Shepherd's Minnich does the monster mash

By BOB PARASILITI
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11:02 p.m. EDT, April 28, 2012

SHEPHERDSTOWN, W.Va. — Nathan Minnich always figured he would do things in a big way.

It's his nature. He is big in stature and he uses it to his advantage in his way of life — as a power-hitting first baseman for Shepherd University.

"Back in Little League, I was one of the bigger kids," Minnich said. "I'm still a bigger kid. I grew into it. I was graced to have the body of a power hitter."

Be it grace or genetics, at 6-foot-3 and 240 pounds, Minnich has made his size matter by hitting baseballs a long way for the Rams. The Waynesboro (Pa.) Area Senior High School graduate has become one of the most feared hitters in NCAA Division II baseball and has a stack of honors and school records to prove it.

Why? It's hard to explain, even for Minnich.

"It's crazy," he said. "It's kind of hard to put into words."

Putting it on a stat sheet hasn't been a problem.

Minnich became Shepherd's single-season home run leader on Tuesday by hitting his 20th of the year in the first game of a doubleheader sweep of Glenville State. He already owns the Rams' career mark with 58 homers in his not-yet-completed four-year stint.

What makes the feat all the more astounding is that he leads Shepherd with a .508 batting average (65-
for-128) in 43 games through Friday this season and has a shot at topping the Rams’ single-season mark of .487. Nearly one-third of his hits are out of the park, but he puts the ball in play.

Minnich uses brawn as his calling card, but there are brains in his hitting style, too. He also leads the Rams with 45 walks.

"I have two kinds of approaches to hitting," Minnich said. "After being walked (45) times, I know I’m not going to get a lot to hit, so I’m looking for something to hit early. But then, I have to be willing to take walks. It’s frustrating. There were a couple of games early in the season when I got away from it and got myself out by trying to force things. I accept getting walks as a level of respect.

"You have to know your role. High-average guys try to get on base and cleanup hitters have to go up and drive in runs. The high-average guys try to place the ball in a spot in the outfield. Cleanup guys try to drive the ball into the gaps … and when we miss, we hit it over the fence."

Minnich has earned respect with the reputation he has built.

The senior leads Shepherd in nine offensive categories while also leading the West Virginia Conference in eight of them. Besides home runs, hits, walks and batting average, Minnich tops the Rams in RBIs (61), runs scored (60) and total bases (134).

He leads Division II baseball in on-base percentage (.656), slugging percentage (1.047) and home runs per game (.47) and is in the top 10 nationally with his homers, walks and RBIs.

Minnich was the WVAC’s 2011 player of the year and finished eighth in the Tino Martinez Division II National Player of the Year voting, an award he is vying for again this season.

Not even Minnich could have anticipated his level of success at Shepherd.

"When you go to college, you expect to hit a few home runs and want to break records," he said "But to do it is a different story."

Still, hitting for power has been his forte from the time he picked up a baseball bat.

"I don't know anything different," said Minnich in his soft-spoken, humble manner. "I remember my first home run. I think I was 8 and the pitcher was 12. I only hit one homer in my first year, then I hit eight and then 16."

The progression continued. Minnich hit .434 with 30 home runs and 109 RBIs at Waynesboro before heading to Shepherd. His line with the Rams speaks for itself, but he remained on his learning curve.

"I've always been level-headed. No lesson is a bad lesson, just like questions," Minnich said. "I think the thing I learned the most has been my consistency. I hit .376 with 11 home runs as a freshman and have improved every year to hitting .500 and 20 home runs this year. I had bigger options, but I wouldn't trade my time at Shepherd for anything."

Minnich may not trade them, but his times at Shepherd are nearing an end. The regular season is winding down for the Rams (28-16, 20-8), and the conference tournament lies ahead next month. With luck, Shepherd could head into the Division II tournament field.

"I'm not going to cry, but I'll be sad," he said. "No matter where I go — no matter if my last game was in high school or in the pros — I will always try my best. It's going to be emotional to leave. It's been a great four years in my life, but I'm ready to move on to better things."

