

# A chip off an old champ

In Foxes' Wiggins, ex-NFL vet Smith sees a mirror image

**JOEY LOMONACO**  
The Free Lance-Star

The resemblance goes beyond the blue and gold jerseys, beyond the tidy braids and Hoover-like hands. When Torrey Smith looks at King George senior Chanz Wiggins, what he sees is himself. "He kind of reminds me of a



**Smith**

younger me, as a person," Smith said in a phone interview. "I understand when you see somebody who really wants to be great and put the work in to do what it takes — I see that in him. And that's kind of what it was for me." When Wiggins takes the field Saturday for the Foxes' Class 4 state semifinal against Tidewa-

ter powerhouse Phoebus, it'll be his latest and greatest opportunity to showcase a skillset honed under the mentorship of Smith, a former Stafford High School and University of Maryland standout who won one Super Bowl apiece with the Baltimore Ravens and Philadelphia Eagles.

Prior to his junior season, Wiggins joined Smith's Level82 passing league team. Almost immediately, Smith took a liking to the 6-foot-3 Wiggins. Similarities abounded; both athletes were

## **CLASS 4 SEMIFINAL**

**King George (13-0)  
at Phoebus (13-0)**

In Hampton

Saturday, 2 p.m.

raised in single-parent households, and Smith sensed a void to fill as a positive male role model. "Chanz did need somebody

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# Wiggins

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to really look up to, to be that mentor and guide him in the right direction,” said Wiggins’ mother Michelle, a retired Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Navy. “Torrey was there at the right time to help Chanz along the way.”

Likewise, for Wiggins, Smith, who grew up in nearby Colonial Beach before moving to Stafford, presented with instant credibility.

“From my position right next door, I can do what he’s done,” Wiggins said. “I can go to the league, I can get Super Bowl rings as well.”

Smith thought back to his own high school days, when Jermon Bushrod, a former King George High School standout who went on to play in the NFL, made himself accessible to college football

hopefuls who were coming up across the Fredericksburg area.

“That was somebody I was able to look up to, to communicate with and watch how they navigated their process,” said Smith of Bushrod. “Wherever you have someone who’s been able to be where you want to be: I’m not even talking about the pros, I’m talking about getting to college and earning your degree.”

The week before he committed to Virginia Tech this past summer, Wiggins spent a few days training and hanging out with Smith at his Maryland home. Each night, they’d discuss the pros and cons of his three finalist schools: Duke, Smith’s Terrapins and Virginia Tech.

“I just gave him the honest truth,” Smith said. “I don’t think a lot of people understand what all it entails, and I do. I know the game that comes with it. I know

these coaches tell you anything.”

As if Smith’s sage advice wasn’t enough, he facilitated a conference call with former All-Pros Anquan Boldin and Steve Smith Sr, both of whom weighed in.

“They talked to me about what I should do and how I should do it,” Wiggins recalled. “They told sometimes you should be selfish and make the best decision for yourself. I really took that into consideration.”

With Level82, Wiggins continued to blossom as a receiver, using his expansive frame to attack the ball while gaining confidence facing similarly-touted competition.

“I watched him perform against the biggest and best corners in the nation and thrive,” Smith said.

While Smith is busy with several ventures of his own, including coaching, he’s remained an active presence in Wiggins’ life over the

past few months. Each weekend, they meet over Zoom to dissect his most recent King George game film, critiquing everything from route running to footwork.

“Being coached by an NFL receiver is something everyone wants to do,” Wiggins said.

This fall, Wiggins has continued to make big catches on the field (47 for 815 yards and 15 touchdowns) while receiving accolades off it.

On Nov. 17, Smith and Foxes coach Vern Lunsford presented Wiggins with his jersey for the Under Armour All-America game. He’s the first King George player to be selected for the prestigious prep showcase, which will be televised on ESPN on Jan. 3, 2024.

“It shows no matter where you’re from you can do big things,” Wiggins said.

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# 'Hawks say effort would make late coach proud

Purnell, Brooke Point advance in Commonwealth

**JOEY LOMONACO**  
The Free Lance-Star

They talked about nights like these.

First-year Brooke Point boys' basketball coach Calvin Booth and Marcus Clay, the man who was handpicked for that role, often discussed changing the Black-Hawks' culture as a basketball program.

