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ACHS has new principal

At its meeting Thursday night, the Appomattox County School Board approved the appointment of Luke Cunningham as principal of Appomattox County High School (ACHS).

Outgoing ACHS principal F. Poldi Moreno announced his resignation in May.

Cunningham has served within Appomattox County Schools for 11 years in the various roles of teacher, basketball coach, instructional coach and most recently as assistant principal at Appomattox Middle School.

During his time within these roles, he led engaging lessons and fostered



Luke Cunningham

strong relationships with his students, planned and facilitated professional development for staff and teachers, assisted in the writing and adoption of the county's code of conduct,

See ACHS, Page A8

Make that a double! Raider softball and baseball teams are state champs!



Charles Conrad/Contributed

Above, the Appomattox Raiders celebrate their VHSL Class 2 Baseball State Championship after defeating John S. Battle 4-3 on Saturday in Salem. Below, the Appomattox Raiders celebrate their VHSL Class 2 Softball State Championship after defeating Page County 1-0 on Saturday in Salem. See articles on Page B1.

See articles on state championship games Page B1



Carnival funds going to the Railroad Fest

SHARON WALKER
Times Virginian

The Summer Fun Carnival, hosted by the Appomattox Railroad Festival, was held Friday, June 3, from 5 to 9 p.m. and Saturday, June 4, from 1 to 9 p.m. at Courtland Festival Park in Appomattox.

Proceeds from the two-day event make for more

fun when the 50th Annual Historic Appomattox Railroad Festival kicks off Oct. 7 for three days.

There will be a parade, arts and crafts and food vendors, live bands, fireworks and more.

See appomattoxrrfest.org for more information on the festival in October, to touch base with any of the board members or to volunteer.



Sharon Walker/Times Virginian

The Summer Fun Carnival, hosted by the Appomattox Railroad Festival, was held Friday, June 3, from 5 to 9 p.m. and Saturday, June 4, from 1 to 9 p.m. at Courtland Festival Park in Appomattox. Attending the event Saturday, Vincent and Sarah Baldwin (above) are parents of this happy crew: Wyatt, 5, with sister's foot on his head, his sister Jaynie, 1, and standing is Sky'lynnne, 3. The Baldwins are longtime residents of Appomattox before they left for a better-paying job for Vincent. But, they are happy to be back from Hillsville, Virginia, for a better paying job in Appomattox now. At right, Ji Ferguson, 14, an Appomattox County High School student, takes a spin on one of the rides Saturday, June 4, in Courtland Park. The festival was set up to help raise funds for the upcoming Railroad Festival planned for Oct. 7-9. See more photos on Pages A8 and A12.



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Softball repeats at Class 2 state champs

CHARLES CONRAD
Times Virginian

Coming into the 2022 season, the Appomattox Raiders' goal was to, so to speak, press the "repeat" button on their playlist. The first state championship won by the Appomattox County High School Raiders was in 1987. Now in 2022, the Raiders are celebrating their second consecutive (or, repeat)

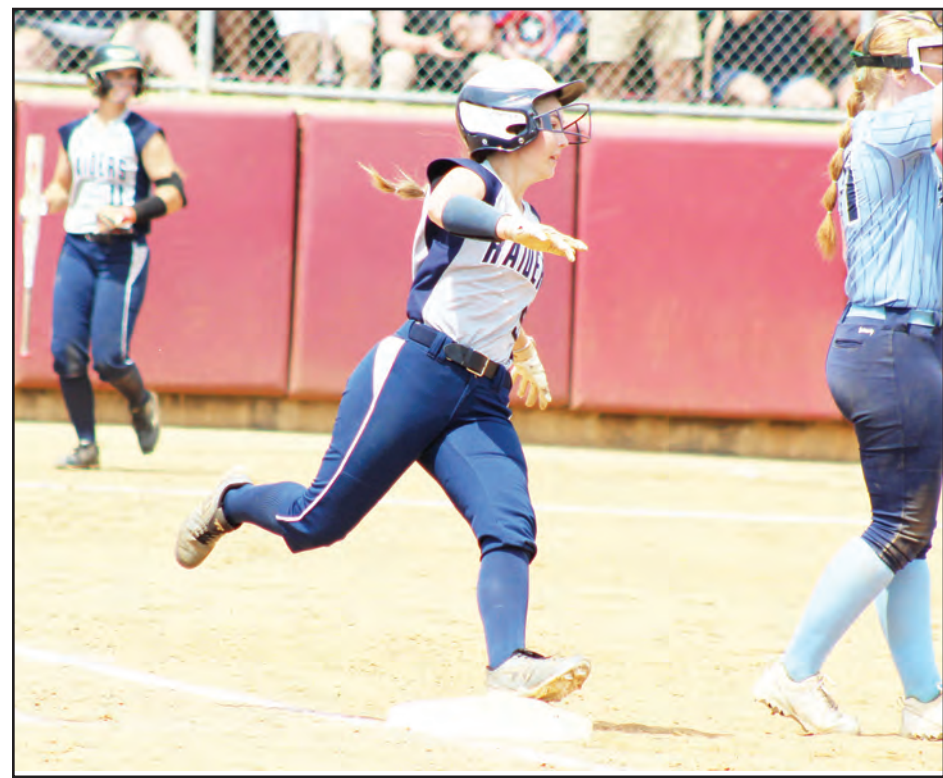
Class 2 title after a dramatic 1-0 win in the seventh inning Saturday over the Page County Panthers at the James I Moyer Sports Complex in Salem.

Courtney Layne fired her second consecutive perfect game in a state championship, accomplishing the same feat in 2021 against Randolph-Henry. Layne had also pitched a five-inning perfect game Friday in a 11-0 state semifinal win

against — you guessed it — Randolph-Henry.

Emily Purcell, the number nine hitter in the lineup, started off the bottom of the seventh inning against Page County with a shot up the middle of the Panther defense and into center field. She then planted her foot on first base as the team's leadoff hitter Kelsey Hackett stepped up to the plate.

See **SOFTBALL**, Page B2



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian

Appomattox Raiders softball photos from the Class 2 State Championship. Top to bottom: Appomattox pitcher Courtney Layne winds up for a pitch during her perfect game performance; Emily Purcell of Appomattox reaches first base on her leadoff single in the bottom of the seventh inning; Kelsey Hackett of Appomattox makes contact on the game-winning base hit that drove Purcell in from first base; Appomattox teammates begin to swarm Emily Purcell (No. 5) after she scored the winning run. See more tournament photos on Page B4 and in the June 22 edition.

