

SPORTS



George Cox
Sports editor

McCracken a good bet to make majors

HITTING THE HIGH NOTES -- Former Whiteville High School baseball coach Linwood Hedgepeth, who sent many a player into the professional ranks, including Philadelphia righthander Tommy Greene, says, "It's just a matter of time" until Southport's Quinton McCracken is playing major league baseball.

Hedgepeth, now scouting and recruiting, recently was in attendance at a Waccamaw 2A Conference contest and took time to talk about baseball and his favorite memories of the past. The subject of McCracken was initiated almost instantly once the conversation started and Hedgepeth, who won five state 2A baseball titles at Hallsboro and Whiteville, didn't hesitate to voice his opinion about McCracken, who helped dethrone his powerful Wolfpack in 1988.

That year the Cougars went 29-0 and won the state title and McCracken graduated -- going on to play football and baseball at Duke. Now in the Colorado Rockies organization in Class AA baseball, McCracken has the intelligence along with the tools, Hedgepeth says, to make the big time within a couple seasons.

Scott Gales, the centerfielder on that South Brunswick championship squad, was another favorite of Hedgepeth's. Gales could smash the baseball and the former 'Pack coach said he would have loved to have coached him.

North's Jared McGee finishes at .467

Jared McGee, North Brunswick's versatile infielder-pitcher, ended the 1993 campaign in a blaze of glory, hitting at a .467 clip. McGee, who hurled a one-hitter against South Robeson a week ago, struck out only five times during the Scorpions' 18-game season while hitting six home runs. He went to bat 60 times, scored 16 runs and produced 28 hits, including six doubles, one triple and a team-leading 28 RBI.

The Scorpion star committed only nine errors at shortstop while doing a creditable job on the mound with a 2.05 earned run average in 41 innings of pitching. Teammate Casey McBride, who along with McGee got hurt during the middle part of the schedule, hurled 40 innings and produced an earned run average of 1.75.

Sophomore Paul Mintz led the club with an ERA of 0.25 in 27 innings of pitching. Infielder Adrian Black, who hit .367, was second in team RBI with 16. Catcher Robert Hewett had 11 and Jeremy Child followed with ten.

Hewett followed Black in batting at .296, Child at .286, and Demetrius Bell at .281. Baseball scouts have been looking at Bell, an outfielder-pitcher, and McGee.

Looking over the season, North Brunswick's best inning was the second in which they scored 22 runs, followed by the sixth with 18. The Scorpions tallied only nine runs in the first inning and eight in the seventh. The Leland team outscored its opposition, 76-52.

'Pack nine dominates Waccamaw play

Talk about domination, Whiteville's baseball program is back on track from where it left off five years ago when South Brunswick derailed it en route to a fifth-place national ranking by USA Today and 29-0 state championship record. The Wolfpack, unbeaten this season prior to Tuesday night's first playoff contest, has made mincemeat of Waccamaw 2A baseball since that time.

Whiteville has won 55 of its last 56 Waccamaw 2A regular season games. Now, if that's not dynamic, nothing is.

Meanwhile, South Brunswick was 10-11 and 7-7 in league play in 1989 and 1990. The Cougars had a winning season at 11-10 in 1991, but a 6-8 conference mark. In 1992, coach Jack Brown's team went 4-10 in league play and 6-15 overall. This season produced a 1-13 loop mark and 2-20 overall mark.

North Brunswick stood 13-9 overall in 1990; 10-4 in league play and 13-10 overall in 1992; 8-6 and 11-13 in 1992 and 7-7 and 9-9 this past spring. West Brunswick produced an 8-6 loop mark in 1991 and 13-10 mark overall. The next season, the Trojans went 10-4 in Waccamaw 2A play and 14-6 overall prior to this season's 13-10 mark and 8-6 league record.

The Scorpions captured the county baseball title this spring with victories over South Brunswick (3-2, 12-1) and one triumph over West Brunswick. Meanwhile, West Brunswick beat South Brunswick once and North Brunswick once for two in-county wins while the Cougars scored their only victory over West Brunswick, 2-1, for the school's only in-county celebration.