That could be a shot at professional baseball. Minnich has had a number of major league teams scouting him with interest in selecting him in June's 2012 amateur draft, but he hasn't been able to talk to them because he is still playing.

The opportunity would be a dream come true.

"I remember one day, when we were playing tennis baseball in a big field across from my house," Minnich said. "I got all dressed up like Ken Griffey Jr. He was my favorite player. I had my hat on backwards like the way he did. Everyone gave me a hard time, but I was ready to go.

"It's crazy, but I may be able to do that. It's right there."

And fittingly, that could be the next big thing to grow into for Big Nate Minnich.
Minnich adds two more records to his Shepherd résumé

10:34 PM EDT, April 29, 2012

Sunday, April 29, 2012

COLLEGE BASEBALL

SHEPHERDSTOWN, W.Va. — Shepherd University senior Nathan Minnich, a Waynesboro High School graduate, set two school records Sunday and hit a solo home run in the first game of the Rams’ West Virginia Conference doubleheader split with Pitt-Johnstown.

Minnich’s 66 RBIs this season eclipses the old record of 65 set by Dirk Webb in 2006, while his 141 total bases surpassed the old mark of 139 set by Brian Collins in 2009.

In a 14-12 win in the second game, Nash Hutter belted two homers and Shepherd scored eight runs on just three hits in the fourth inning to take a 12-5 lead. Hutter hit a two-run blast in the third and a grand slam in the fourth. Aaron Scoville added a two-run single. Minnich homered in the seventh and Chad Murphy hit an RBI single in the eighth.

Pitt-Johnstown earned a 12-7 win in the first game, which had been suspended on Saturday by rain. UPJ (24-25, 17-17) plated four runs in the third behind a two-run homer by Kyle Morrow and a two-run single by Nathan Pope to take a 7-1 lead.

Michael Lott and Brandon Coffey each had two hits and an RBI to lead the Rams (27-19, 19-12).
Area Roundup: Shepherd tennis falls to Bloomsburg

April 30, 2012
journal-news.net

RALEIGH, N.C. - Sixth-seeded Shepherd University dropped a 5-1 decision to No. 3 seed Bloomsburg in NCAA II Atlantic Regional men's tennis action at Biltmore Hills Park on Sunday.

Shepherd's lone win came at No. 1 doubles as sophomore Chris Pratt and junior Taylor Boyle teamed for an 8-2 victory.

Shepherd finished its season at 16-9.

COLLEGE BASEBALL

Rams split with UPJ

SHEPHERDSTOWN - Senior designated hitter Nash Hutter belted a pair of homers and senior first baseman Nathan Minich added another to lead Shepherd University to a 14-12 win over Pitt-Johnstown in West Virginia Conference baseball action on Saturday. Pitt Johnstown earned a 12-7 win an earlier game that had been suspended on Saturday due to rain.

Trailing 5-4 in the second game, Shepherd plated eight runs on just three hits in the fourth to take a commanding 12-5 lead. Hutter, who hit a two-run blast in the third, belted a grand slam and sophomore outfielder Aaron Scoville hit a two-run single to key the rally.

The Rams added insurance runs in the seventh and eighth. Minich hit a solo blast off Shaw Hall in the seventh, and junior second baseman Chad Murphy had an RBI single in the eighth.

Hutter drove in six runs, while Scoville and Murphy each drove in a pair. Junior outfielder Jake Cook paced the Rams with three runs scored.

Nate Pope went 2 for 5 with three RBI, and Drew Westover belted a two-run homer and scored four runs to pace the Mountain Cats.

Sophomore pitcher Trevor Appleby (3 IP, 2 Ks, 0 BB, 2 ER) picked up the win to improve to 6-3 on the year. Freshman reliever Brian Martin (3 IP, 4 Ks, 3 BB, 1 H, 2 ER) gained his second save of the year. Nate Plummer (0-2) took the loss for the Mountain Cats.