ACHS baseball wins first-ever state title

CHARLES CONRAD
Times Virginian

It was a long time coming. Appomattox County High School won its first-ever state championship in the sport of baseball as the Raiders defeated the John S. Battle Trojans by the score of 4-2 on Saturday at Salem Memorial Ballpark, the home of the Boston Red Sox Single-A minor league affiliate, to claim

the 2022 VHSL Class 2 State Championship.

Raiders long-time head coach Joe Caruso, who has been at the helm of the baseball ship since 2001, and worked as an assistant beginning in 1998, becomes the first ACHS baseball coach in history to bring home a state-winning trophy.

Appomattox, while playing in a minor league ballpark, has exuded the

confidence this season that would make one believe they are willing to take on a minor league squad. That confidence was apparent when it counted most on Saturday.

Raiders starting pitcher Alex Caruso got into an early jam, allowing two base runners in the top of the first inning on singles by Jon Allen Richardson

See **BASEBALL**, Page B1



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian

Appomattox Raiders baseball photographs from the Class 2 State Championship win over John S. Battle High School. From top: Appomattox left fielder Mannix Wilhoit (second from left) is greeted in celebration by Hunter Garrett (far left) and his teammates after throwing out a runner at home plate in the top of the fourth inning, the tag being applied by catcher Trey Shrock (far right); Appomattox baserunner Wyatt Sisk slides into third base, beating the throw in the bottom of the second inning; Appomattox second baseman Nate Dillon forces a runner out at second base while turning to make a throw to first base in a double play attempt; Appomattox baserunner Collin Slagle takes a lead off first base and keeps a sharp eye on John S. Battle pitcher Even Hankins while Hankins keeps a sharp on on him. See Page B4 for more championship game photos. See the June 22 edition for even more Appomattox Raiders state tournament photographs.

Softball

Continued from Page B1

The moment was big but Hackett and the Raiders thrive in big games under the spotlight. As the tension in the ballpark grew, Hackett came through with a line drive into left field and Purcell's wheels began churning around the basepaths.

Expecting a throw from left field, Purcell noticed that the Panther left fielder misplayed the ball, which was rolling toward the wall. Purcell rounded third base and headed for home plate. She crossed the plate for the championship-winning run and was immediately surrounded by jubilant teammates who revealed in the moment.

Purcell, who in tears described her postgame feelings as "very excited and overwhelming," scored unchallenged on the play was excited to score the winning run but was not about to take anything for granted as she was running the bases.

"It felt good," she said. "I felt a little nervous though because I saw the catcher looking when I was rounding third and I was like, 'Oh my gosh, I have to beat this.' The left fielder, she bobbled the ball and it went by her and I was like, 'This is mine, I have to get there.'"

Panther pitcher Bailee Gaskins had held the Raiders to three base hits up until the last inning but Hackett was able to adjust at the right moment on a pitch she said was middle-in at the plate.

"Throughout the game I had been getting all inside (pitches), so my last at-bat I went in thinking, 'Inside, let's just crush it down the line.' Well, she tried to trick me and switched it up on me a little bit. I just saw it coming and I was like, 'This is my chance, I need to go for it now.' Swung. Once I saw it go down the line, I just had all the faith in the world in Emily. I knew she was gonna go all the way for us," Hackett said.

"(Gaskins) pitched a great game," Hackett added. "She was very smart with her pitches, I will definitely give her that one, but throughout the game we were definitely adapting to her...So by my last at-bat I kind of had a feeling of exactly what she was gonna do and I just took my chance."

Raiders head coach Janet Rawes had faith that both Purcell and Hackett were capable of ending the game in their respective situations.

"My first thought before Kelsey ever hit the ball was, 'If we can just get a ball hit to right field Emily will score.' And when the left fielder misplayed the ball, at that point it's all or nothing. 'If they get Emily out we still have Kelsey,' was my thought. But when that girl misplayed the ball it wasn't even close," Rawes said.

"Emily's a good kid," Rawes added. "She's been solid for us, the number nine hitter — and we put here there for a reason, to put us back to the top of our lineup — and she's done her job. She's consistently put the ball in play. She hasn't had a lot of strikeouts but she hits the ball well, and today she hit the ball well when we needed her to — you can't ask her to do any-

more than that." Rawes said it appeared that the Panther left fielder took her eye off the ball on Hackett's hit because she was likely focused on keeping Purcell from scoring.

Layne offered a simple explanation for why she has been able to continually deliver clutch performances for the Raiders, stating, "Just taking it pitch by pitch and not letting the moment get too big and trusting my defense."

"They played amazing as always," Layne said in regard to the team's defensive play. "We've been practicing it all season really but especially in these playoffs because we knew there were gonna be games like this...and they did an amazing job of executing each one."

Second baseman Michaela Williams was crucial on defense in preserving Layne's perfect game when she made a diving stop of a ground ball by Panther's batter Karleigh Austin in the top of the fourth inning and tossed it to Macee Hargis at first base for the out.

Williams didn't bat in the lineup — her spot was taken by designated hitter Bailey Hamilton — but was still focused on the field.

"Mentally I was in it the whole time...I wasn't batting today, so I just knew I had to make the plays in the field to support Courtney, and I did that," she said. "Those (dive plays) are the hardest ones. It was an 'I'm gonna try my best to get this, and if I get it, great, and if I don't I gave it my everything.' I'm just trying to support them as best as I can — it's not about me, it's about my teammates."

Raider third baseman Carrington Moore was also steady on the "hot corner," coolly nabbing several runners out on throws to first base.

Rawes was somewhat nervous when the Raiders were unable to score with runners in scoring position in the second, third, fourth and sixth innings but still anticipated a breakthrough.

"Yes (I was nervous) when you leave as many runners as we left early on in the game," she said. "But I knew eventually, as long as we were hitting the ball it would all work out. Sometimes you like to have them before the seventh inning but sometimes it doesn't happen that way. Courtney was great today, her defense behind her was good today. We did what we needed to do when we needed it even though sometimes early in the game we didn't. The plays that Michaela made, and Courtney getting hit in the back put a fire under them a little bit. Emily's hit and then Kelsey's hit, I mean it worked out. I always said either it's meant to be or it's not, and today it was meant to be."

Layne was hit by a pitch in the middle of her back while batting in the sixth inning but was able to stay in the game and pitch from the mound. As usual, she was replaced by a pinch-runner, this time Kenadee McCullough.

The on-field chemistry between Layne and catcher Abby Wilkerson is one reason why the Raiders have won two consecutive state titles. Wilkerson explained that their extensive history of playing

together is the key to their magical connection.