West's Fleming signs with UNC-G

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro recently inked a grant-in-aid with West Brunswick catcher Brian Fleming to play baseball at the Gate City school.

UNC-G's basketball team already has another Brunswick County product -- former South Brunswick player Greg Williams. With the school upgrading its athletic program and facilities, Fleming should be in a position to leave a positive mark on the school.

The school is now in Division I and, according to Fleming's father, a new \$20-million sports facility is in the making. UNC-G is located in downtown Greensboro.

With the regular season over with, Mike ("Hardrock") Clewis played his final game in a South Brunswick baseball uniform last Saturday night against cross-county rival West Brunswick in Charlotte. He'll be missed next season on both the Cougar football and baseball teams.

Clewis is looking to attend Western Carolina on a baseball scholarship if he can either get his college board or ACT scores up to minimum requirements. Otherwise, Clewis will enter school as a regular student without the required 700 minimum on the SAT.

Season would open Friday

Legion teams ready to begin

By George Cox
Sports Editor

Even though there's been less than a week of practice since Brunswick County high school teams ended their seasons, the American Legion baseball season swings into action this Friday with the county's two Area II Eastern League entries scheduled for action.

However, one of those teams -- Brunswick Shores Post 445 -- will probably have to postpone its encounter because of Whiteville High's participation in the state 2A playoffs. Those clubs were original-

ly scheduled to meet in Whiteville at 7:30 p.m. Friday night.

"If Whiteville doesn't call us, we'll be there and take a forfeit," Post 445 athletic officer Danny Gore chuckled Friday night in the press box of the South Brunswick-West Brunswick season finale in Charlotte. Gore acknowledged that he will likely get that call (unless Whiteville loses its first-round contest Tuesday night) and Brunswick Shores' opener will probably occur a week from Wednesday at West Brunswick when Burgaw invades Charlotte that night.

Post 68's Friday opener appears to

be on schedule in a road encounter at Pender High School against Burgaw. Coach Ed Lewis' club is coming off a 15-2 regular-season second-place finish last summer in which the team lost to eventual champion Wilmington Post 10 in the post-season playoff finals.

Lewis' club travels to Raleigh Sunday for a doubleheader against Raleigh Post 297 before getting back into league action Monday night against Wilmington Winter Park at Hardee Field at 7:30 p.m.

Post 68 is made up of North Brunswick, Wilmington New Hanover, Hoggard and Columbus

County players. Brunswick Shores Post 445 is comprised of South Brunswick and West Brunswick players.

Assisting Lewis at Post 68 is North Brunswick interim head coach Wes Coward. Keith Moore, North Brunswick's regular head mentor, is still in graduate school at Western Carolina. Bully Ganey is the athletic officer and John Cook the post commander.

Managing the Post 445 club is West Brunswick head coach Mike Alderson, assisted by South Brunswick coach Jack Brown. Southport's See Legion, next page

West beats Cougs, 3-2

By George Cox
Sports Editor

West Brunswick and North Brunswick captured season-ending triumphs last week as the Waccamaw 2A Conference regular season baseball race came to a conclusion.

At Charlotte, the Trojans of coach Mike Alderson rallied Saturday night in a game which was resumed after rains halted play after two and a third innings on Friday night against South Brunswick with the Cougars leading, 2-1.

However, a home run by West Brunswick outfielder Aaron Butler propelled the Trojans past the Cougars, 3-2.

The Cougars won one conference game in 14 outings and finished the campaign with a 2-20 overall mark. West Brunswick had a winning 8-6 Waccamaw 2A Conference mark and 13-10 overall record.

Meanwhile, the victory by the Trojans gave them second place in the county standings behind champion North Brunswick. The Scorpions had a 3-1 in-county record with two victories over South Brunswick while West Brunswick finished 2-2 with lone victories over South Brunswick and North Brunswick.

