

# Collins a big hit for Shepherd

*Rams' junior leading team at the plate*

By BEN GIBSON  
FOR THE JOURNAL

SHEPHERD-STOWN — Shepherd third baseman Brian Collins has been a team leader in many statistics like runs and RBI, but like many leaders, he also gives his team plenty of intangibles that can't be found in a box score.

After leaving the field on a cold and wet Thursday evening last week, Collins could have let one bad day at the plate overshadow his team's two wins, but Collins isn't the type to put himself ahead of the team.

"I made contact every time I was up but felt like I could have done a lot better," he said. "We came out with two wins — that's the main thing."

Like many, he started off with baseball at age 5 and played into high school, and Collins is hesitant to say he knew he had a bit of talent out on the baseball diamond.

"I don't know if I ever thought I was better than everyone else or anything like that. I had succeeded on all levels when I played from Little League on up. I think I'm still doing well at this level," he said.

The Jefferson High



AP photo

Shepherd's Brian Collins, a Jefferson High School graduate, has been a steady force at the plate for the Rams. The junior third baseman leads his team in several offensive categories.

School alum who played various positions and pitched, often getting into the 80s with his fastball, doesn't have to travel too far from home to pursue his college playing career, but his career didn't

start there — it first started off at nearby Frederick Community College.

"I decided to head to FCC to see what I could do and see where that would take me, but injury got in the way,"

Collins said.

Collins was enjoying his time at FCC, but a bad pitch at a game in Myrtle Beach, S.C., changed his plans.

After being hit by a pitch, the injury led to a blood-clot that sidelined

him for over a year.

When he was cleared to play baseball again, Collins picked up with his sophomore year at Shepherd, hoping to be able to make an impact after spending over a year off.

The 6-foot, 200-pound infielder is making plenty of impact as a junior for the Rams as he leads the team in several categories, including seven home runs, a

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.711 slugging percentage, 35 RBI and 12 doubles. He's also second on the team with a .378 batting percentage.

The Rams saw more of that production in a four-game series this weekend against Wheeling Jesuit, when he knocked in four hits and five RBI on Saturday, helping the Rams pick up their second straight double-header sweep.

Off the field, Collins is studying Elementary Education and plans to work with children and become a

teacher, which sometimes comes as a surprise to teammates.

"That surprises people a lot. They look at me and aren't sure about that," Collins said. "I love working with kids and despite what my teammates say, I'm good with kids."

On and off the field, Collins hopes he can make an impact on others, and if he does as well off the field as he does on, Collins and those around him have plenty to look forward to.

## Bombs away for Rams' Minnich

*Sophomore smacks  
6 HRs during week*

By ERIC JONES  
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

SHEPHERDSTOWN — The Shaw Hall dormitory, which sits behind the right field fence at Shepherd's Fairfax Field, is seemingly out of the path of any home runs.

That wasn't the case when the Rams' Nathan Minnich stepped up to the plate during an incredible offensive week for Shepherd in which he hit six home runs, drove in 16 runs

and went 17 for 30 (.571). He also added four doubles and scored 15 runs.

His efforts earned him the West Virginia Conference's Player of the Week award, and he also has been named Gold's Gym/The Journal Athlete of the Week (April 4-April 10).

Part of the sophomore's week included a three-home run performance in Game 2 of the Rams' doubleheader sweep of Elizabeth City. With



MINNICH

the wind coming somewhat to his aid on a breezy day, but mostly hit with his own power, two of his three home runs cleared Shaw Hall, and his third home run of the game bounced off the building. Minnich finished the second game of the doubleheader 3 for 5 with his three bombs and six RBI.

In the two games against Elizabeth City, Shepherd hit five home runs, including one apiece by Tyler Beard and Tylor McCain in Game 1.

That kind of power, which he kept up all week, is a big reason why the Rams went 6-2 and picked up a couple big doubleheader triumphs,

including one against conference foe Wheeling Jesuit.

It was the nightcap of the doubleheader with Wheeling Jesuit that Minnich belted two more home runs, finishing the game, which Shepherd won 16-8, 3 for 3 with four more RBI.

As if his week wasn't good enough up to that point, Minnich continued his offensive explosion in another doubleheader on the road against Wheeling Jesuit, in which the Rams split the two-game set.

Continuing his and Shepherd's home run streak, Minnich went 3 for 3,

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including his sixth homer of the week, a three-run blast in the Rams' five-run second inning.

The Rams put up 23 runs and 24 hits in that game, and Minnich accounted for three hits and three RBI. He was only outdone by teammate Brian Collins' eight-RBI performance.