"Me and Courtney have been pitching and catching together since we were in Dixie ball, and then we went to a Travel Ball team at a young age, and then school ball — we've just been together all through," she said. "We have chemistry. We know each other's strengths and weaknesses, so I know when I need to be prepared — like on a changeup, okay this is gonna be where I need to set up to block if it goes low, but also Courtney knows that I have that block if that happens."

Wilkerson said Layne's go-to pitch is the rise-ball — a fact that is well known in local softball circles but is a difficult dilemma to solve.

At one point in the game, Layne was behind 3-1 on the count to a Panthers batter and her fellow infielders, including Wilkerson, gathered at the mound to give her a chance to rest for a moment.

Layne said they told her, "Just to stay calm, don't let it get too big and keep it in my spots like I've been doing. I came back and threw two strikes, so obviously it worked. So, (it was a matter of) just keeping (Page County's) momentum down and ours up."

The senior class of Layne, Hackett, Hargis, Williams and Wilkerson played their last game in a Raiders uniform Saturday. They leave with fond memories of each other and are glad to have gone out on a winning note.

Hargis said winning their second championship together, "means a lot because everyone always told us the second one was gonna be harder than the first one, and it definitely was. I'm glad we get to go out this way because the first one was sweet but this one's a little bit sweeter as a final goodbye...It's the end of an era, and to end like this is the best way to end."

Layne said she will remember, "Just the heart that all these girls have. We really do play for each other and we really wanted one thing this season and that was this moment right here, and I'm just so proud of them and I'll forever remember all the memories that we made, all the championships that we won, and it's been fun."

Wilkerson expressed her feelings as, "very, very bittersweet, but I love it. I wouldn't wanna be anywhere else with any other team. This is where I wanna be...The whole season, the whole time being a Raider, I loved it. We get along so good. We have such a good bond and such a good trust between each other, so we know no matter what the game's gonna throw at us we'll be able to respond."

Hackett said what she will miss most is, "The people. I mean, these girls we've been through everything together. We are so close. It's so sad to see it end but it's so exciting for the way it ended. These girls will forever hold a special place in my heart because we are like sisters, we literally do everything for each other."

Purcell, a junior, will miss the seniors and hopes to keep up the winning tradition in the future.

"I just love them all so much," she said. "It's

gonna be hard because it's basically our whole infield that's leaving and it's gonna be a new team next year. But in my head I'm just saying, 'Different team, same determination.' So we've just gotta keep the mojo going."

Rawes echoed Purcell's assessment of the senior class as well as the outlook of the future of the Raiders program.

"How can you not (miss them)?" she said. "You know, you've got the pitcher, catcher, first base, second base, shortstop — you know, they're the heart of this team, but yeah they'll definitely be missed. Not to take anything away from them, because they're great kids, but we've got a good JV program coming through, too. But even to replace these kids, it's gonna take some time."

Winning the state championship in the COVID-shortened 2021 season left the Raider players and coaching staff with something to prove — that 2021 was not a fluke.

"We work hard and coaches put a lot of time in," Rawes said. "We love these kids — I love these kids like they're mine, so it's huge. Last year was a little different, we only played 16 games, but to play a full season, stay undefeated and do the things that we've done, that's huge."

Layne and Hackett move on the play at the NCAA Division I level with the Virginia Cavaliers next season. Layne said that having Layne, as well as two other close friends — Rustburg pitcher Eden Bigham, and Bassett shortstop Jade Hylton — join her at UVA will help ease her transition.

Wilkerson will play ball at Sweet Briar, and Williams will play at Randolph College.

The Raiders now ride a 30-game winning streak, having finished 2022 with a perfect 24-0 record, and 16-0 in 2021.

In closing the 2022 chapter of Appomattox Raiders softball, Purcell repeated the team's rallying mantra. "It was Gator Season," she said, meaning that the Raiders were hungry for another state championship and left Salem feeling satisfied.

Raiders Stats
Hits (5): Hackett (2), Purcell, Fulcher, Tweedy (1)
RBI (1): Hackett (1)
SB (1): Bryant (1)
Pitching: Layne (7 IP, 0 H, 0 BB, 15 K)

State Semifinal
Appomattox 11, Randolph-Henry 0

In a rematch of the 2021 Class 2 Softball State Championship game, the Appomattox Raiders squared off against the Randolph-Henry Statesmen in the 2022 VHSL Class 2 Softball Semifinal on Friday in Salem.

Statesmen starting pitcher Danner Allen is a cousin to Appomattox shortstop Kelsey Hackett. On Hackett's first at-bat she grounded out to first base. However, after not scoring in the first inning the Raiders would come back strong, taking a 9-0 lead by the end of the second inning on their way to an 11-0 win that was ended after the top of the fifth inning due to the Mercy Rule.

Appomattox broke a scoreless tie in the bottom of the second inning when

an error on the Statesmen second baseman on a grounder by Abby Wilkerson led to runs by Sydney Bryant and Aubrey Fulcher.

In the bottom of the third, Macee Hargis opened up the lead at 5-0 with a three-run blast over the center field fence, driving in Hackett and Haleigh Tweedy. Wilkerson soon followed with an RBI-bloop single that scored Bryant. Michaela Williams later beat a throw to home on a single by Emily Purcell.

Fulcher displayed her own power by smashing a two-run homer in the bottom of the fourth inning with Haleigh Tweedy on first base. Hamilton put the cherry on top as she scored on a fielder's choice ground ball out by Williams, who had hit the ball to third base.

Williams once again came up with a standout play at second base, ending the game with a forward diving catch of a pop fly, which helped preserve another perfect game for pitcher Courtney Layne.

Starting play at 10 a.m. was quite different than the usual late afternoon or early evening start of a typical game. Several games were scheduled for the field that same day, which necessitated the early time slot. The Raiders appeared unaffected, however, as Tweedy noted.

"Personally I have more energy in the morning — 5:30 in the morning really hits me. I have way too much energy," Tweedy said. "I feel like we really came out stronger than any game that we've played this year. Maybe everyone's like me, we have more energy in the morning."

Wanting to prove themselves a worthy champion for the second year in a row, the Raiders knew they had to overcome Randolph-Henry once again.

"We came to beat this team," Tweedy said. "This is the same team we played in states last year, so we had to prove it again."

Tweedy wasn't surprised that the score was one-sided and knows that playing behind a dominant pitcher such as Layne helps their confidence.

