

MCBRIDE THROWS THREE-HITTER

# Laurinburg Edges Brunswick For Area II Legion Title

BY DOUG RUTTER

Time finally ran out on the "Cardiac Kids" of American Legion baseball.

After coming from behind to win its two previous playoff series, Brunswick County's season ended Saturday night with a 2-1 loss to Laurinburg in the seventh and deciding game of the Area II championship series.

Laurinburg scored single runs in the third and fourth innings and held on for the victory. Brunswick Post 68 ended the year with a 26-15 record, while Laurinburg Post 50 (24-6) advanced to the state semifinals.

"We have nothing to be ashamed of when you lose the area championship by one run," Post 68 Coach Ed Lewis said. "I'm very proud of this team. They picked themselves up off the floor three times."

Brunswick, which came from behind against Whiteville and Wilmington to win its first Area II Eastern Division title in 12 years, nearly squeaked past Laurinburg.

Post 50 had taken a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven series, but Brunswick County won the next two games to set up the championship contest Saturday night at North Brunswick High School in Leland.

Post 68 appeared to have the advantage going into the game. Brunswick County had won two straight, was playing at home and was 5-0 when facing elimination from the playoffs.

Coach Lewis also had one of his aces on the mound, and right-hander Casey McBride baffled Post 50's batters all night. McBride had a one-hitter through seven innings and recorded 14 strike outs in the game.

"Casey pitched well under pressure," Lewis said of the rising junior at North Brunswick. "You can't throw any better than that and lose. He's got a bright future."

Ironically, two of McBride's strike outs led to Laurinburg's first run. Post 50 took a 1-0 lead in the third inning when Jeremy Hudson reached base on a third strike that eluded catcher Robert Hewett and rolled to the backstop.

After Hudson stole second base, McBride struck out Tommy McKay. For the second time, however, the third strike squirted out of Hewett's mitt and McKay took off for first base.

Instead of throwing to first for the sure out, Hewett attempted to gun down Hudson at third base. His throw sailed into left field and Hudson trotted home.

Laurinburg bumped its lead to 2-0 in the fourth when Jonathan Jackson drew a leadoff walk, moved to second on a wild pickoff throw and scored on Robbie Lowery's base hit.

McBride held Post 50 scoreless over the final five innings, but Brunswick County couldn't get anything going at the plate.

Laurinburg's starting pitcher, McKay, gave up four hits and four walks in four-plus innings. Reliever Ray Greene gave up one run and three hits in four innings and Jackson pitched the ninth.

Post 68 scored its only run in the eighth when Adrian Black singled and scored from third on a two-out wild pitch by Greene.

Brunswick County had several chances to score runs. Post 68 left nine runners on base and stranded runners in scoring position in the third, fourth, seventh and ninth innings.

Brunswick's best scoring opportunity came in the fifth when Bert Hatchell and Jeremy Child hit back-to-back singles to put runners at the corners with no outs.

Demetrius Bell followed with a fly ball to left field. Hatchell, who had two hits in the game, tagged up at third base but hesitated after leaving the bag and was out at home.

"The thing I preached to this team time after time was you can't make mental mistakes and win," Coach

Lewis said. "We made two mental mistakes that cost us tonight."

Despite the heartbreaking loss, Lewis had nothing but praise for his club. Brunswick County finished third in the Area II Eastern Division during the regular season with a 13-5 record.

In the Area II East playoffs, Brunswick rallied from a 2-0 series deficit to defeat Whiteville Post 137 three games to two.

Post 68 then lost the first game to Wilmington Post 10 before coming back to win the best-of-seven championship series 4-2. The Area II Eastern Division title was the first for Post 68 since 1981.

"Every year we've taken a step

and this year was another step," said Lewis, in his sixth year as head coach of Post 68.

"If anybody told me we were going to be 26-15 at the end of the year I would have laughed at them. We didn't have the most talent, but our kids played with heart all year."

**Game Summary**

Laurin. 001100000—2 3 0

Brun. 000000010—1 7 2

**PLAYOFF SERIES RECAP**

Game 1.....Laurin. 6, Bruns. 0

Game 2.....Brns. 3, Laurin. 1

Game 3.....Laurin. 12, Brns. 11

Game 4.....Laurin. 11, Brns. 5

Game 5.....Brns. 10, Laurin. 9

Game 6.....Brns. 8, Laurin. 6

Game 7.....Laurin. 2, Brns. 1

## Post 68 Wins One In Laurinburg

BY DOUG RUTTER

Brunswick County managed to win one out of three road games last week in its best-of-seven American Legion Area II baseball championship series against Laurinburg.