Minnich's week was just part of Shepherd's offensive firepower. In their eight games, the Rams combined for 91 runs, averaging approximately 11 runs a game. Between runs scored and RBI, Minnich accounted for 34 percent of Shepherd's offense.

## Shepherd softball sweeps Bluefield

BLUEFIELD, (WV) -- Shepherd swept Bluefield by scores of 12-0 and 5-2 in a WVIAC softball doubleheader played on Sunday.

The Lady Rams improved to 25-9 overall and to 11-5 in the WVIAC with the sweep. Bluefield fell to 3-21 overall and 1-11 in the WVIAC.

A five-run first inning in the first game got the Lady Rams off to a quick start. The game ended early because of the eight-run mercy rule.

In that opener, Shepherd's Courtney Williams had a solo homer and an RBI single. Cammie Orlandi, Chelsie Oals, Bianca Biondillo, and Kris Durham all contributed two hits to the win.

Shepherd pitcher Tricia Bettura struck out six in three innings to notch her 13th win against five losses.

in the second game, Shepherd's Tiffany Farmer had a two-run double in a three-run second inning rally. Biondillo had a run-scoring single and Amber Dudek had a sacrifice fly.

Shepherd pitcher Nichole Pitcock went four innings to get credit for the pitching win. She is now 11-4. Brooke Stambaugh, who also pitched two innings in the runaway opener, went the last innings in the nightcap to record a save.

The Lady Rams were in fifth place in the WVIAC behind Charleston, West Virginia Wesleyan, Alderson Broaddus, and Fairmont.

## Shepherd, Concord split

ATHENS -- Tricia Bettura fired a two-hit shutout as the Shepherd softball team defeated homestanding Concord, 2-0, in the opener of a WVIAC doubleheader on Saturday. Concord got a split of the afternoon's games when it grabbed the nightcap, 5-1.

In the shutout fired by Bettura, she recorded nine strikeouts and moved her overall record to 12-5.

The opener was scoreless until Shepherd scored two times in the top of the seventh. Chelsie Oals had a vital two-run double to score Bettura and Amber Dudek with the game's only runs. Tamara Smith

was the tough-luck losing pitcher for the Mountain Lions.

Concord erupted for all five of its second-game runs in the first-inning runs off Nichole Pitcock. There were five hits and a Lady Rams' error in the big inning.

Bettura came on in relief of Pitcock and held Concord scoreless in her innings. She fanned eight.

Dudek's double drove in Bianca Biondillo with Shepherd's only run.

Concord improved to 5-9 in the WVIAC and 17-16 overall. Shepherd was 23-9 overall and 9-5 in the WVIAC pending its doubleheader on Sunday at Bluefield.

## 2010 Rams schedule

The 10-game Shepherd football schedule for 2010 will have five home games and five road games.

The Rams will open on the road on August 28 at Shippenburg in the annual Great Valley Classic.

After a Saturday off, The Rams will face St. Joseph's of Indiana in Shepherdstown on September 11 and then WVIAC rival Fairmont on September 18 at Ram Stadium.

The next two games will come on September 25 at Seton Hill and at Charleston on October 2.

Following a home game on

October 9 against Concord and the annual Homecoming game on October 16 against West Virginia Wesleyan, the Rams will travel to West Liberty on October 23 and to West Virginia State on October 30.

After another open date the first Saturday in November, the regular season doesn't close until November 13 when Glenville comes to Ram Stadium.

The five home games will have an earlier starting time than in the past and are all slated to begin a 12-noon.

## Minnich launches three; Rams sweep Vikings

BOB MADISON Sports Editor

It took until the second week in April, but Shepherd was finally able to find a pitching staff much like its own mid-week throwers ... and then feast on that staff.

And feast the Rams did -- spanking the Vikings of Elizabeth City 12-6 and 14-9 to sweep last Thursday's rain-delayed doubleheader at sunny and breezy and then weather-interrupted Fairfax Field.

Shepherd crashed extra base hits and lost-in-the-sun hits in equal amounts. Many of the extra base hits left the Mid-Atlantic version of Chicago's "friendly confines" as long-gone home runs.

The chief executor of Shepherd's version of "Dr. Longball" was massive first baseman Nathan Minnich.

In the second-game shower of 15 Shepherd hits, Minnich cleared Shaw Hall beyond the right-field barrier with a shot that had to travel 450-feet. In an encore performance, Minnich again cleared the same dormitory with a similar rocket-shot. Not satisfied with two homers, Minnich came back a third time and landed another homer on top of the dorm, getting the last of his six RBIs in the process.

In the easy-win opener, Shepherd had home runs from Tyler Beard and Tylor McCain. Beard's homer disappeared beyond the roof of Shaw Hall as well. McCain's was his first homer of the now 13-16 Shepherd season.