"I know if we play behind Courtney, that she'll pitch for us as long as we'll just play behind her. And I feel like she wouldn't give up a game for us, so we don't need to give up a game for her," she said.

Raiders Stats
Hits (10): Wilkerson, Fulcher, Williams (2), Purcell, Layne, Hackett, Hargis (1)
RBI (9): Wilkerson (3), Hargis (3), Williams (2), Purcell (1)
HR (2): Hargis, Fulcher (1)
SB (7): Tweedy (3), Hamilton (2), Hackett, Bryant (1)
Pitching: Layne (5 IP, 0 H, 0 R, 6 K)

State Quarterfinal
Appo 5, Tazewell 0

As was noted in the June 8 edition of the Times Virginian, the Raiders softball team defeated the Tazewell Bulldogs, who came into the game with an 18-4 record, in the Class 2 State Quarterfinal round at home on Tuesday, June 7.

Appomattox struggled early to get runs on the board thanks to a fine start by Bulldogs pitcher Carly

Compton, who showed excellent velocity.

The Raiders did score a run in the bottom of the first inning when Kelsey Hackett went across home plate on a fielder's choice grounder by Courtney Layne. However, the offense was stymied until the fourth inning when Carrington Moore hit a single to center field, driving in Haleigh Tweedy.

The Raiders added a run in the fifth inning when Macee Hargis blasted a double off the right field wall, scoring Hackett.

Moore drove in two more runs in the sixth inning on another single up the middle, which brought home Destyni Almond and Bailey Hamilton.

Raiders pitcher Courtney Layne escaped trouble in the fifth inning by striking out Maddie Gillespie swinging with the bases loaded.

Layne struck out 18 batters and allowed two base hits.

Moore explained that in the playoffs the pitching is much more competitive, so it can take time to adjust to an opposing pitcher — and that trying to stay loose reduces the tension.

"Always the first inning we're just adjusting to the pitcher, and we do stuff in the dugout that makes us excited or whatever," Moore said.

"That's kind of how it's supposed to be in the playoffs," she added. "As you win more and more the pitchers get better, the teams get better. We can't expect to beat a team 20-0 every single time because it's not gonna happen. We just take what we get."

It was the final home game at Louise Martin Field for five Raider seniors — Layne, Hackett, Hargis, Abby Wilkerson and Michaela Williams. Hackett said the girls didn't talk much about the moment before the game in order to focus on the task at hand.

"We'll probably talk about it after but we just didn't wanna get very emotional before the game, so we were like 'Let's just play our game, play like we usually do, it's like it's another game' — which it was, I mean this one just means a tad bit more to us seniors. But all in all we just had the mindset to just go out and play our best," Hackett said, adding that the moment struck her late in the game.

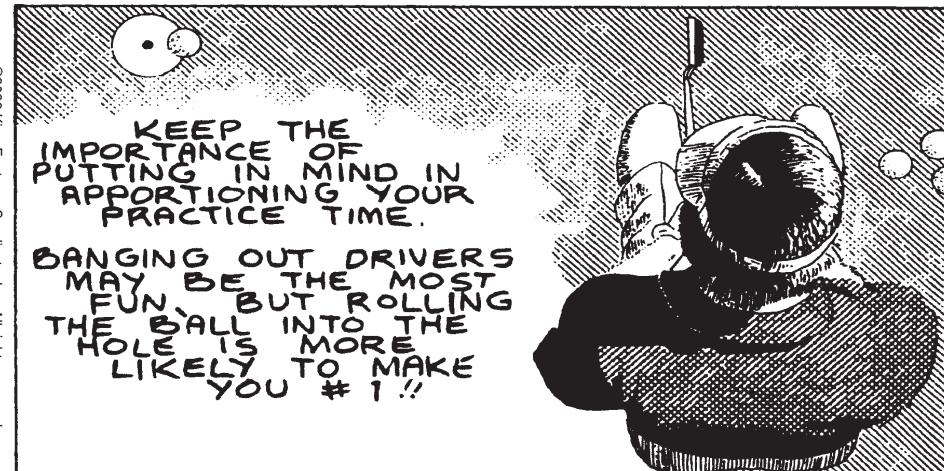
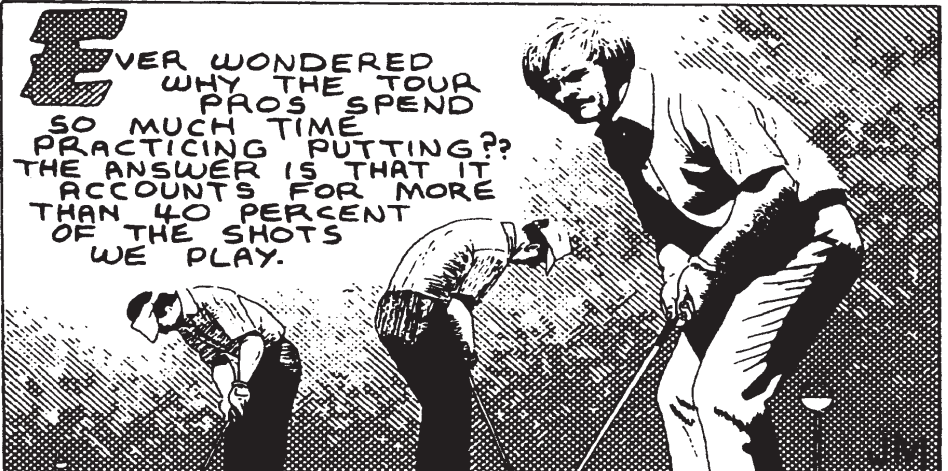
"The last inning kind of hit me really hard. Before the game I just knew this was the last time, and just give it all I got," she said.

Hackett's fondest memories of playing on the softball field at Appomattox County High School involve hitting her first-ever home run and playing two seasons on the same team with her big sister Kaleigh, who now plays softball at the University of Lynchburg.

"On this field I hit my very first home run, which was a grand slam, so that will always stay with me. Another memory...it's literally where me and my sister (Kaleigh) played together. Having her and me play together just meant everything to me."

Raiders Stats
Hits (7): Moore, Wilkerson (2), Hackett, Hargis, Hamilton (1)
RBI (4): Moore (2), Hargis, Layne (1)
SB (2): Fulcher, Hackett (1)
Pitching: Layne (7 IP, 2 H, 3 BB, 19 K)

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Baseball

Continued from Page B1

Trojan batter Evan Hankins fouled a ball off of his own face and suffered a cut above his upper lip. After falling to the ground and receiving treatment in the dugout, he returned to the plate but struck out. The next batter, Elijah Childress, grounded into a double play thanks to the dynamic Raiders infield tandem of second baseman Nate Dillon and shortstop Kyle Davis, plus the sure glove of first baseman Hunter Garrett.