Pitt-Johnstown used a 15-hit attack to gain a 12-7 win in the earlier game that was suspended on Saturday.

UPJ plated four runs in the third behind a two-run homer by Kyle Morrow and a two-run single by Pope to take a 7-1 lead to pull away for the win.

Sophomore outfielder Michael Lott went 2 for 4 with a pair of runs scored and an RBI to lead the Rams. Sophomore second baseman Brandon Coffey added a 2-for-3 effort with an RBI.

Heath Singer (1-0) picked up the win for Pitt-Johnstown, while Shepherd starter Andrew Gallant took the loss to fall to 4-3.

Shepherd moved to 27-19, 19-12 in WVC play, while Pitt-Johnstown is now 24-25, 17-17. The Rams await word on possible makeup games and seeding for the WVC tournament.
Colts claim Deji Karim off waivers, announce undrafted free agents

Posted by Josh Alper on April 30, 2012, 5:04 PM EDT

The Colts added a bunch of players to their roster on Monday.

The team announced that they claimed running back Deji Karim off of waivers from the Jaguars. Karim struggled as a running back behind Maurice Jones-Drew last season and was waived on Friday. He's had more success as a kickoff returner.

Indianapolis also signed tight end Dominique Jones. Jones has played in the UFL and the Indoor Football League since leaving Division II Shepherd University.

The Colts also announced that they have signed 15 undrafted rookie free agents. They are Utah defensive end James Aiono, Morehouse defensive tackle Chigbo Anunoby, East Carolina offensive tackle Steven Baker, Maryland defensive back Cameron Chism, Endicott defensive end Kevin Eagan, Wisconsin defensive back Antonio Fenelus, Rhode Island guard Jason Foster, USC linebacker Chris Galippo, Florida State guard Hayworth Hicks, Pittsburgh defensive back Buddy Jackson, North Carolina safety Matt Merletti, Hampton safety Micah Pellerin, Montana wide receiver Jabin Sambrano, San Diego State punter Brian Stahovich and Stanford wide receiver Griff Whalen.

Whalen caught passes from Andrew Luck in college where one of the other targets was tight end Coby Fleener, the Colts’ second-round pick.
Stanford WR Griff Whalen among the Colts Undrafted Free Agent signings

Whalen joins #1 overall pick Andrew Luck and 2nd Round selection Coby Fleener as Stanford products headed to Indianapolis

Colts Public Relations

Fox59.com

4:55 PM EDT, April 30, 2012

INDIANAPOLIS, IN

The Indianapolis Colts today have agreed to terms with 15 undrafted free agents including, defensive end James Aiono, defensive tackle Chigbo Anunoby, offensive tackle Steven Baker, defensive back Cameron Chism, defensive end Kevin Eagan, defensive back Antonio Fenelus, offensive guard Jason Foster, linebacker Chris Galippo, offensive guard Hayworth Hicks, defensive back Buddy Jackson, safety Matt Merletti, safety Micah Pellerin, wide receiver Jabin Sambrano, punter Brian Staovich and wide receiver Griff Whalen.

The team also agreed to terms with tight end Dominique Jones and claimed running back Deji Karim off waivers.

Aiono, 6-3, 305 pounds, spent two seasons at Utah following a stint at Snow College. As a defensive end with the Utes, he compiled 12 tackles and 0.5 sacks. At Snow, he was a 2008 first-team junior college All-America choice and was rated the No. 1 recruit in the nation by Rivals.com. Aiono was also the Western States Football League 2008 Defensive MVP and first-team all-conference defensive lineman.

Anunoby, 6-4, 324 pounds, totaled 49 tackles (26 solo), a team-leading 14.0 tackles for loss, 3.5 sacks, three forced fumbles and one fumble recovery as a defensive tackle last season for Morehouse College. For his performance, he was invited to play in the HBCU All-Star game.

