

1984 IN REVIEW

Brunswick County's Year In Sports

BY JOHNNY CRAIG

From prep basketball to little league baseball, from the muddy football fields to the beautiful resort golf courses of the area, "improvement" is the word to sum up the 1984 Brunswick County sporting scene.

While all three county high schools showed drastic improvements in nearly all areas of athletics, Brunswick County began to come into its own and move out of the shadow of Myrtle Beach in the golfing world. There are countless other improvements in areas outside of the high school level and the golf links as can be found below.

The year makes for a tough selection to draw one particular event as the top story of the year. All of the following certainly played its own part in forming a unique year in Brunswick County sports. Each made its own lasting impression on the year and will set the stage for the new year already underway.

Roundball Success

Basketball success was abundant in the county as five of six teams advanced to the state playoffs at the district level. All three boys teams won spots in district play while North and South girls both won playoff berths.

The West Brunswick boys finished their best year ever under fifth-year coach Ronnie Champion. The Trojans knocked three-time league champion East Bladen from its perch to win their first Three Rivers 3-A Conference title in Champion's reign. West Brunswick led the conference race from start to finish while winning a season-high six straight games in early February. The Trojans ripped South Johnson in the opening round of the District III playoffs but were eliminated the next game by Apex in the semifinals to finish 18-6.

Although the Trojans edged East Bladen for the TRC title, the Cougars, after a 16-6 finish in the regular season, went on to capture their first-ever state championship defeating West Caldwell in Greensboro for the title.

The South Brunswick boys finished 8-15 but not before a trip to the 2-A District IV where they were eliminated in the first round by Fairmont.

Meanwhile, North Brunswick concluded its year at 11-12 but advanced to the semifinals of District III play.

Although finishing below .500, both North and South Brunswick did advance to the playoffs following the East Waccamaw Conference tournament. However North Brunswick (5-16) and South Brunswick (6-14) never made it past the first round.

Cage Honors

A number of county players received post-season honors including all-east, all-county and all-conference.

West Brunswick's Robert Thompson, Brad Cheers, Scott Evans, Sheila Johnson and Amy Trogdon were all named to the All-Three Rivers Conference team while Chuck Brown, Dana Quince and Robyn Robinson from North Brunswick along with South Brunswick's Joe Clemmons, Isaac Ballard and Regina Jones made the All-East Waccamaw Conference squad.

The Beacon released its second All-Brunswick County team that consisted of Thompson and Evans of West, Brown and Quince of North and Ballard of South. The girls team included Johnson and Trogdon of West, Jones of South and Robinson and Darlene Harrison of North.

A trio from West Brunswick—Cheers and Thompson (boys team) and Johnson (girls)—were named to the All-East team.

Brunswick Golf Featured

In February, Oyster Bay Golf Links, along with Sentry World (Wisconsin) was named America's Best New Course by Golf Digest. The Sunset Beach course was featured in a two-page color spread in the Digest's expanded annual issue. The course is owned by Larry Young and was designed by Dan Maples.

Adams Named New Director

Also in February, Charles Adams was named the new executive director of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association. Adams replaced Simon Terrell, who retired in July, after serving 16 years as assistant director.

Dominate Diamond

West Brunswick won its second straight Three Rivers Conference baseball crown while setting a school record for most wins in a single season. The Trojans went 19-3 overall and 11-1 in the league including a 13-game winning streak that wasn't broken until the second round of the state playoffs by Southern Durham.

Included in the Trojans romp to the title were Scott Evans' no-hitter thrown in a 10-0 win over Clinton and Henry Stevenson's three-home-run game in a 12-4 win over Loris, S.C. In the win over Clinton, Evans struck out 13 and only three walks prevented the senior hurler from a perfect game.

Pitcher Matt Gore tossed a one-hitter in a 3-0 win over Laney while Evans also one-hit Pender in an 11-0 triumph over Pender.

The Trojans topped Durham Jordan, 10-3 in the state playoffs' opening round but fell to Southern Durham, 8-0 in round two.

Meanwhile, North Brunswick finished 15-0 and also advanced to the second round of the state 2-A playoffs. The Scorpions blanked North Duplin, 5-0 in the opening round but fell to Saint Pauls, 11-5 in the next round of play.