Appomattox wasted no time in getting runs on the board. Trey Shrock led off the bottom of the first inning with a line drive double down the left field line. Dillon followed with an infield hit, allowing Shrock to reach third base. Dillon stole second base before Caruso came to bat and hit a grounder to shortstop Richardson, who bobbled the ball. Shrock scored but Dillon was tagged out on a rundown between second and third base.

Pinch runner Zach Busa, in for Caruso, moved to second base on a wild pitch by Gobble. Collin Slagle walked. Busa, who had moved to third base, scored on a passed ball with Garrett at the plate. Garrett followed by dropping a base hit into a gap in center field, driving in Slagle for a 3-0 lead.

Dillon and Davis worked together for another 4-6-3 double play in the top of the second inning after Nolan Sailor singled for the Trojans.

The Raiders added another run in the bottom of the second when Wyatt Sisk scored from third base on a fielder's choice groundout by Dillon. Sisk had singled to lead off the inning.

Appomattox left fielder Mannix Wilhoit got the Raiders off the field in the top of the fourth inning with a rifling throw to home plate, which Shrock caught to tag out Trojans baserunner Hankins for the third out. Wilhoit was greeted heartily by a mob of teammates as he came off the field.

"I've been yelling at him since he was nine or 10 years old to get his

throws lower and hit a cut-off man," joked Joe Caruso after the game. "He hadn't listened to me for 10 years, and you know what, it paid off tonight — just a really good athletic play from a good athlete."

"I don't even remember it, looking back at it," Mannix said about the throw. "But I'm glad it went the way it did, and we've been working for (the state championship) all year, so it just came full circle for us and ended up working out."

The Trojans rallied in the top of the fifth inning, however, as the first five batters reached base on four singles and one walk to cut the Raider lead to 4-2. Caruso struck out the next batter.

Controversy ensued when, with bases still loaded and one out, Trojan hitter Landon Odum hit a ground ball to second baseman Dillon, who flipped the ball to shortstop Davis to force one out. Odum was called safe at first base on Davis' throw to Garrett but an umpire ruled that Hankins had obstructed Davis while running to second base and, therefore, annulled Odum at first base, ending the inning. The Trojans coaching staff vehemently argued the call for several minutes but the umpires, after a brief consultation, allowed the ruling to stand.

"He didn't slide, and he grazed my shoulder when he came through," Davis said later.

Joe Caruso didn't see the actual play at second base because he was recording the play on his iPad, but said he knows the rule.

"I didn't see it but I know it's a rule, and I tell my guys all the time, 'You gotta slide? Stay down, be careful. Don't leave it up for interpretation,'" he said.

Despite the reaction by the Trojan fans and dugout, Appomattox was able to block it all out and continue to focus.

"Our mantra has been, through the tournaments is, you know something bad or something you don't wanna happen or something unexpected is gonna happen. What matters most is how you respond — and they took that to heart, you could see how they responded," Joe Caruso said.

Appomattox made another outstanding defensive play in the top of the seventh inning when center fielder Ethan Walton ran to his right and stretched out for a catch on a deep fly ball off the bat of Richardson.

"I can't even remember, just like Mannix said about his throw," Walton said. "It was just instincts and it just happened, I was just there. The sun wasn't there, I could see it fine. I just reacted and played."

Gobble hit a single to keep the Trojans' hopes alive but Hankins grounded out to Dillon to end the game and secure the state title for the Raiders.

Appomattox finishes the season with a 23-1 record (11-0 in the Dogwood District). Their only loss was a road game at Rustburg.

Raider seniors Slagle, Garrett, Wilhoit, Walton, Jake Maner and Bryson Murphy played their final game in a Raiders uniform.

"I feel on top of the world. It doesn't get much better," Maner said in regard to leaving as a state champion.

Walton described his fellow Raiders as the, "Best teammates in the world, they always have your back. Hardest working and hardest playing teammates you could ask for. We're like a family together, so it's just the best feeling in the world right now. I'm so grateful it all happened, a happy end like this."

Garrett said he had a feeling that the Raiders were on their way to a state championship when they were able to overcome the Trojans' fifth-inning challenge.

Utility player Bryson Murphy, who as a homeschooled student played his first year of varsity ball in 2022, is glad he was part of the experience.

"I'm very grateful," he said. "It's always been my dream to actually play on a team like this. It's just like a second family to me and I'm feeling great right now."

Slagle expressed plenty of thankfulness to go around.

"I'm very thankful to God and my coaches, my teammates and friends who were able to make this possible," he said. "I'm very thankful for the coaches

day in and day out helping us to get better and put that work in, and that really helped a lot. Just a lot of love going on (with) teammates. (ACHS) has never been in this spot before for baseball, first time forever, so it's an awesome feeling."

Joe Caruso is thrilled for his players as well as the community of Appomattox for having the chance to experience a baseball state championship to go along with other sports, as well as marching band and theatre.

"It's for the kids, the players, that's what means the most because they all work so hard," he said. "It's great for the school because we have such good community support from everyone. It's a feeling of pride, that little Appomattox and bringing home these titles...it's a great feeling. Sports is important to Appomattox, and so it's good that Appomattox gets this."

Joe Caruso has been impressed with the team's defensive play this season, particularly when it comes to the Dillion-Davis combination, and said he takes the time to watch how well they operate together in practice.

When asked what makes their on-field chemistry look so easy at times, Davis said, "I guess it's just a lot of practice, and we grew up playing together so it's been there for a while."

Davis is known for wearing his white cowboy hat, even in the dugout, and said he is a country boy through and through. He drives a baby blue 1997 Chevy Silverado pickup truck, and his favorite country music song is "Neon Eyes" by Morgan Wallen. He also appreciates the old-time country, being a fan George Strait.

Joe Caruso doesn't like to put pressure on his team as far as wins and losses but he realized this team's potential while noting that nothing is guaranteed.

"You have potential because you know you have a good pitching staff, you have guys that can really run," he said. "So when you see them playing defense like that and hitting like they did and executing offensively, you start getting the idea that, 'Hey, we

could make a run.' But you have to be fortunate, too... You can make a run but it doesn't always end up in a state title. As long as we play well, play hard, leave it all on the field, I'm good — and those guys do that every game."

The veteran coach, Caruso, revealed the immediate plan for his players, coaching staff and himself.