The Rams literally gorged themselves on several of the Vikes' throwers, getting 14 hits in their six turns in the runaway opener before landing the 15 safeties in six turns in the more-tense second game.

Elizabeth City, now 15-15 overall, had few problems with any of Shepherd's pitchers although Paul Chenoweth, Shawn Wiles, and Kenny Reisinger did have their moments when they retired some people.

The Vikings had six hits and nine base runners in the opener, including home runs from Kyle Meads and Stephen Green ... and then splashed 15 hits all around Fairfax Field in the nightcap.

In winning the opener, the Rams had six base runners in the first inning and four more in the second. In all, 22 of the 40 batters Shepherd sent to the plate

reached base.

Beard would go 4-for-4. Getting three hits was Derek Gunsell (batting .143 entering the afternoon); and also reaching base three times were McCain, Minnich, and Anthony Jackson.

Jake Cook had two hits as did Minnich (both doubles).

Wiles pitched three innings, allowing a run, only three base runners, and moved the game along well enough.

In the rain-threatened nightcap, Shepherd had a 9-5 lead after four innings when a brief shower interrupted play for about a half-hour. Most of the Rams' scoring damage had come in a six-run first inning when no fewer than 12 men batted.

After the tarp had been removed from the infield, the Rams scored another five runs in their first turn after the rain cleared to the northeast.

Elizabeth City had brought its deficit back to only 9-8 before Shepherd batted around with another five hits.

There were another 28 Shepherd base runners in the nightcap as Minnich kept flying baseballs out and then over the nearest building.

Eight of the nine players in the Shepherd batting order were on base at least twice.

Ninth-place batter Pat Aragon was on base four straight times and had three hits. Eighth-place batter Chris Szafran went 3-for-4. Seventh-place batter Sean Zirkle was on base three times and was 2-for-4. Sixth-place batter Gunsell went 3-for-5.

McCain was on base three times. So was Beard. So was Brian Collins.

And then there was Minnich, who completed his carnage against the Viking pitchers with a 5-for-9 doubleheader that moved his batting average to .412.

The Vikings had Kermit Jackson with four hits and Justin Hooker and Clifton Taylor with three hits. Gustavo Arcia contributed two hits as did Green.

Quick work with the huge tarp had saved the second game which was not official when the rain came.

Quick, longball work from Minnich had wrecked the Vikings in the second game.

And the Rams could recognize the type of pitching they usually only see from the own mid-week, non-conference-game pitchers.

## Shepherd twinbill divided

WHEELING -- Wheeling Jesuit left-hander Noah Mull left Shepherd's WVIAC baseball hopes dangling by the thinnest of threads when he beat them, 4-2, in the first game of a league doubleheader on Sunday.

Shepherd outscored the Cardinals, 23-14, in the wild-and-wooly second game to make this weekend's pair of doubleheaders at Fairfax Field against division-

leading Seton Hill meaningful.

Mull struck out nine in his seven-inning complete game effort. He walked only two.

Shepherd actually had leads of 1-0 and 2-1 before Wheeling Jesuit tied the game in its half of the fifth and then added the game-deciding runs in the sixth against Rams' starter Kenny Reisinger.

Chris Szafran had a 3-for-3 game against Mull, the winningest pitcher in the WVIAC.

In the hitters-paradise of a nightcap, Shepherd plundered Cards' pitching for some 24 hits. The Rams had early-game leads of 8-4 and 16-6 (after three innings), but then had to weather a seven-run Wheeling fifth inning.

After Shepherd starter Kyle Shifflette was gouged for four

earned run in 0.2 innings, the Rams used Gerard Sokolis (who had pitched four innings as a starter the day before), Paul Chenoweth (one inning and seven runs), and Justin Byrd before getting out of the afternoon with a split.

Shepherd homers came from Brian Collins, Nathan Minnich, and Jake Cook (his first). Of the 24 hits the Rams collected off five Wheeling Jesuit pitchers, Tyler Beard had four, Collins four, and Tyler McCain four. McCain scored three runs.

Collins had a career-high eight RBIs while Minnich and Beard each drove in three runs. Minnich was 3-for-3 and scored three times.

Shepherd emerged from the weekend with a 16-17 overall record and a 6-6 WVIAC record. The Rams need to win all four games this weekend against division-leading Seton Hill to reach the WVIAC playoffs in early May.

## Rams snap six-game skid; then lose to Millersville in second game

MILLERSVILLE, (Pa.) -- Shepherd snapped a six-game losing skid when it defeated homestanding Millersville, 7-3, in the first game of a non-conference baseball doubleheader last Wednesday.

