

SPORTING SCENE

# Decade Of 80s Brought Championships To Brunswick...

BY JOHNNY CRAIG

The 1980s was a banner decade for Brunswick County sports. Never have so many teams and individuals achieved as much as they did during the past 10 years. Every county high school won at least one state championship and a growing number found themselves in professional baseball and basketball.

The county experienced a golfing explosion that is continuing into the 90s.

Youth leagues expanded from baseball to basketball, football, soccer and wrestling.

Sports facilities (new fields, equipment, etc.) also grew at the high school level and the county parks dept. as well.

The county sports story of the decade?

Ask 10 local sportsmen and you'll probably get 10 different answers. Reminisce through the past 10 years and decide for yourself which was the best.

**1980**

The story of the year was without question North Brunswick's state 1-A-2-A softball championship. The Lady Scorpions went a perfect 21-0 and swept Bandys in two games, 9-1 and 5-3, for the title June 4 played at Leland.

The team, under the guidance of head coach William Hargrove and assistant Della Sloan, included Cookie Southerland, Sonya Sloan, Iris Sloan, Ginger Denkins, Denise Mintz, Sherry Blanton, Elenor Ballard, Denise Davis, Wanda Butler, Belinda Jacobs, Gail McMillian, Leslie McCoy, Alecia Bryant, Valarie Sloan, and Rita Brown.

Just the year before the North girls went 18-1 before losing in the third round of the state playoffs.

The Waccamaw all-stars also captured a state championship of their own—the Dixie Boys (13-14 year olds) title at Indian Trail near Charlotte.

The local team went 22-3 and advanced to the regional tournament in Montgomery, Ala. before losing their first two games.

Playing for Waccamaw were Rusty Johnson, Henry Stevenson, Barry Kelly, Ken Howard, Scott Evans, James Williams, Edward Smith, Terry White, Jeff Johnson, Timmy Ludlum, Alfie Hill, Jeff Miliken, and coaches Jimmy Clemmons and Howard Benton.

In other baseball news, former North and East Carolina baseball star Billy Best was selected by the Kansas City Royals in the 27th round of the major league baseball college draft.

While at ECU, Best set school career records for triples, stolen bases, at bats and RBIs.

The Dixie Youth baseball state tournament came to Brunswick County for the first time ever. Long Beach hosted the event.

The county little league baseball all-stars won the district VI tournament and advanced to third place in the state touney.

West's Audrey Owens became the first girls in school history to be named athlete of the year.

Also at West, the Trojans (8-3) won the Three Rivers 3-A Conference football championship and advanced to the state playoffs for the first time in five years. Head coach Sam Page was also named athletic director replacing Jimmy Marshall.

Also under Page, the Trojan baseball team broke a school record for most wins in a season finishing 13-10 overall. The Trojans equalled the old record of 10 wins with a 4-1 triumph over Pembroke.

In basketball, the Trojan boys advanced to first round of district III touney falling to Durham Jordan.

Don Stevenson received top individual honors on the Trojan cage team being nominated to McDonalds All-American team. Stevenson led West with a 16.5 point per game average.

Former West cage standout Billy

Bromell played in NAA national tournament with Southern Tech (Marietta, Ga.) in Kansas City.

Former Lady Trojan Jackie Gore helped Chowan JUCO to a 17-9 record as a freshman center.

West tennis star Alan Powell captured the TRC singles tournament championship.

Some 200 athletes made the year's Special Olympics held at South the largest ever.

The U.S. Open King Mackerel Fishing Touney at Southport held its second annual event. The year before, the tournament was the largest in the North Carolina.

**1981**

Former North baseball star Clyde Holley took top individual honors during the year in his junior season at UNC-Wilmington. Holley led the Seahawks to a 32-15 season, a team best since being in the NCAA Division I ranks.

Holley ended the year with a .333 batting average and 38 RBIs.

Also in baseball, West equalled a school single-season record for wins with a 13-8 record under first-year head coach Greg Norris. Greg Pigotte started the season off on the right foot by throwing a no-hitter in his first start of the season, a 7-0 win over South.

Post 68 captured the American Legion Area II Eastern Division championship. The title was the last won by Post 68. The local team went on to an 18-11 record.

The West boys' basketball team opened 1981-82 season with 11 straight wins before losing their TRC opener to West Columbus. The Trojans went on to a 16-6 season.

