

1974 AMHERST COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL TEAM

The national pastime of baseball found its niche in Amherst County early in the twentieth century, or even before, as teams sprang up in every community around the county. Most of the small rural high schools had a baseball team. Youth leagues grew slowly in the post-war years, and, by the time the county consolidated secondary education into a centralized school, baseball was the natural sport to reach high levels.

By the 1970s, Amherst County High School had boasted a consistent winner in baseball, with several district championships, both at the AA and AAA levels; a state playoff system was not installed until around 1970. Coach Jim Procopio came from the professional ranks in 1968 to coach at Amherst, and he not only maintained its winning ways, but led the Lancers to even loftier heights. He was joined by long-time assistant, Kenny Holt.

The 1974 baseball team featured pitchers DeWayne Kitts, Kent Mays, and Pete Fields; the season record for the team was 16-2. The combination of an extraordinarily high batting average and low ERA provided Amherst with all the firepower needed to run off 12 straight wins to conclude its season. Such pitching and offensive performances would be difficult to duplicate.

For three consecutive years at the AAA level, facing the largest schools in the area, Amherst won the Western District championship, with two trips to the state finals. After an extra-inning loss in the regional final in 1972, the Lancers followed the next year with an appearance in the state final, losing by one run. The school's final season at the AAA level proved to be its first state championship year, with an almost flawless run through the playoffs, giving up only 6 hits in four shutouts.

In a match-up against Deep Creek, with a crowd of 3500 in the stands, the Lancers prevailed in a game that was the consummate pitchers' duel. Both starting pitchers threw complete games. Amherst led in hits, but was unable to scratch out a run until the final inning. The Lancers scored the only run of the game in the top of the seventh inning on a two-out, bases-loaded stroke up the middle by Johnny Hunt, driving in Lennie Irvin, who had led off with a single. Star pitcher DeWayne Kitts had allowed no walks and only one hit, improving his season record to 9-0 with a microscopic ERA.

This breakthrough to the state championship set the stage for future banners, not only in baseball but also later in football. Procopio's teams went on to win 2 more state titles in AA.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

- AAA State Championship, 1-0 win over Deep Creek
- 16-2 season record
- State playoffs: 4 shutouts, gave up only 6 hits, committed 0 errors
- First state championship for ACHS
- Second consecutive Northwest Region Championship
- Third consecutive Western District Championship

Jim Procopio, head coach
Kenny Holt, assistant coach

Buddy Bailey
Barry Carroll
Barry Duff
Pete Fields
Silas Harvey
Alan Herman
Johnny Hunt
Lennie Irvin
Dwayne Kitts

Vernon Massie
Kent Mays
Mike Powell
Wayne Robertson
Norvin Rockwell
Ronnie Storey
Bill Thornton
Mike Thornton
J.W. White

S.C. Burks, manager
Tim Overstreet, manager
Jay Thomas, manager

