

Kapitulas

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finds himself near the end of his third season of varsity ball. "Batting average isn't really a big thing."

His brother reflects the same sentiments. "I know I'll get mad at myself if I go 0-for-3, but I just try to get line drives or gap hits," Matt says. "Anything just to get on base and help the team get runs."

Lately, the team has been getting plenty of runs, and the result has been a string of victories that have the Black Knights in solid standing for the coming district playoffs.

After a 2-7 start, Lehman won its next five games to reach the .500 mark after the first 14 games of the season. Even though Mark missed two games during that winning streak because of illness, he and his brother have still played a significant part in the team's resurgence.

"They're contributions have been overlooked," says Brian Gorski, Lehman head coach. "They're great ballplayers. They definitely lead by example. They do what it takes to win."

Both brothers have had a taste of winning before they reached high school baseball. Mark won a pair of championships with the Back Mountain Phillies Little League team and then two more playing in a senior league as a teenager. He also won a district championship trophy while playing on an All-Star teenagers team and twice during his career has been on the roster of teams that have gone undefeated.

Matt also played on two championship teams in Little League.

However, winning a high school district championship this year would far exceed any previous title either of them has captured.

"This is my last year, so I want to make it my best year," Mark says. "I think we can take it. We have one of the best teams in the league."

While this season represents the closing of Mark's high school baseball career, it signifies just the beginning of Matt's.

The younger brother honed his skills last year by facing hard-throwing pitchers in the American Legion league. He credits

that with preparing him for the type of pitching he has encountered on the varsity level.

"This year, it's like a whole re-run of that," he says. When he steps up to the plate now, he tries to stay focused on the basics, and put out of his mind the idea that the pitcher he's facing could be up to three years older than him. "You just think of base hits and base running," Matt says.

That simple philosophy has paid off.

"He's doing pretty good," his older brother says. "He's a freshman, and he has as many homers as I do."

But along with the encouragement both brothers have for each other also comes a friendly rivalry — one that has inspired each to elevate his game.

"Although they want each other to do well, they're still very competitive young men," Gorski says. "I think they feed off of each other a lot, and they always encourage each other to do well."

But the Kapitula brothers have learned that doing well requires hard work. What began with them playing tee-ball as children has developed into a nearly year-round devotion that includes playing in multiple leagues and tournaments. Through it all, they have registered steady and productive results. And they have helped their teams win along the way.

"It's been a real honor watching them play," says their father, Mark Kapitula, Sr.

Mark Jr. hopes to continue playing in the future. He will attend Luzerne County Community College the next two years, but plans to play organized scholastic ball again once he transfers to a four-year institution. Matt's goals also include playing college baseball. Neither has ruled out pursuing baseball beyond college.

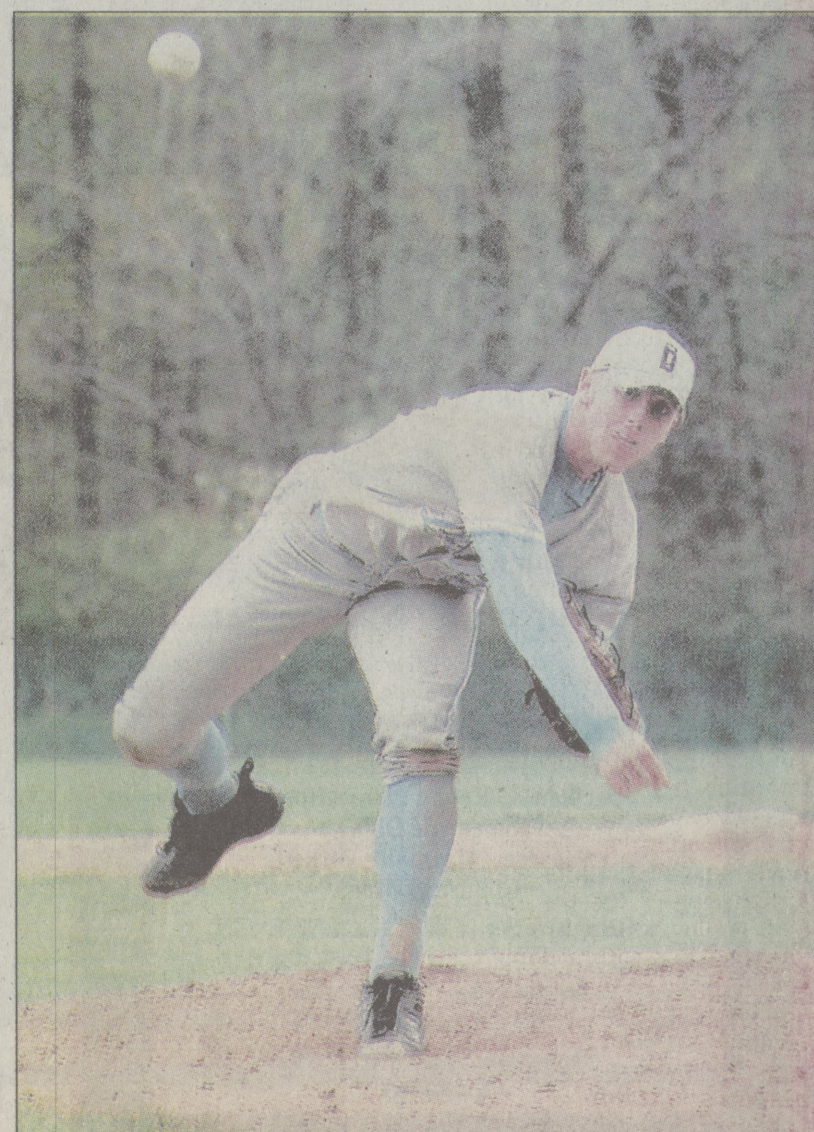
"They're not only good baseball players, they're awesome boys," their mom says. "We're lucky. We're a baseball family and we just enjoy watching them play."

