding," she said. "My coaches are still tearing up when we talk about it, so I know it was really rewarding for them as well."

"My coaches and teammates are so supportive," she added. "They cried more than I did when I was done. Everybody has been so supportive."

A three-sport athlete, Hailey's running legs don't get a break. She had one day of rest between the state race and the first day of indoor track practice. From that season, she segues to outdoor track. She's a two-time

state champ in the 800-meter race and a state runner-up in the mile for outdoor track and has finished in the top five in her state indoor races as a freshman and sophomore.

"Hailey is a coach's dream," said James. "She's dedicated, intelligent, and totally focused on success. She is polite, humble, a great student, and the hardest working athlete I have ever met."

The daughter of Lynn and Troy Smith of Kilmarnock, Hailey hopes to follow in her mother's footsteps and major in secondary education. She's talked with cross country coaches at University of Lynchburg, Shenandoah University, Radford University and Kings State in Tennessee but hasn't decided where she wants to further her education.

"Hailey's state championship was not won with her senior season of practice. It was built step by step over a seven year period of continuous training and steady improvement. She wanted this win and was intent on earning it. She deserved that big win," said James. "The college that gets Ms. Smith next year is lucky. She will bring honor to the school in the classroom and on the race course."