"I'm gonna be smiling for weeks at a time," he said. "It's a long season, so we're gonna enjoy it, we're gonna relax."

State Quarterfinal
Appomattox 4, Gate City 3

On June 7, Appomattox opened the 2022 state tournament with a home 4-3 win over Gate City in the VHSL Class 2 State Quarterfinal round.

Alex Caruso and Hunter Garrett put the Raiders ahead 2-0 in the first inning with RBI singles.

Wyatt Sisk started the game on the mound for Appomattox and pitched 4 and 1/3 scoreless innings before the Gate City Blue Devils rallied to take a 3-2 lead.

Caruso took over in relief of Sisk and pitched the remainder of the game.

Appomattox answered the bell in the bottom of the fifth inning with a two-run outing to regain the lead.

Nate Dillon led off with an infield single and stole second base. Caruso then crushed a double to deep center field to tie the score at 3-3. Collin Slagle hit a sharp liner down the first base line, which scored Caruso from second base. That play proved to be the winning run.

With two outs and a runner on first base, Raiders catcher Trey Shrock fired a dart to second base on an attempted steal to nab the runner and end the game — a throw reminiscent of legendary baseball catcher Johnny Bench.

"I got a little nervous when it came out low and bounced twice but it was right there for Kyle (Davis). He stuck with it really good and tagged him" Shrock said.

Shrock was bit surprised that Gate City took a chance at that point in the game with two outs but said he had a clear path in which to throw.

"That's not really a good

situation to run with the tying run right there on first, just taking a chance on getting it to second," he said. "They were in the middle of their lineup, I thought they'd trust their guys a little bit more."

Shrock noted that first baseman Garrett Hunter shouted and tipped him off on the attempted steal, and he got pitch high and away, which he said is the easiest pitch to throw from with right-handed batter.

The contest marked the last time the Class of 2022 senior players would take the field in game action at Appomattox County High School.

Graduating from the baseball team are Jake Maner, Ethan Walton, Garrett, Mannix Wilhoit, Slagle and Bryson Murphy.

Shrock, a junior, will miss the senior class and what they've meant to him personally.

"I grew up with every single one of them," he said. "Every single one of them's always been there if I needed something. They gave me rides before I could drive. If I wanted to come out and hit, I'd text one of them and they'd come out with me and hit and give me a ride anytime I really needed one. Every single one of them is what you what you want to be, what you want to have as a leader."

Slagle is glad to have driven in the game-winning RBI in his last home game as a Raider, and said it would be his fondest memory of playing on the Raiders' field.

"It was definitely a really good feeling," he said. "We had some guys before me do their job and get on base, and luckily I was in the right spot. I was just trying to do my job, like take a team at-bat, nothing for myself. I was just trying to help the team get that guy in and it worked out. So yeah, I'm really happy about it, especially my last game here."

"I'm sure there's a lot of things (I will miss)," he continued. "But I feel like I'll always remember what just happened for a long time — hosting a state playoff game for the first time in 11 years, and then being able to do that the last time here is a pretty good memory."

Raiders edge Stuarts Draft in semifinals

ADAM POWELL
Times Virginian

Appomattox County High School continued its quest for a Virginia High School League (VHSL) Class 2 State Baseball Championship on Friday morning with a 1-0 victory in the state semifinal round over Stuarts Draft High School at Haley Toyota Field at Salem Memorial Ballpark. The victory moved the Raiders into the Class 2 state finals. Appomattox County improved to 22-1 on the season with the narrow triumph over Stuarts Draft, and won their seventh straight game.

The Raiders, who won the Region 2C Championship on June 2 with a 14-0 domination of Alleghany, and then advanced to the state semifinals with a 4-3 triumph over Gate City on June 7 in the quarterfinal round, scored the game's

only run in the bottom of the third inning, as junior catcher Trey Shrock lifted a fly ball to left field that brought home sophomore shortstop Kyle Davis, who tagged up from third base.

The Raiders got a stellar outing on the mound from senior pitcher Hunter Garrett, who tossed a complete game four-hit shutout with eight strikeouts and only one walk. Garrett, who committed to play college baseball at UVA-Wise back in late January, allowed Stuarts Draft to get runners in scoring position on only two occasions, in the fourth and sixth innings. In both cases, Garrett managed to get the Raiders out of trouble and protected Appomattox's slim lead.

After both teams went down in order in the first inning, Garrett set Stuarts Draft down again with no baserunners in the top of the second. Ethan Walton

led off the bottom of the second with a bunt single down the third base line for the Raiders, but after Collin Slagle bounced into a fielder's choice and reached first base, Slagle was thrown out trying to steal second.

Garrett once again set Stuarts Draft down in order in the top of the third, and the Raiders subsequently put themselves in position to score the winning run. Davis led off with a single into left field, and advanced to second on a walk by Stuarts Draft pitcher Colton Harris to Raiders junior Wyatt Sisk. The Raiders subsequently loaded the bases, as Jake Maner attempted to sacrifice the runners ahead, but took advantage of an error by Harris. Shrock followed with the flyout to left field that brought home Davis, but Appomattox missed a golden opportunity for

even more, as Sisk was doubled off at second base after a rundown.

Stuarts Draft got its first hit of the game leading off the top of the fourth, as Nate Wayne singled to right field. Trent Coffey followed with a one-out double to right field, but the Raiders managed to keep Wayne at third base. From there, Garrett settled down and forced Dawson Jones to fly out to Appomattox right fielder Alex Caruso for the second out. The flyout wasn't able to bring Wayne home, and Garrett ended the Stuarts Draft threat by striking out Harris for the third out of the inning. That was as close as the Cougars would get to touching Garrett and the Raiders for a run.

Garrett again set Stuarts Draft down in order in the top of the fifth, but Dalton Christian led off the top of the sixth inning with a

single to left field for the Cougars. Wayne followed with his second hit of the game, moving Christian to second. But then the Raiders caught a huge break as Shrock successfully picked off Christian at second base. Although Garrett walked Symeon Balsaer to move Wayne into scoring position, he coaxed the next two Cougars batters into a pair of flyouts to Caruso in right field.

Appomattox nearly added an insurance run in the bottom of the sixth, as Caruso drilled a two out single into right field and reached second on a Cougars error. But Slagle flew out to center field, setting up Garrett for a big finish.

Garrett once again set Stuarts Draft down in order in the top of the seventh — his fifth inning of the game without allowing a baserunner. After striking out Harris for the first out, he

got Andre Ellis to ground out to Davis at shortstop. Needing only one more out, Garrett forced Cedrych Miller into another ground out to Davis, which ended the game.