If the Kapitula brothers' dreams come true, they will be playing baseball for a long time to come.



POST PHOTOS/JIM PHILLIPS

Action from the last week's contests between Dallas and Lake-Lehman teams, clockwise from top left: Tracy Ragukas tried to hold off Jackie Hardwick; Lauren Collini and Sheree Horvath fired off pitches; Ryan Gryskewicz struck out 13 Knights Wednesday; Erin Swepton played toss with John McNeil Jr.; Lisa Wasser chased Hillary Adams.



Cup

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ing off seven straight fall sports victories over their Back Mountain rivals, until Dallas won the Old Shoe football game. But the cushion was nearly erased over the winter months, as the Mountaineers won all four basketball meetings between the schools' varsity teams and

Lehman won only in wrestling, its traditional powerhouse.

After Lehman won the first matchup of the spring season, in boys volleyball, Dallas came to life again, winning in baseball, softball and tennis on April 14 to nearly even the contest at 9-8 Lake-Lehman. But a win in girls

soccer and both girls and boys track made the difference, as the Black Knights closed out the contest when they took a 12-8 lead. (A chart in last week's issue left out the girls soccer game played April 16, which Lehman won.)

After Lehman took the second

soccer match, the two school split in baseball and softball to bring the final standings to 14-9. The Back Mountain Cup is sponsored by The Dallas Post. Look for full details of the celebration/cookout in next week's issue.



Greg Nothstein scores 500th point

Greg Nothstein, 13, a member of the seventh grade Gate of Heaven School Varsity Basketball team in Dallas, scored his 500th point basket January 25 during the Gate of Heaven school versus St. Mary's of Old Forge basketball game. Greg scored a total of eleven points during that game. He is pictured above with his parents Mary Ann Nothstein and Dr. Gary Nothstein. Greg and his family reside in Dallas.

Matt Ruch named MVP at tourney for 13-year-olds

Back Mountain won the Championship of the 3rd Annual David "Dome" Yenchek 13-year-old Tournament last weekend in Nanticoke. The Back Mountain beat North Valley 5-1. Matt Ruch picked up the win while combining with Myer Messinger & Mike Prater to pitch a 2-hitter. Back Mountain pounded out 15 hits in the victory. Doug Harding led the way with 2 RBI singles. Scott Skammer, Mike Prater & Matt Ruch collected 2 hits apiece while Dan Taroli and Joey Collini contributed RBI singles.

At the end of the game Matt Ruch received the first annual George W. Graboske Memorial Award as the tournament MVP. The tournament was played at Ted Hiller Field & was sponsored by the Nanticoke Teener League.

Aston-Rome second in Spring Trail Run

Aston-Rome finished second overall on Sunday at the Wyoming Valley Striders Spring Trail Run at Frances Slocum State Park.

Also finishing well in that race were:

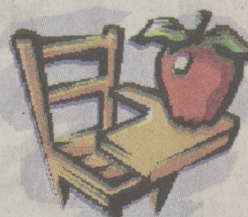
John Sobocinski, Dallas, fourth at 39:15; Tom Shalata, Shavertown, ninth at 42:22; Bob Warnagiris, Hunlock Creek, 11th at 42:38; and Matt Lipo, Dallas, 19th at 46:13.

Aston-Rome, the 36-year-old from Dallas who has dominated the female divisions of area road races over the last few years, recently turned in three outstanding performances in races out of the area.

George named to Top 10 at Cornell

Andrew George, a 2002 graduate of Dallas High School, has been named one of the Top 10 Freshman Athletes by the Cornell Daily Sun.

The Sun wrote, "When everything else seemed to go wrong during the men's soccer season, George always seemed to stand out, often providing the vital offense spark. George played in each of the team's 16 matches, leading the team in scoring with three goals and seven points. George was also second on the team in shot percentage."

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