All-County Baseball

West Brunswick led the way in the Beacon's annual All-Brunswick County baseball team that saw Gore, Evans, Jeff Johnson, Rusty Johnson, Stevenson and Pat Smith of the Trojans honored. Also included were South's Jim Dezern, Richard Long and Jeff Brindle. From North were Johnny Sanders, Justin Sholar, Landon McLean, Chuck Clemmons and James Reynolds.

Athletes Of The Year

In June all three high schools held awards banquets

honoring top athletes. Evans was named the top athlete at West while Kenny Bryant and Regina Jones were the tops at South. Wanda Jacobs and Andre Lee were named the best at North.

All-EWC Softball

Seven girls from North and South were named to the All-East Waccamaw Conference softball team including Pam Coring and Deborah White of South and North's Wendy Williams, Belinda Ramsey, Robyn Robinson, Wanda Jacobs and Donna Royal.

Trojan Tennis Is Tops

West Brunswick won its third boys tennis title in four years finishing the year 12-2 overall with an 11-match win streak. Top singles player, Brad Cheers, advanced to the regionals after a second-place finish in sectional play in Wilmington. Cheers finished the year with a 17-1 record in singles play.

Local Pair Win Golf Tourney

Ernie Hewett (Supply) and Charles Todd (Shalotte) became the first Brunswick golfers to win the annual South Brunswick Islands Four-Ball Championship in June. Hewett and Todd combined for a total 137 for two days at Carolina Shores and Oyster Bay to win the biggest and most prestigious tournament in the county.

Grid Coaching Changes

The first of two football coaching changes occurred in June when South Brunswick announced Glenn Sasser as the Cougar's new gridiron coach. Sasser, a former coach at New Hanover and Laney in Wilmington, moved from Myers Park in Charlotte where he was named Associated Press state high school coach of the year.

One week later West Brunswick football coach Sam Page announced his plans to resign to take a similar position at Buford High School in Lancaster County, S.C. Page ended six years with the Trojans after compiling a 28-35 record that included a 1980 TRC championship and 9-3 record.

In July, Greg Norris was named the new Trojan football coach. Norris, the former successful baseball coach at West Brunswick, stepped up to the job after a year's layoff from coaching.

County Players Sign Grants

During the summer, a number of county standouts signed grants-in-aid to continue play on the collegiate level. Scott Evans signed a baseball grant with Campbell University while Brad Cheers signed a tennis grant with UNC-Wilmington. Chuck Brown, although not officially signing, did sign a letter-of-intent to play basketball at N.C. State.

Brown's letter ended many months of speculation as to where the Scorpion standout would continue his basketball career after being the most sought-after cager in Brunswick County.

Midget Girls Win State Title

The Brunswick County All-Stars won the Midget Girls State Softball championship with a 5-5 win over East Davidson at Wilmington. Pitcher LaShonda Grissett was named most valuable player.

Little League All-Stars

Jimmy Johnson was named Brunswick County Little League Baseball most valuable player in July. Johnson led the Cardinals to another league title while also being named the most valuable pitcher with a 6-0 record.

Named to the league's all-star team were Jimmy Hewett, Matt Abbott, Wayne Cassidy, Shane Holden, Chris Robinson, Chris Bland, Chris Morgan, Jarvis Herring, Johnson, Raymond Howard, Neil Ward, Luke Upchurch, Scott Quaintance and Jody Clemmons.

Athletes Successful In College

A number of former Brunswick County athletes had successful years on the college level. Former Trojan pitcher Greg Pickett was named All-Dixie Conference after a 6-0 year on the mound for Methodist College in Fayetteville. Pickett finished with a 2.37 ERA and helped lead Methodist to a 37-7 record on the NCAA Division II level. Included in Pickett's 6-0 record was a one-hitter against Savannah State early in the season.

Former South Brunswick football standout Jo Jo White broke the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) career rushing record of 3,843 set by Timmy Newson, now with the Dallas Cowboys. White broke the old mark with 206 yards on the ground in a 54-0 win over Bowie State in October to bring his rushing total to 3,922 yards.

Another former Cougar grid star, Ned Thigpen, was named Lenoir-Rhyne College player of the week in the Bear's 28-20 loss to defending national champion Carson-Newman. Thigpen was honored for his play on special teams.