Garrett consistently pitched ahead throughout the game — 72 of his 105 pitches were strikes, and he led with a first pitch strike to 12 of Stuart Draft's 25 total batters. He forced 10 Cougars flyouts, and outlasted Stuart Draft's Harris, who pitched a fine game himself with only five hits and one walk allowed.

Although Appomattox had just five hits, they only struck out once, as the Raiders consistently put the ball in play and kept Stuarts Draft's defense under pressure. The Cougars made two errors, including the critical error in the third inning that helped the Raiders push across the game's only run.



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ACHS wins big at state championship!

Charles Conrad/
Times Virginian
The Appomattox Raiders girls 4x200-meter relay team won the VHSL Class 1/2 Indoor Track and Field State Championship in the event Thursday, March 3, at Liberty University. Pictured from left: Nadiyah Abdussalaam, Harmony Troxler, Kelsey Hackett and Amyah Bolar. Abdussalaam also won the girls triple jump title with a distance of 34 feet, 5.5 inches at the event.



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian

The Appomattox Raiders girls indoor track and field team holds the state runner-up trophy after the VHSL Class 1/2 Indoor Track and Field State Championship on March 2 and 3 at Liberty University. Kneeling, from left: Amyah Bolar and Kelsey Hackett. Middle row: Coach Jamie Martin, Madison Martin, Dezyre Christian, Nadiyah Abdussalaam, Sarai Glover, Morgan Flamm, Aubrey Fulcher and Marissa Perry. Back row: Harmony Troxler, Coach Paul Napier, Head Coach Tim Crossin and Coach Brittany Pennix (obscured). Not present was Ella Dudley. See article and more photographs on Pages 5 and 6.



Appomattox Volunteer Fire Department/Contributed

The Appomattox Volunteer Fire Department puts out a brush fire in Concord on Friday.

AFVD kept busy fighting multiple area brush fires

On Friday, March 4, the Appomattox Volunteer Fire Department responded to two brush fire-related calls for service. One of the calls was around 12:30 p.m. for a controlled burn in Evergreen that needed to be extinguished to prevent the spread, and the other call for service was around 4 p.m. for a brush fire on Thomas Farm Lane in Concord.

The Concord fire resulted in approxi-

mately 14 acres being burned and one older structure being damaged and another saved.

On Monday, March 7, AVFD responded to three calls for a tree on a power line and three calls for brush fires caused by downed power lines. These incidents resulted in minor fires and didn't damage

See FIRES, Page 16

ACHS Chorus member attains high honors

Appomattox County High School (ACHS) freshman chorus member Lainey Woody made school history by landing a selection as Soprano 2 to the 2022 ACDA Southern Region Advanced Treble Honor Choir.

Recorded auditions were submitted in September from three grade levels and eleven states in the region (Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West

Virginia, Mississippi and Florida) for these highly coveted vocal slots, and Lainey ranked in the top third of selectees for her vocal part.

Lainey attended the event held at the American Choral Directors Association's Southern Region Conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, from Feb 23 to 26. She rehearsed those four days with her selected peers under the

See CHORUS, Page 15



Brenda Jarrett/Contributed

Appomattox County High School freshman Chorus member Lainey Woody made school history by landing a selection as Soprano 2 to the 2022 ACDA Southern Region Advanced Treble Honor Choir.

Small Business Spotlight



Timothy Layman/Contributed

Shown is the exterior of American Trading Company, located on 460 Richmond Highway, Appomattox.

American Trading Co. serving area since 2018

COURTNEY MENDENHALL
Times Virginian

American Trading Company has been proudly serving the Appomattox area with furniture and household appliances since 2018.

The owner, Timothy Layman, his wife Cami, and their 19-year-old son Camden, mainly run the store and occasionally have a "fourth person" to help them when needed. The store has well-known name-

brand furniture such as Sleepwell and Lane, ranging from different colors, sizes and styles. Household appliances include refrigerators, microwaves and ovens (with stovetops).

Timothy Layman said that COVID-19 has not negatively affected his business, stating that it has "kept the costs down."

Before owning this store, he owned an ATV shop for about 12 years that sold dirt

See SPOTLIGHT, Page 16



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Sports

Raider girls are Class 2 state runner-up

Girls relay team, Abdussalaam win state titles; Boys 6th

CHARLES CONRAD
Times Virginian

On Thursday, March 3 at Liberty University, the Appomattox Raiders girls indoor track and field team finished as runner-up in the VHSL Class 1/2 Combined Indoor Track and Field State Championships, just one point behind winner Glenvar at the conclusion of the two-day event.

The Appomattox girls produced two state champions. The 4x200-meter relay team of Nadiyah Abdussalaam, Amyah Bolar, Kelsey Hackett and Harmony Troxler won in a time of 1 minute, 53.57 seconds. Abdussalaam won the girls triple jump competition with a distance of 34 feet, 5.5 inches.

The Raider boys team finished in sixth place with 29 team points. Bruton was the boys team winner with 65. Vori Copeland was the Raider boys highest-rated performer with a second-place finish in the triple jump. Blake Fulcher placed third in the pole vault.

The Class 2 girls team champion would be determined in the final girls event of the afternoon, the 4x400-meter relay. Appomattox was not entered in the event. If Glenvar would have finished in any spot other than first, the Raiders would have taken home the championship trophy. Alas, Glenvar won the race to edge Appomattox in total team points 61-60.

Thirty schools competed in the girls division, while 34 competed in the boys division.

The Raiders captured the 4x200-meter relay in exciting fashion. Bolar ran the opening leg and handed off the baton to Hackett with the team in fourth place. Hackett took off sprinting as if she was stealing third base in a softball game, passing three runners and giving the Raiders the lead down the stretch at the last turn before handing off to Troxler. Abdussalaam took the baton from Troxler for the final lap with the Raiders in second place behind a runner from Poquoson. Abdussalaam shot forward with a sudden burst of speed to take the lead just before the first turn and held on for the final lap to seal the win for Appomattox.

Abdussalaam, a long-strider in her running style, was confident but, at the same time, she surprised herself with how quickly she was able to regain the lead for the Raiders — especially considering the



Appomattox Raiders indoor track and field athlete Nadiyah Abdussalaam won the girls state triple jump title with a distance of 34 feet, 5.5 inches at the VHSL Class 1/2 Indoor Track and Field State Championship in the event on Thursday, March 3 at Liberty University.

fatigue of performing in a multitude of other events.