Clay, whose sudden death a month prior to the start of basketball season shook the Brooke Point community, was intent on building a contender — the kind of team that would play for

**BOYS BASKETBALL**  
**COMMONWEALTH SEMIFINAL**  
Brooke Point 44, Stafford 36

championships.

The kind of team that would go on the road on a Wednesday night and upend a heated rival to extend its season.

"I'm honestly going to cry when I get into the car, because it meant a lot to him," Clay said following the Black-Hawks' 44-36 victory over Stafford in the Commonwealth District tournament semifinals. "I know he's looking down and I know he's proud of this."

The view on Wednesday included a virtuoso performance from senior Demetrius Purnell, who turned in a game-high 16



Brooke Point's Demetrius Purnell (right) pushes past Stafford's Jackson Wallace. The Black-Hawks won the Commonwealth District semifinal.

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# Brooke Point

From B1

points, 10 of them coming during a torrid third-quarter stretch. On four straight possessions, Purnell abruptly pulled up for a mid-range jumper. He didn't miss.

"He absolutely willed this team to win," Booth said. "I mean, if he gets the hot hand, I trust him with the ball wholeheartedly. When he gets going — when he gets in that mode — there's not a lot of people in this county that can stop him."

For their part, the Black-Hawks (11-10) centered their defensive efforts on stopping Stafford freshman phenom Jackson Wallace.

"That was our main focus, keying in on (No.) 1 making sure he didn't get going," Booth said. "Pretty much just getting a hand up, and, if someone else shoots, we were going to live with it."

Wallace managed a team-high nine points for the Indians (14-9), who trailed by just a point at halftime but weren't able to chisel away once the Black-Hawks mounted their decisive run early in the third quarter.

"We got away from what we do," Indians coach William Richardson said. "You can't get it all back in one shot. You're down four, you

think there's a four-point shot. And there's not."

After coming up with a steal in the game's final moments, Purnell aborted his fast break a few feet from the hoop and re-charted course to the scorer's table, where he dapped up a teammate in celebration.

As the buzzer sounded, Booth hoisted up a T-shirt bearing Clay's photo and proudly displayed it before a jubilant Brooke Point cheering section.

With the win, the Black-Hawks automatically clinched a berth in next week's Region 5D tournament. On Friday, they'll face the winner of Wednesday's other semifinal between Riverbend and Massaponax. Stafford faces the loser in a play-in game.

"Regardless of who we play, we've always got our chip on our shoulder," Purnell said. "Coach Marcus is watching and we're going to stay together until the end."

<b>Brooke Point</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Stafford</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>36</b>

**Brooke Point:** Demitrius Purnell 16, Seth Sanusi 9, Demabior Shukai 7, Yanis Youbi 6, Ryan Apieth 4, Gavin Schweiter 0. Totals: 18 8-10 44.

**Stafford:** Jackson Wallace 9, Jamison Noil 8, Tyler Turner 8, Skilayr Atkinson 4, Jasante Thomas 7, Jh'anit Coles 0. Totals: 15 2-6 33.

**Three-pointers:** Brooke Point 0. Stafford 4 (Noil 2, Thomas, Wallace).

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# As fans watch the field, security eyes the stands

## Law enforcement agencies take high school game safety seriously

**JOEY LOMONACO**

The Free Lance-Star

Prior to kickoff of any high school football game, most eyes are trained on the midfield meeting of captains and coin toss. But there's another pregame briefing — one just as critical to ensuring a smooth affair — taking place off the playing surface.

A school resource officer, usually assigned to the hosting school, huddles with law enforcement colleagues who are paid to work security before, during and after games.

"It starts with assignments," said Stafford Sheriff's Maj. Shawn Kimmitz. "Typically, we'll have six to eight deputies at a game, and they'll be assigned to different areas with responsibilities to check different spots. Obviously, being in uniform creates a certain level of security."

A visible law enforcement presence is just one strategy being employed across the Fredericksburg area, as schools remain vigilant for the potential for violence at well-attended sporting events.

In late August, a game at Kempsville High School in the Virginia Beach area was halted



Restricting items that can be brought to events is part of the stepped-up security at area high schools. Colonial Forge High School displayed multiple signs before its Oct. 6 football game.