The Rams received a complete-game effort from left-hander Kyle Shifflette, a winner for the first time all season. His record was 1-1.

Shifflette completed a six-hitter that saw him walk four and limit the Marauders to just two earned runs. There was just one strikeout from a pitcher who had entered the afternoon with an ERA of over five runs a game.

Freshman infielder Jake Cook had two hits and three RBIs as Shepherd improved its overall record to 11-15 and the Marauders went to 15-17 overall.

Brian Collins was 2-for-4 and Tyler McCain scored two runs. Michael Lott was 1-for-1 with an RBI and was on base three

times. The Rams scored three times in the first inning when Lott was hit by a pitch and Anthony Jackson walked to begin the inning. Collins had a RBI single, and Cook grounded a single through the middle for two RBIs.

Another Shepherd three-run inning came in the third and was begun when Nathan Minnich doubled. Cook drove in Minnich with a single. Later, Pat Aragon had an RBI single and Jackson walked with the bases loaded to force in a run.

The Rams had nine hits off two Millersville pitchers.

In the nightcap, Shepherd freshman right-hander Trevor Appleby didn't fare as well, lasting only 2.1 innings while allowing four hits, four runs (three earned), while striking out only one.

Millersville had a 5-0 lead against Appleby after three innings en route to a 6-4 win that

was made uncomfortable when the Rams rallied for all four runs in the seventh.

The Rams used Adam Lauer, Kenny Reisinger, Gerard Sokolis, and Sean Wiles after Appleby left in the third.

Trailing, 6-0, Shepherd pushed across all its runs in the seventh when McCain singled, Aragon was safe on an infield error, Derek Gansell got his third hit of the season (an RBI single), Sean Zirkle drew a walk, Collins had an infield single that drove in a run, and Minnich produced an RBI single.

But then the inning fell apart when pinch-hitter Bryan Milburn grounded into a double play and Cook grounded out to second to end the game.

Minnich was 3-for-4, Collins 2-for-4, Lott 2-for-3, and Cook 2-for-3 as the Rams had 11 hits.

Kyle Belanchik won for the first time this season against his three losses.

## Shepherd hitting hasn't outweighed its mostly futile pitching

BOB MADSON Sports Editor

A fistful of doubleheaders have given Shepherd coach Wayne Riser few -- if any -- options where his tattered pitching staff is concerned.

With only three home dates remaining, Riser has a group of 11 pitchers he has tried this season.

Now, here is the one statistic that makes Shepherd's 16-17 overall record and 6-6 record in the Northern Division of the WVIAC seem improbable.

Of Riser's 11 pitchers, miscalculated Kenny Reisinger (36.1 innings, 41 hits, 15 walks, eight wild pitches, five hit batsmen including three in 0.1 inning of one disastrous game) has the lowest ERA ... at 5.20.

When your lowest ERA on an 11-player staff is at 5.20 your team's hitters had better be providing 10 or more runs per game.

Reisinger has become one of Riser's four starting pitchers he uses in consecutive weekend doubleheaders.

Pat Smith also has a 5.20 ERA and has started seven times in his nine appearances. Smith has a 3-1 record. In 36 innings, he has allowed 38 hits and 16 walks.

Another conference weekend starter is Gerard Sokolis, author of a 4-1 record ... but a 5.65 ERA. Sokolis' 36.2 innings have seen the opposition get 47 hits and glean 13 walks from the left-hander.

After Sokolis, in descending order of spiraling ERA's are Sean Wiles (6.10), Kyle Shifflette (6.23), Brian Collins (limited to only 10 innings by arm problems is at 6.30), Justin Byrd (6.33), Paul Chenoweth (6.67), Adam Lauer (8.22), Trevor Appleby (9.95), and Bryan Wolfe (10.55).

The Rams' opponents have a combined ERA of 7.09 against a Shepherd lineup that often features a number of freshmen or first-year players.

After various conference and non-conference games where either Shepherd or its opponent (or

both) scored at least 10 runs, the Rams have two players who have become the team's most reliable hitters.

Sophomore Nathan Minnich has steadily elevated his batting average and his power numbers as the weather has become more baseball-friendly.

Minnich is at .435 with 50 hits in 115 at-bats. He has 11 homers, nine doubles, and 41 RBIs.

Collins is at .379 with 44 hits in 116 at-bats. He has eight homers, 13 doubles, and a team-leading 49 RBIs.

Val Arduini, who hasn't played in the last seven games, is batting .361. Freshman outfielder Michael Lott resides at .355, but has been injured and missed a number of games. Tyler Beard has raised his average from .276 to .337 in the last four games.