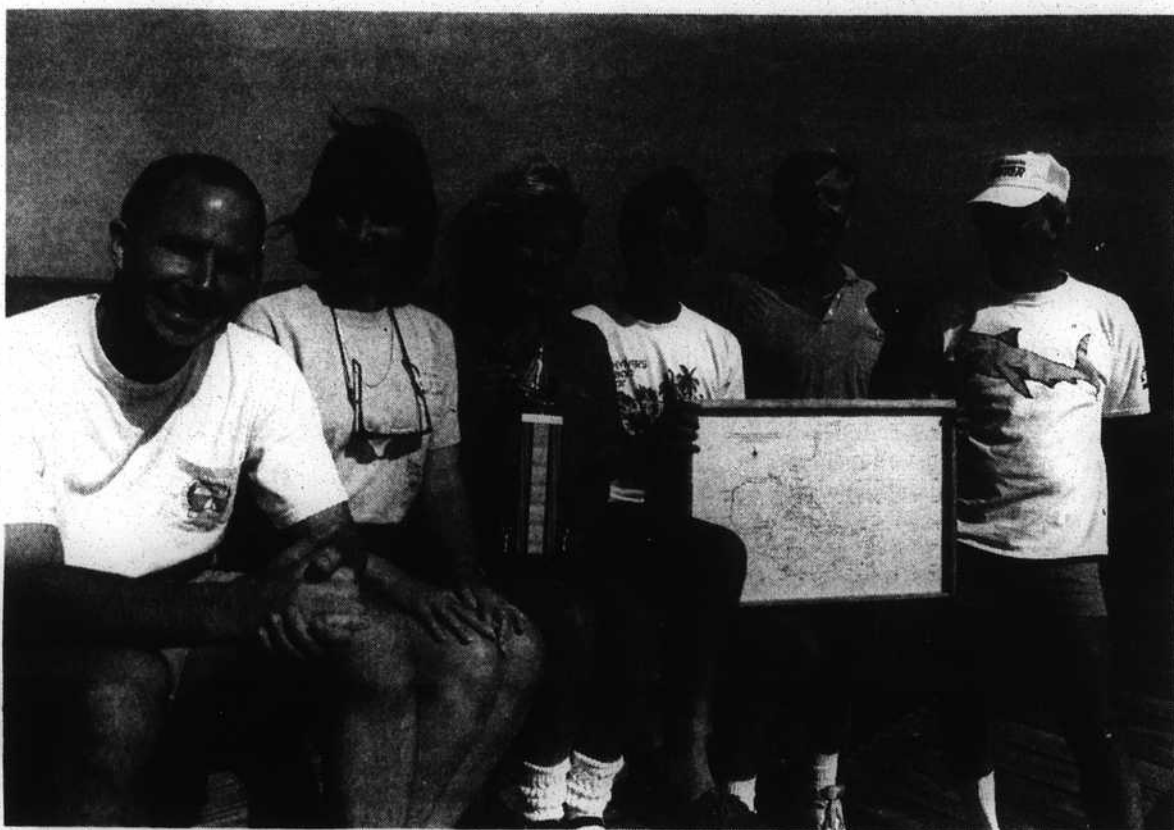
North Brunswick hit the road Friday, beating Fairmont 9-3, to finish the season at 7-6 in Waccamaw 2A play and finished overall at .500 with a 9-9 mark.

Coach Wes Coward's team played the final inning against Fairmont with just eight players because of injuries.

DIAMOND DUST -- West Brunswick took a 1-0 lead Friday night, scoring in the bottom of the second inning. Frederick Gore, the rightfielder, singled to left, advanced to second on a sacrifice by Mike Earwood, and scored on a sacrifice fly by shortstop Scott Gore after reaching third on an infield hit by Greg Mott.

South Brunswick came right back

See West beats, next page



The crew of the *Grinz* -- Verne and Sarah Seaton, Mary Tomlinson, captain Bob Cowen, Greg Skipper and Lynn Buchman -- proudly accepted the trophy for winning the Port Charlie's Waterway Regatta which was run over a course in the lower Cape Fear on Sunday.