**"Everyone has gone above and beyond to allow us to play high school football in a safe environment."**

**Vern Lunsford**, King George football coach, on local security efforts at games

in the third quarter when gunfire erupted near the stadium. Locally that same week, James

Monroe's scheduled season opener against rival Stafford was canceled hours before kickoff

due to threats of violence stemming from "inappropriate social media posts." Stafford ultimately forfeited the contest after the teams couldn't find a compatible open date to play.

Fans attending games at any of Stafford's seven high schools in recent weeks have been greeted by a sign at the gate reading: "School event. Bags are not permitted." Clear bags are still allowed for medical use/diapers but are subject to search.

The new practice was developed and put into effect approximately a month and a half ago, following discussions between the division's office of constituent services and athletic directors, said Stafford Schools spokesperson Sandra Osborn.

In Stafford, the Sheriff's Office has a memorandum of understanding with the school system to pay deputies who work sporting events, Kimmitz said. Similar agreements exist in Spotsylvania County with the Sheriff's Department and in Fredericksburg, where the city police department staffs James Monroe's home contests at Maury Stadium.

# Security

From B1

Once the game kicks off, deputies fan out across the stadium, with special emphasis on areas where students are known to congregate for, er, extracurricular activities.

“Bathrooms are a common place where you’re going to find kids going back there to vape,” Kimmitz said. “Under the bleachers, that sort of stuff.”

Another area of emphasis is the parking lot, where deputies keep an eye out for expelled or former students who may be trespassing. During the pre-game briefing, photos are sometimes distributed of individuals who are not permitted to be on school premises, Kimmitz said.

Around 10 p.m. following a recent game at Colonial Forge High School, a Free Lance-Star reporter perked up from his keyboard when a deputy pulled alongside and chirped his siren.

“It’s time to go,” the deputy said. “We need to clear the parking lot.”

Deadlines aside, that sort of presence is intended to prevent situations like the one that occurred in September 2021. The Brooke Point football team had just boarded its bus to head home from a 70-26 loss at Freedom High School in Woodbridge when a robbery led to shots being fired into a crowd of students assembled in the parking lot.

For coaches, best practices involve following closely the direction of administrators and law enforcement and tightly choreographing players’ movement when entering or leaving stadiums.

“We fall in line and do the things that we need to do to make sure we’re in the right places at the right times and move to the right places at the right times,” King George football coach Vern Lunsford said. “I feel like everyone’s done a great job in the area at keeping kids safe.”



**PETER CIHELKA, THE FREE LANCE-STAR**

A Stafford County Sheriff’s Office patrol vehicle is parked behind the Colonial Forge High School bleachers before an Oct. 6 football game.

If a threat becomes known, either on social media or by word of mouth, stakeholders waste little time getting proactive.

“It’s a constant communication,” Kimmitz said. “As soon as something like that comes in, we’ll link up. And sometimes, it even comes from the (school) administration to us. They’ll get the threat before we do.”

“Sometimes, it comes through the 911 center and the deputy will relay it to administration, and then they’ll work closely together to pull files and figure out what’s involved.”

Had the JM-Stafford game been played, Stafford High School’s student resource officer was prepared to be in the crowd at Maury Stadium, keeping tabs on visiting students.

“He knows the students, he sits with them every day and knows which ones he needs to keep an eye on and which ones are going to be perfectly fine,” Kimmitz said.

Familiar faces, such as teachers and coaches, can go a long way toward holding student spectators accountable, agreed Brooke Point athletic director Danny Tryon. Some Fredericksburg-area schools pay their teachers to work games, while others count the hours toward a required night duty.

“I think it’s just important to

have a large presence of school personnel so that your kids see you,” Tryon said.

Other options for enhanced security, said Kimmitz, include beefing up the number of deputies in uniform from the standard 6-8 to 10-14 and utilizing a surveillance drone and/or a handful of undercover deputies scattered throughout the bleachers.

One way to circumvent potential issues with spectators is simply not to allow any. After a fight caused Prince William County police to halt a Sept. 22 game between Potomac and Forest Park, the team played almost the remainder of the contest – almost the entire fourth quarter – the following Tuesday night in an empty stadium.

Judging by the incident reports he reads daily, Kimmitz said he has not seen “a big change” in disturbances at Stafford County’s high school sporting events. And it’s possible that a more proactive approach to addressing threats has led to greater awareness throughout the community.

“We’ve always felt very safe throughout the area,” Lunsford said. “Everyone has gone above and beyond to allow us to play high school football in a safe environment!”

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