Freshman Jake Cook has inherited Arduini's second base spot and has 43 at-bats with 14 hits and a .326 batting average. Senior catcher Anthony Jackson has driven in 17 runs with his re-

ceding .312 batting average.

Outfielder Chris Szafran is at .286 and freshman outfielder Tyler McCain is at .259 after resting below the .200 level for the first 25 games.

Shortstop Pat Aragon is at .234 and has done more recently.

Freshmen Bryan Milburn (.267), Derek Gansell (.300), and Sean Zirkle (.250) have all played sparingly.

If Collins and Minnich are dimmed by opposition pitching, Shepherd is mostly doomed. If both of them are hitting in the

same game, the Rams can score an adequate number of runs if any of the others can find their way on to the base paths.

In the field, the Rams have been short at times.

When the season began, there was an outfield of Lott, McCain, and Szafran in place. But Lott has been injured enough to miss 10 games and any replacements found for him have not been especially capable ones.

There have been 19 double plays as compared with the 25 the opponents have turned.

Aragon has been charged with 10 errors at shortstop and Collins has committed nine more errors at third base. Tyler Beard -- serving almost exclusively as a designated hitter -- has still committed three outfield errors in the few appearances he made in the field.

Shepherd has a .949 field percentage and has committed a team total of 54 errors through the first 33 games.

A sometimes shaky defense combined with a team ERA of 6.54 has darkened Shepherd's chances on too many afternoons.



SHEPHERD PHOTO

Shepherd first baseman Nathan Minnich has raised his batting average to .435 and has 11 home runs and 41 RBIs. Shepherd will play conference rival Seton Hill in doubleheaders on both Saturday and Sunday.

## Sweep of Wheeling Jesuit keeps Shepherd alive

WHEELING -- Shepherd kept its faint hopes alive for a WVIAC playoff berth by smashing homesteading Wheeling Jesuit, 13-2 and 16-8, in a baseball doubleheader played last Saturday in the Northern Panhandle.

The twin wins gave Shepherd a 5-5 record in the Northern Division of the WVIAC, but still found them trailing both division-leading Seton Hill (9-2) and Pitt Johnstown (10-6).

Only two teams from the Northern Division will qualify for the six-team conference playoffs in early May in Johnstown.

In the 11-run win in Saturday's opener, the Rams scored a dozen runs in the first inning and literally coasted to a win because they had only one more run in their next six turns.

That huge first inning began with walks to both Michael Lott and Tyler Beard. Brian Collins had an RBI single as did Nathan Minnich.

Anthony Jackson likewise drove in a run with his single. Jake Cook walked. After Tylor McCain fanned, Chris Szafran drew another walk. Szafran's walk came

with the bases loaded.

Pat Aragon had a single that plated two more runs. Lott walked in his second at-bat of the raucous inning. Beard also walked a second time.

Collins doubled in two more runs -- giving him three RBIs in the inning. Minnich drew a walk. Jackson walked. Cook had a two-RBI single.

McCain made his second out of the inning and Szafran flew out to end the uprising.

Gerard Sokolis was the benefactor of the scoring largess and he pitched four innings, allowing four hits and no walks while fanning three. Sokolis was 3-1 with the pitching win.

Collins would finish the opener with a 3-for-3 game and four RBIs. Cook and Aragon each had two hits. Minnich, Aragon, Col-

lins, and Beard all scored two runs.

Aragon, Cook, and Jackson each drove in two runs.

In the free-scoring nightcap, Shepherd led only 5-3 lead after two innings but took a 12-3 lead with a seven-run fourth inning rally.

Minnich would hit two homers in the game and Sean Zirkle would add his first home run of the season to the 17 hits the Rams amassed.

In the seven-run fourth, Beard led off with a walk and Collins was safe on an infield error. Minnich drew a walk and Jackson tripled to drive in three runs. McCain had an RBI single. Szafran also had a single and Aragon drove in a run with his single.

Beard batted for the second

time in the inning and doubled to plate two more runs.

Shepherd pitcher Pat Smith went five innings to get the win, his third against one loss. Smith allowed six hits while walking two. He fanned three. Trevor Appleby and Sean Wiles, who both pitched in the first game, had no luck and Kenny Reisinger pitched the final 1.2 innings of hitless baseball.

Beard had his second 4-for-4 game in his last three starts. Minnich was 3-for-3 with four RBIs and four runs scored. Jackson was 2-for-3 with four RBIs. McCain and Aragon managed two hits each.

Aragon, Beard, and McCain each drove in two runs.

Wheeling Jesuit dipped to 2-7 in WVIAC games and 10-12 overall.