Post 68 scored three runs in the top of the 10th inning last Thursday night at Scotland County High School and held on for a 10-9 victory in Game 5 of the series.

Brunswick's dramatic win cut Laurinburg's series lead to 3-2 and sent the series back to Post 68's home field in Leland, where the teams split the first two games.

Laurinburg had a chance to clinch the Area II championship last Thursday at home and held an early 4-0 lead before Brunswick County rallied for five runs in the fourth inning.

Adrian Black blasted a two-run home run and Jeremy Child followed with a two-run single to give Post 68 a 5-4 lead. Brunswick added two more in the sixth on a passed ball and sacrifice fly.

Laurinburg Post 50 tied the game with three runs in the bottom of the sixth and neither team scored in the last three innings.

In the top of the 10th, Laurinburg pitcher Elliott Lowery issued a pair of bases-loaded walks as Post 68 grabbed a 10-7 lead. Laurinburg scored twice in the bottom of the 10th and had the bases loaded when Jeremy

Hudson lined out to end the game.

After splitting the first two games of the series in Leland, Laurinburg won the next two on its home field. In Game 4, Post 50 jumped out to an 8-0 lead after three innings and cruised to an 11-5 victory.

Brunswick County trailed 9-0 after five innings, but rallied for five runs in the sixth. Casey McBride had an RBI double to ignite the rally. Robert Hewett, Glen Hildreth, Bert Hatchell and Jared McGee also knocked in runs for Post 68.

Post 50 had 11 hits and benefited from four Brunswick County errors. Five Laurinburg pitchers combined on a five-hitter.

Laurinburg had taken a 2-1 series lead last Tuesday night with a wild, 12-11 victory in Game 3 at Scotland High. Post 50 scored three runs in the bottom of the ninth to win a game that featured five lead changes.

Brunswick County led 5-3 after five innings, but Laurinburg scored six runs in the sixth to take a 9-5 lead. Post 68 battled back with six runs of its own over the next two innings to take an 11-9 advantage.

Brothers Mike and Robert Hewett each had two-run doubles in the four-run seventh inning. McGee's two-run home run in the eighth gave Brunswick County a two-run lead.

But with one out in the bottom of the ninth, Post 68 reliever Paul Mintz gave up a single to Laurinburg's Brent Butler that sent home the tying and winning runs.



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

**BRUNSWICK COUNTY PITCHER** Casey McBride struck out 14 batters and gave up just three hits in Saturday night's 2-1 loss to Laurinburg.

## Hildreth Is Hero In Game 6 Win

BY DOUG RUTTER

Glen Hildreth pitched Brunswick County to an 8-6 win over Laurinburg last Friday night in Game 6 of the best-of-seven American Legion Area II championship series.

Hildreth, a 16-year-old from East Columbus High School, relieved starting pitcher Mike Hewett in the second inning after Hewett walked four Laurinburg batters, including two with the bases loaded.

Hildreth made the most of his relief appearance, pitching into the ninth inning. He yielded just three runs on three hits while striking out eight. Jared McGee recorded the final three outs for the save.

"This game belonged to Glen Hildreth," Brunswick County Coach Ed Lewis said. "Jared did a tremendous job coming in and shutting them down in the ninth, but Glen got us to that point."

The home victory for Brunswick Post 68 evened the series at three games apiece after Laurinburg Post 50 had taken a 3-1 series lead by winning two out of the three games in Scotland County.

Post 68 scored its only run in the eighth when Adrian Black singled and scored from third on a two-out wild pitch by Greene.

Hildreth's double to right-center field.

Post 68 added one more run in the fourth on Child's solo home run to left field. Brunswick bumped its lead to 8-3 in the sixth on a run-scoring double by Demetrius Bell, suicide squeeze bunt by McGee and RBI single by Hildreth.

Laurinburg made a late run at Post 68, scoring two runs in the seventh as Brunswick County committed four infield errors.

Post 50 added one run in the ninth on a wild pitch, but McGee struck out the last two batters to nail down the win.

**Game Summary**

Laurin. 030000201—6 3 3

Brun. 31010300X—8 13 5

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