

MADISON HEIGHTS HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL 1961-1962

Before countywide consolidation of high schools in the late 1950s, Amherst schools had very limited sports programs with small districts, short schedules, and no postseason play or all-star designations. Their facilities featured a lot of red dirt and weeds, both for players and spectators. Some of the players had honed their skills as kids on fields called "The Graveyard" and "Schoolhouse Hill", and others used the training school softball field. Their games were neighborhood games; there was no youth baseball at the time.

Following the opening of Amherst County High School in the fall of 1956, Madison Heights High School remained open with a small student body of about 125, with its final graduation occurring in 1962.

In its final two years, the baseball teams provided both the school and community with a source of great pride, going 12-1 and 12-0, with the only blemish on the record stemming from disciplinary action against several players – perhaps unwarranted punishment related their behavior with a substitute teacher, whose behavior itself is still in question.

Madison Heights played in a league comprising mostly Bedford County high schools. MHHS was no doubt the smallest. The early 1960s proved to be a time that all the factors for a successful team meshed, with consistently good pitching and hitting, and solid defensive play at every position. Those Madison Heights teams were the best in Central Virginia.

The building process started for the "Golden Eagles" in 1959, when coaches Dick Holt and John Seal chose four freshmen for the team, which had about a .500 record. However, the foundation had been laid. Several more underclassmen were added the following year, with John Seal at the helm. With so much experience in place, new coach Don Layne added a couple more players and led the teams in 1961 and '62.

The team in '62 was loaded with offensive productivity, scoring 145 runs, while giving up only 5. They had scrimmaged against the Lynchburg College JV team, which had added a several varsity players, including the pitcher. During their district games, MHHS scored as many as 20 runs on several occasions. Most consistent hitters in 1961 were Butch Layne, Jerry Norberg, and Ronald Wheeler. In '62, Lynwood Phillips and Barry McBride both had batting averages over .400. Leading home run hitters were Donald Wheeler in '61 and Carson Ward in '62.

Starting pitchers Donald Wheeler and Eric Norberg, with reliever Lynwood Phillips, were the heart of the pitching staff. Wheeler's battery mate was his twin brother, Ronald. There were several no-hitters, and Norberg pitched a perfect game against Boonsboro.

Upon reflection, players and coaches alike realize how the camaraderie and dedication exhibited throughout these baseball seasons had influenced everyone in later life. The team and its success was an important part of Madison Heights community life, and the school closed on a high note. Players credit Donald Layne not only with developing the team for success on the field, but also with creating an atmosphere of respect and guiding them into adulthood with his strong foundation of leadership.

MHHS BASEBALL 1961 and 1962

Tony Anthony '61-'62
Norman Bowling '62
William "Sambo" Brooks '62
Kelly Dean '61
Henry Eubank '62
Enoch Feagans '61
Butch Layne '61
Winnie Layne '62
Ronnie Lee '61
Winston Lee '61-'62
Joey May '62
Barry McBride '61-'62 co-captain
Eric Norberg '61-'62
Jerry Norberg '61-'62 co-captain
Billy Paris '61
Lynwood Phillips '61-'62
Carson Ward '61-'62
Donald Wheeler '61-'62
Ronald Wheeler '61-'62
Clay Wood '61
Randy Woody '62

Donald Layne, Coach