Freddie Stevenson got top individual cage honors being named to the all-region first-team.

The first annual South Brunswick Islands four-ball golf tournament (sponsored by the chamber of commerce) fielded 46 teams. The two-day event held at Marsh Harbor and Carolina Shores was the biggest touney held in the county.

Girls' track came to West in the spring for the first time ever under coach Debbie Newman.

Also in girls sports, the West tennis team won the TRC championship in their first winning season. At North, the Lady Scorpions won the East Waccamaw Conference volleyball title.

West standout Michael Bryant was named athlete of the year. Bryant went on to play football at North Carolina for two years.

Twelve county athletes won nine gold medals at N.C. Special Olympics in Charlotte.

Brunswick County hosted the N.C. little league baseball touney won by Southwest Forsyth. Just a week earlier local all-stars failed to qualify for the district finals for first time in five years.

Defending Dixie Boys state champion Waccamaw won the district II baseball tournament but lost their bid for a second straight N.C. title losing their first two games.

The Trojan Athletic Boosters Club was formed and the new organization built a new press box for the football field.

West won its second straight county football championship defeating both North and South.

**1982**

The Brunswick Beacon named the first all-county football team this season and selected the first all-BC basketball squad the following year.

All-county teams are now selected in baseball as well and have grown to include players and coaches of the year.

North Brunswick pitcher Craig Coker was drafted by the Philadelphia Phillies in the 11th round of the major league baseball amateur draft. Coker was a standout for both Scorpion and American Legion Post 68 teams.

Also on the legion diamond scene, Whiteville Post 137 defeated Post 68, 4-3 in the Area II Eastern

Division best-of-seven series. Brunswick County finished the season 16-12.

Waccamaw was the host site of the N.C. Dixie Youth baseball tournament. Cape Fear won the touney while Waccamaw finished third.

The West girls' tennis team won their second straight TRC championship and finished 7-2 overall.

On the prep gridiron scene, North equalled a school record four-game win streak to start the season enroute to a 5-5 finish. An estimated 1,200 fans turned out for North's 20-8 homecoming win over Acme-Delco to set a school attendance record.

Jeavonne Bryant also set a North single-season rushing record with 907 yards.

**1983**

The top story of the year was North's first and only county football championship.

The Scorpions defeated South on Mike Blank's last second 45-yard field goal and downed West for first time in 10 years enroute to the title. North finished 4-5-1 after winning its first three games of season.

The West baseball team won a school-record 14 games while winning their first conference championship and advancing to the state playoffs for the first time in eight years.

Also at West, the boys' tennis team won the TRC title with a 9-4 record.

A trio of county athletes signed college grants during the year. South's David Tomlinson signed a football grant with The Citadel, West's Priscilla Herring signed a basketball grant with N.C. Central and North's Mike Oliver signed a basketball grant with Saint Andrews.

Former South football star Jo Jo White was named Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) offensive player of year at Livingstone College in Salisbury. The junior rushed for over 3,000 yards in his career and was a three-time all-district 26 & all-CIAA performer.

Former North pitcher Craig Coker won six straight games on mound for Phillies Class A team in Spartanburg, S.C.

Another county baseball player, West's Perry Johnson, signed with the Oakland A's after a college career at ML Olive JUCO.

Both West boys and girls basketball teams along with North boys and South girls qualified for the district tournaments.

Host Brunswick County little league all-stars won their sixth district VI title in nine years. The locals went on to finish fifth in the state tournament.

North's Cliff Gibson was named EWC basketball coach of year after leading the Scorpions to a 19-win season. Carolyn Galloway was also named EWC volleyball coach of year after guiding the Lady Scorpions to a second place finish.

**1984**

Improvement was the key word in the county in 1984. Facility uplifts at all county high schools, at the county parks and the arrival of a number of resort golf courses made for a great year in Brunswick.

Oyster Bay Golf Links was named America's best new resort course by Golf Digest. The county's newest course received a two-page spread in the golfing magazine.

The Brunswick County all-stars won the N.C. midget girls' softball championship in Wilmington. La-Shonda Grissett was the touney most valuable player.

North, South and West boys basketball teams all qualified for the district touney as did both North and South girls.

The West boys cagers had their best year under five-year head coach Ronnie Champion, winning their first TRC title in his reign and finishing 18-6.

Also at West, the Trojan baseball team (19-3) won its second straight TRC championship, set yet another school record for wins in a single season and won 13 straight games during one stretch.