Lees-McRae freshman Jeff Sholar was named to the All-Region X Junior College football team. Sholar was a standout at North Brunswick under coach Tom Farrar prior to playing with Lees-McRae.

Football Improvements

West Brunswick finished with the best football record in the county at 6-4 and finished third in the Three Rivers Conference with a 2-2 mark. It was the first winning season for the Trojans in three years after back-to-back 1-9 seasons.

Meanwhile, South Brunswick finished 5-5 after a 1-9 year and North Brunswick fell to a disappointing 4-6 season after winning four of its first five games.

Buffkin Wins Scoring Title

West Brunswick's James Buffkin won the county football scoring title in a runaway with 14 touchdowns and five two-point conversions and 94 total points. Included in Buffkin's play was a four-touchdown performance in the Trojans' 36-34 win over West Columbus.

All-County Grid Teams

West Brunswick led the Beacon's annual All-Brunswick County football squad with nine selections while South placed eight and North seven to the team.

From West were Keith Stanley, Buffkin, Matt Gore, Mike King, Jarrett Elliott, Tony Ward, Tom Brown and Dave Andrews.

From South were Larry Galloway, Leo Bohland, Scott Rhode, John Spencer, Bryan Galloway, Danny Howard, Quinton McCracken and Mark Karnes.

From North were Mike Blanks, Junior King, Mitchell Stevens, Jackie Bullard, Lanier Sloan and Levi Moore.

All-TRC Football, Tennis

Seven Trojans received All-Three Rivers Conference honors in football and girls tennis in November. Receiving football honors were Stanley, Buffkin, King and Elliott while Gina Howard, Jill Hewett and April Causey took tennis honors.

Galloway Named Cougar MVP

Larry Galloway was named South Brunswick football most valuable player at the Cougars football banquet in December. The senior played both linebacker and was the leading rusher for the Cougars. Speaking at the South banquet was former NFL and N.C. State quarterback Roman Gabriel.

Champion Wins 100th

West Brunswick basketball coach Ronnie Champion won his 100th career win while at West Brunswick just before Christmas break in a 61-59 win over North Myrtle Beach, S.C. The win comes in Champion's sixth season with the Trojans.

Alignment Finalized

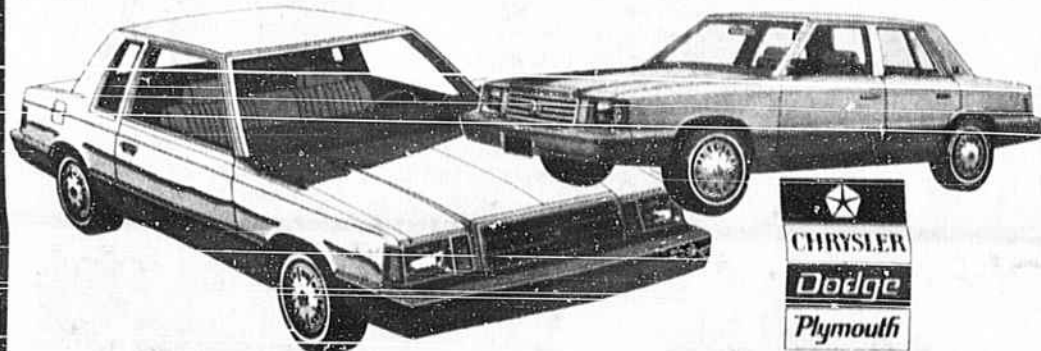
In what will probably have the biggest effect on Brunswick County sports in 1985, the prep conference alignment by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) received its final drafting in December in Chapel Hill.

Speaking in more local terms, this alignment moved all three county high schools into the same conference for the first time ever. Three schools of the Three Rivers Conference (West Brunswick, East Bladen and West Columbus) were moved from 3-A classification to the 2-A level and will join South and North Brunswick, Fairmont, South Robeson and Whiteville to give the East Waccamaw Conference an eight-team field.

The remaining teams from the TRC, Clinton and Pender, also dropped to the 2-A level to join the East Central Conference. Meanwhile, Hallsboro and Tabor City (formerly with the EWC) dropped to the 1-A Tri-County Conference.

Although finalized in December, the new alignments will not take effect until the 1985-86 school year.

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