Leland middle school teams loading the bases for varsity

By George Cox
Sports Editor

LELAND -- The future of the baseball and girls softball programs at North Brunswick looks bright thanks to banner seasons of those sports this spring at Leland Middle School, where both teams sprinted to almost unbelievable seasons.

Coach Randy Fennell's middle school baseballers' only loss of the season was to second-place South Brunswick en route to a record of 10-1.

And coach Robin Clark's girls softball team won its third straight county title, although it lost its only contest in that same time span while compiling a record of 27-1.

"These kids are so coachable," says Fennell in reference to the boys' success. "They never missed practices and have played together since they were small. They have learned how to win together."

Clark is just as emphatic about the girls, but extremely apologetic about losing that one game.

"This was the first year that we played our first full game," the eighth grade science teacher said. "Most of our games have been called by five innings with us leading by big scores" -- like 32-1 and 29-5.

The softball coach has been at the helm four years and finished second the first time behind South Brunswick Middle School. Since then the

team has been untouchable.

Both coaches stressed the importance of academics and emphasized that the majority of the players make good grades. "There were just a few 'D's' and lots of 'A's' and 'B's', Fennell said, noting the first semester.

Clark agreed, saying, "All of them make good grades. The important thing is keeping their attitudes right. A lot of them played for their parents (in community programs)."

Her softballers included Candice Ganey, Cristy Holt, Sandy Cook, Shemaka Jones, Tiffini McBride, Jenny Crowder, Rebecca Hewett, Vannetta Alston, Shaderika Willis, Sherry Jones, Chanice McKoy. See Bases loaded, next page

Scorpion girls reach playoffs

By George Cox
Sports Editor

LELAND -- Could the 1993 girls softball season mark the beginning of another North Brunswick dynasty like one here in 1979-81 in which the Scorpions won a state 1A-2A championship, finished state runner-up another season and sported a three-year mark of 57-5?

With a relatively young team and a bundle of superb softball players coming along in the middle school grades, there's reason for Scorpion supporters to believe that the 1993 campaign may be the start of something big.

After finishing the season as both Waccamaw 2A Conference and Brunswick County varsity girls softball champions, the Scorpions

prepared this week to represent the area in the post-season 1A-2A playoffs (see related story).

Coach James Sholar's club sang a familiar tune throughout the long, regular season this spring in a girls softball tradition much like boys in this baseball-softball oriented community.

Sholar, whose rapport with the players is extraordinary, has blended together talent which has been developed in the community's girls softball program. He and his coaching staff of assistants Paul Ganey, Jimmie Mintz and Burwin Mercer have done a superb job in motivating the players.

The Scorpion gals swept through the Waccamaw 2A regular season race with a 13-1 mark -- the only defeat at the hands of West

Columbus. And their overall mark was just as sparkling, 20-3, with losses to a strong Wilmington Hoggard team and Pender in the Easter Holiday Tournament.

Only four seniors are in this season's starting lineup -- Kim Ganey (first base), Christy Register (left field), Kristy Mintz (second base) and Tanya Edge (shortstop).

The remaining starters -- all freshmen, sophomores and juniors -- include Patricia Dunn (third base), Regina McKoy (outfield), Michelle Bennett (outfield), Shaunda Holden (outfield), Cindy Holt (pitcher) and Amy Mercer (catcher), who alternates with Ashley Burton, who also plays second base on occasion.

Reserves include Karen Messer (third base), Keri Cox (pitcher), Cassandra Pierce (outfield), Wendy

Ganey (catcher and pitcher), Marny Williamson (outfield) and Wendy Watson (first base).

SCORPION NOTES -- If the present group of Scorpions hope to duplicate their predecessors, they'll have to win three straight league championships as well as a state title. Coach William Hargrove, then the assistant principal and now assistant at South Brunswick, led the 1979-81 teams to the school's only state title to date.

The first season, in 1979, Hargrove's team went 18-1, going unbeaten in regular season play before succumbing to Fayetteville Cape Fear in the third round of the state playoffs.

The 1980 season was a perfect one and the North Brunswick girls beat See Scorpion, next page