Also on the county diamond, North advanced to second round of state 2-A playoffs.

Jo Jo White breaks the CIAA career-rushing record held by Dallas Cowboy star Timmy Newsom. In doing so, White ran his career yardage to 3,922.

Scott Evans (West) signed a baseball grant with Campbell University.

Athletes of year were Evans (West), Kenny Bryant and Regina Jones (South) and Wanda Jacobs and Andre Lee (North).

The West boys' tennis team won its third TRC title in 4 years and finished 12-2 overall.

Both West and South got new head football coaches during the year. Glenn Sasser was named to the top spot at South and Greg Norris moved to the football ranks after a successful tenure with the Trojan baseball team.

North basketball standout Chuckie Brown signed a grant with N.C. State and West tennis star Brad Cheers signed with UNC-W.

Former West standout Greg Pickett was named to the all-Dixie Conference at Methodist College. Pickett sported a 6-0 record while helping Methodist to a 37-7 finish.

The North Carolina High School Athletic Association made its final alignment draft with West dropping from the 3-A ranks to 2-A. The Trojans' new classification took effect with the 1985 school year.

**1985**

Chuckie Brown highlighted the year by being named the first North Carolina Mr. Basketball by the Charlotte Observer. Brown led North to a 17-3 record as a senior while averaging 25 points and 10 rebounds per game.

Brown received all-conference, all-county, all-region, all-east, all-state honors while being the most highly recruited basketball player in Brunswick County history.

Brown's teammate Dana Quince signed a professional baseball contract with the Seattle Mariners.

On the collegiate baseball level, West pitcher Matt Gore signed a grant with The Citadel.

Kelly Lynn Steep, 8, of Holden Beach won her second straight AAU national karate championship.

Sea Trail Golf Links opened in October as the county's sixth championship course with four more in the planning stages.

West continued to dominate area tennis. The Trojan boys' team won their fourth conference title in five years (3 TRC and 1 WC) while win-

ning their 26th straight match since 1984. The Trojans finished the season 16-0.



**CHUCKIE BROWN**

The Lady Trojans were equally-successful winning their fourth conference championship in five years as well. The West girls finished 10-1 and finished sixth in the state 1-A-2-A tournament.

Jeff Sholar (North) was honored second straight year at Lees-McRae football to all-coastal football conference all-star team.

All three county boys prep basketball teams finished with win-

ning records. West (15-8) won a share of the TRC championship while South went 13-11 and North, 17-3.

West's Robert Thompson set a school single-game scoring record in January with 37 points in a win over Clinton. Thompson finished his prep career with over 1,300 points while averaging 24 points and 12 rebounds per game.

North (13-10-2) advanced to the final eight of the state 2-A baseball playoffs and Scorpion coach Bubba Baldwin was named EWC coach of the year.

At West, the Trojan diamond team finished 12-7 and advanced to the state playoffs as well.

In other diamond news, Brunswick County celebrated its 10th year of little league baseball.

**1986**

The year's top story was West's Colin Smith winning the state 3,200-meter championship in Chapel Hill in May.

Smith broke the West record three times in the 3,200-meter event in the spring before winning the title by some 20 yards in 9:53.20, another school record.

Another big story later in the year was South winning the WC football championship. It was the first conference title for the Cougars in any sport. After a season-opening loss, South won nine straight games and went to a 10-2 finish and capturing the county championship along the way.

Professional golf came to Brunswick County for first time ever when a Tournament Players Association touney at Oyster Bay (Green Pines Open) featured a \$131,000 purse. Bill Butner (Fla.) won the two-day event.

The West boys' tennis team extended its win streak to 40 matches but finishes second in the WC.

The Lady Trojan tennis team also had a banner year winning their fourth conference championship in five years.

At least three prep players signed with nearby colleges. West's Julie Benton inked with Campbell as the first recipient of a volleyball scholarship in university history.

Also, West's Mark Jones signed to play football at Emory & Henry, Va., and North's Chuck Clemmons signed a baseball grant with Lenoir Community College.

The West boys' basketball team suffered their first losing season in school history (6-17) but rebounded to win the county championship.

Athletes of the year were Derek Long and Dorothy Gore at West and Scott Rohde and Tammy Cox at South.

Among the early dozen new coaches at county schools during

(Continued On Following Page)

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