“I don’t know how that happened, honestly,” Abdussalaam said. “My legs went numb and my mind was just blank, and I just had to go. I had been doing everything else, so I was kind of tired anyway.”

“I didn’t expect to be where we were (second place) but I expected to get in front of her even if we weren’t where we should have been, and I think we did really, really good,” she added.

Hackett, a softball player who signed to play with the Virginia Cavaliers, is competing in her first season of track and field and is proud to be a member of the relay team.

“This team’s just amazing,” she said. “Coming off the softball team and winning a state championship, that team was very special as well. This one, just having four of us, it takes a lot — we had so much faith in each other and it helped us to push one another to do better, and I feel like that’s what we did.”

Bolar, an accomplished senior member of the team, realizes the importance of being in the lead spot for the relay team.

“I definitely get nervous knowing that I have to get a good start for the rest of my teammates so they can hold it for me,” she said. “It is very nerve-racking but I just have to push it down deep through to know that they are counting on me to give them a good start. I feel like I gave it all that I got (today) with it being my senior year. I left it all on the track — do my best, that’s what we did.”

Troxler was not present when the girls 4x200-

meter relay team won the Class 2 regional championship on Feb. 18 because she was playing a regional playoff game with the Appomattox girls basketball team. However, she is glad to be part of the state winning team.

“It feels so great,” she said. “I wasn’t as prepared as everybody else, so I was kind of underestimating myself but they’re my family and they push me up.”

Abdussalaam also remarked on her state title triple jump performance, giving her two state medals, and the love she has for her teammates.

“I was extremely surprised (about winning the triple jump) honestly, but I knew that I could get it. I knew I had it in me, I just didn’t know if I could pull it off today doing everything else,” she said.

“It feels amazing,” she added. “I love my team, they did really, really good and they definitely made me feel amazing today.”

“Nadiyah, she’s coming around — she’s one of our multi-athletes, she does a lot,” said Appomattox head coach Tim Crossin. “We limited her jumps today, just kind of got her at ease and then she just put it out with a great triple jump. And pole vault, she matched her personal record...and then she ran a real good leg on the relay. She had a great day.”

The accomplishments mark the end of a successful 2021-22 indoor campaign for Appomattox, as both the boys and girls teams won regional titles in Class 2 two weeks ago at Roanoke College.

Although the girls fell a single point from winning the state championship,

Crossin was not disappointed in the final result considering the fact that the team had a slow start on the first day of events on March 2.

“No, it’s not (disappointing) because we had more of a disappointment yesterday — we didn’t do some of the things we could’ve done yesterday,” he said on Thursday. “But today we went far and beyond, so they bounced back. It’s great to finish where we finished because if you’re going on what we did yesterday we probably would’ve finished 10th today.”

Crossin gave credit to Glenvar, namely senior Carly Wilkes, and believes the Raiders will be back to compete for the top spot again in the 2022-23 indoor season despite losing seniors Bolar and Hackett to graduation in May. He is also looking forward to competing with the current team in the 2022 outdoor track and field season that begins later this month.

Overall, Crossin is pleased with the team chemistry and the progress the boys and girls teams made throughout the season.

“We had regionals as a target and we had state as a target. We reached that, we were there,” he said. “They did well — they came together as a team and they started to gel and they just see it different now than where we were in the past, so they know we can go higher.”

“It’s been a while since we were runner-up in the state, maybe 30 years, but I was an assistant coach then. This is the first time being a head coach as a runner-up” he added, as the



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian
Vori Copeland was the top Appomattox boys finisher, placing second in the triple jump at the VHSL Class 1/2 Indoor Track and Field State Championship.

strong finish is one of the highlights of his coaching career.

- Appomattox Final Results**
- Girls 55-Meter Dash Finals**
- Amyah Bolar (5th - 7.71)
 - Harmony Troxler (6th - 7.79)
- Girls 300-Meter Dash Finals**
- Kelsey Hackett (7th - 44.43)
- Girls 1600-Meter Run Finals**
- Madison Martin (5th - 5:52.08)
- Girls 3200-Meter Run Finals**
- Madison Martin (3rd - 12:42.98)
- Girls 55-Meter Hurdles Finals**
- Nadiyah Abdussalaam (9.32)
- Girls 4x200-Meter Relay Finals**
- Nadiyah Abdussalaam, Amyah Bolar, Kelsey Hackett, Harmony Troxler (1st - 1:53.57)
- Girls 4x800-Meter Relay Finals**
- Morgan Flamm, Marissa Perry, Ella Dudley, Dezyre Christian (11th - 12:40.81)
- Girls Long Jump Finals**
- Amyah Bolar (4th - 15-8.5)

- Nadiyah Abdussalaam (7th - 15-3)
 - Harmony Troxler (9th - 14-7)
- Girls Triple Jump Finals**
- Nadiyah Abdussalaam (1st - 34-5.5)
- Girls Pole Vault Finals**
- Nadiyah Abdussalaam (2nd - 9-0)
 - Morgan Flamm (8th - 7-6)
- Boys 55-Meter Hurdles Finals**
- Mannix Wilhoit (6th - 8.60)
- Boys 4x200-Meter Relay Finals**
- Vori Copeland, Micah Johnson, DiTavion Mosley, Collin Slagle (7th - 1:40.16)
- Boys High Jump Finals**
- Mannix Wilhoit (7th - 5-6)
- Boys Long Jump Finals**
- Vori Copeland (3rd - 20-4.75)
- Boys Triple Jump Finals**
- Vori Copeland (2nd - 42-6.25)
 - Matthew Epperson (8th - 39-4.5)
- Boys Pole Vault Finals**
- Blake Fulcher (3rd - 10-3)
- Boys Shot Put Finals**
- Quamea Gray (10th - 37-3.75)



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian
Top left: Nadiyah Abdussalaam (far left) and Aubrey Fulcher (far right) of Appomattox compete in the girls 55-meter preliminary trials March 2 at the VHSL Class 1/2 Indoor Track and Field State Championships at Liberty University. Bottom left: Amyah Bolar (center left) and Kelsey Hackett (center right) run in the girls 55-meter dash finals March 3 at the VHSL Class 1/2 Indoor Track and Field State Championships at Liberty University. Above: Amyah Bolar (center) of Appomattox sheds tears of joy after her Raiders 4x200-meter relay team won the state championship in the event. Bolar, a senior, was the leadoff runner for the team. Bolar is pictured with Appomattox head coach Tim Crossin (left) and assistant coach Brittany Pennix.