Baker, 6-8, 310 pounds, is a four-year letterwinner at offensive tackle for East Carolina University. He competed in 42 career contests and started nine of 12 games last season. Baker was part of an offensive line that helped ECU tally 12 rushing touchdowns in the last seven games of the 2011 campaign and provided time for quarterback Dominique Davis to set NCAA records for consecutive completions in a game (26 vs. Navy) and a season (36 vs. Memphis and Navy). Baker also competed on special teams.
Chism, 5-10, 190 pounds, was a three-year starter for Maryland at cornerback who started 32 of 44 career games and ranked first on the team in career passes defensed (16), tied for first in career interceptions (seven) and ranked third in career tackles (191). As a senior last season, he registered 47 tackles and three interceptions and became one of only three players in school history with two interception returns for touchdowns.

Eagan, 6-4, 276 pounds, totaled 104 tackles (53 solo), 23.0 tackles for loss, 8.5 sacks, three forced fumbles and three fumble recoveries last season as a defensive end with Endicott College. He was named a BSN All-America second-team selection, the NEFC Boyd Division and ECAC DIII North Defensive Player of the Year and was an All-New England pick by the New England Football Writers. Eagan graduated as the school's career leader in tackles (371), tackles for loss (70.0), sacks (23.5), forced fumbles (seven) and fumble recoveries (seven).

Fenelus, 5-9, 190 pounds, is a four-year letterman at defensive back for the Wisconsin Badgers. In 52 collegiate games (32 starts) he notched 155 tackles (113 solo), nine interceptions, 22 passes defensed, three forced fumbles and three fumble recoveries. He was named a first-team All-Big Ten selection and was the winner of UW's Jimmy Demetril Team MVP as a senior last season. Fenelus also earned first-team All-Big Ten honors in 2010.

Foster, 6-5, 305 pounds, was a four-year starter for Rhode Island at offensive tackle. He earned second-team All-CAA honors last season and garnered third-team honors in 2010 as the Rams totaled six games with 150-plus rushing yards.

Galippo, 6-2, 250 pounds, compiled 166 tackles, 12.0 tackles for loss, 2.5 sacks and six interceptions as a linebacker for the University of Southern California. In 2010, he was named an honorable mention All-Pac 10 selection while earning the team’s Special Teams Player of the Year Award. In 2009, he was a semi-finalist for the Butkus Award and made the CollegeFootballNews.com Sophomore All-America first-team list.

Hicks, 6-3, 336 pounds, started 24 of 36 games at offensive guard for Iowa State and last year was presented with the team’s Arthur Floyd Scott Sward Award as the most outstanding offensive lineman. He also garnered second-team All-Big 12 honors from league coaches and honorable mention conference honors from the Associated Press.

Jackson, 6-1, 180 pounds, totaled 34 tackles (23 solo), four passes defensed and one fumble recovery last season as a defensive back for the Pittsburgh Panthers. He competed in every contest over his last two seasons and also participated on special teams.

Merletti, 5-11, 205 pounds, totaled 88 tackles, one tackle for loss, two interceptions, one pass defensed, two forced fumbles and one fumble recovery as a safety at the University of North Carolina. He compiled a season-high 36 tackles last season and logged both of his career interceptions in 2010.

Pellerin, 6-1, 195 pounds, logged 51 tackles (29 solo), four interceptions, 15 passes defensed and one forced fumble as a senior defensive back last season at Hampton. He saw action in every game over his last three seasons (33).

Sambrano, 5-11, 175 pounds, started three consecutive seasons at wide receiver for the Montana Grizzlies and totaled 1,787 career receiving yards. Last season, he earned second-team All-Big Sky Conference accolades while leading the team with 632 receiving yards and 10 touchdowns. Sambrano was also a Big Sky Conference honorable mention selection in 2010.
Stahovich, 6-0, 190 pounds, was one of the nation’s top punters at San Diego State, earning first-team All-Mountain West Conference honors in each of his last three seasons. As a senior, he averaged 43.4 yards per punt with over a quarter of his attempts going for more than 50 yards.

