

# Camp, Vay provide thunder for more consistent Thomas Dale attack in baseball

BY JOSH MATHEWS

For baseball, Chris Marshall and the Knights have gotten off to a 4-1 start as of press time. They've gotten big-time contributions from two of the hottest bats in the state, Drew Camp and VCU pledge Hunter Vay, along with two ace-like arms, Tyler Bailey and Evan Lester.

Thomas Dale has wrapped up victories over Atlee, Colonial Heights, Manchester, and Dinwiddie, with their lone loss coming to old-time Central District rival Prince George. In a competitive Conference 3, the Knights will take it a game at a time, with big match-ups on May 1 (at James River) and May 17 (home vs. Cosby).

The 2017 Knights appear to have more balance on the hill and with the bat than in recent years.

Camp and Vay have very similar, and very good, stat lines at the dish. Both batters are 7-for-13 (.539 batting

average). Both have two doubles and home runs. Camp leads the team with nine runs batted in, while Vay has five to his credit. That's a formidable 1-2 punch. Combine who with two juniors who have stepped up in Tanner Holben (.364 average HR, 2 RBI and Nathan Tuck (.412 average, 7 hits, 2 2B, 4 RBI), and you've got yourself a pretty staunch offensive attack.

"The offense has been consistent, especially in RBI situations," Marshall said. "That's a big change from last year."

On the hill, Thomas Dale has two aces. One is Bailey, who's pitched to a 2-1 record with a 1.68 earned run average (ERA) over 16 innings pitched (IP). Lester, who will be playing at Hampden-Sydney next year, is 2-0 with a 1.00 ERA. He's struck out 11 batters over seven innings pitched.

With a more consistent offensive attack that's come up in the clutch, flanked by great pitching, Thomas Dale will look to head back to regionals for the first time since 2015.

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# Knights softball overcoming tough schedule, injuries early in season

BY JOSH MATHEWS

While injuries to pitchers are seemingly always a story in baseball, they are less apparent on the softball field, but they affect a team just as much.

That's exactly what Thomas Dale has experienced as they are off to a 0-4 start as of press time. Staff ace, sophomore, and Longwood commit Leigha Hill went down with an arm injury, and it's been a bumpy start for the Knights.

"Sometimes life doesn't go the way it's supposed to," said coach Dennis Jones. "You have to overcome that adversity."

As bumpy as it's been, there have been many positives, and their loss to Manchester aside, the Knights have battled and stayed in each game, suffering one-run losses to Colonial Heights and Dinwiddie, while falling to Prince George in extra innings 6-3.

What's the glue that's held the team together? Signs point to senior outfielder and now, pitcher Lauryn King who signed along with the football

players on National Signing Day to West Virginia Wesleyan and is known for her five-tool skill set. Despite not having pitched since the 8th grade, she's kept Thomas Dale competitive.

"Lauryn has stepped up tremendously for her team," said Jones. "She is a true team captain and is what defines a team player."

Along with King, the Knights have gotten big-time offensive contributions from Brooke Dudley and Abby Traylor.

Dudley is King's battery mate and the team's catcher. The junior has also played on the infield with the injury that shuffled the positioning of the Knights. Traylor is a sophomore who's shone defensively in the outfield in and gotten some big hits. Sophomore Li Li Smith has been a "surprise" as Jones puts it. A call-up from junior varsity, she's been an on-base machine in addition to being a plus defender.

The team has started to gel even without their ace, and when Hill comes back healthy, don't count out Thomas Dale.

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