Whalen, 6-1, 185 pounds, was a teammate of Indianapolis draft selections; quarterback Andrew Luck and tight end Coby Fleener at Stanford. In his collegiate career, Whalen totaled 1,058 receiving yards (13.2 avg.) while adding five touchdowns as a wide receiver. Last season, he led the Cardinal in receiving yards (749) and recorded four touchdowns.

Jones, 6-3, 255 pounds, comes to Indianapolis from the Reading Express of the Indoor Football League. Through seven games this season, he led the team with 39 receptions for 349 yards and seven touchdowns. As a senior at Shepherd University, Jones recorded 34 receptions for 403 yards and nine touchdowns. He helped lead his team to the Division II National Semi-Finals and a school record 12 wins. For his performance, Jones earned third-team All-America honors and second-team all-conference accolades. Prior to joining Reading, Jones gained professional football experience as a tight end for the UFL’s Sacramento Mountain Lions.

Karim, 5-8, 209 pounds, spent the last two seasons with the Jacksonville Jaguars and in 23 games, totaled 98 rushes for 290 yards and added 17 catches for 130 yards. He served as a kickoff specialist, tallying 77 returns for a 24.7 average.
COLLEGE SOFTBALL

Junior Prospect Day

SHEPHERDSTOWN - Shepherd will be hosting the Junior Day Prospect Camp, Showcase & Recruiting Education Seminar.

Junior Day is for 2013 and 2014 high school graduates who are interested in playing college softball.

The one-day event will be held on June 20, 2012 at Shepherd's softball field. The Butcher Center will be used in case of inclement weather as the event will be held rain or shine. Junior Day is strictly limited to 64 high school softball players.

The Junior Day Prospect Camp, Showcase & Recruiting Education Seminar is an event designed to be productive and educational for student-athlete and her family. The camp will feature coaches from all levels of NCAA softball as Towson University, University of Maryland-Baltimore County and Shenandoah University all have coaches committed to attend this event. In all, there will be approximately seven different colleges represented at Junior Day.

Shepherd is currently one of three host sites for this event nationwide.

For the student-athlete the day will feature intense instruction from the college coaches, games, evaluations and lecture. For parents, family and players there will be the highly regarded Recruiting Education Seminar. The goal of the seminar is to help answer the questions, bust myths and learn the recruiting rules of the NCAA. The camp will feature topics such as "How to promote yourself" and "What college coaches look for."

Visit www.JuniorDaySoftball.com to register for camp and learn all of the details. Contact coach Leslie Lopez at llopez@shepherd.edu or 304-671-7032.
Five Rams All-WVC

PRINCETON Five members of the Shepherd University softball team have been named to the 2012 all-West Virginia Conference team. Junior pitcher Tricia Bettura gained first-team honors, junior pitcher Tiffany Biggs and freshman outfielder Taylor Schaefer were second-team selections, while junior outfielder Bianca Biondillo and sophomore first baseman Sam McQuade earned honorable mention accolades.

Bettura posted a 13-14 record with a team-best 2.10 earned run average. She also led the team in shutouts (7) and complete games (26). Bettura recorded 144 strikeouts in 177 2/3 innings. She was a two-time WVC Pitcher of the Week selection this year.

Biggs recorded a 16-9 mark with a 2.49 earned run average. She led the team in wins (16), strikeouts (149), innings pitched (185.1), and appearances (29). Biggs added 25 complete games and four shutouts. She was a WVC Co-Pitcher of the Week selection.

Schaefer had a .321 batting average with 51 hits in 139 at-bats. She led the Rams in hits (51, tied with Biondillo), doubles (12), extra base hits (15) and runs batted in (30). She was tied for second on the team in walks with 16 and was 3-for-4 in stolen bases.

Biondillo batted .305 with 51 hits in 167 at-bats. She led the Rams in hits (51, tied with Schaefer), total bases (75), runs scored (31), stolen bases (10), triples (4), and home runs (3). Biondillo was third on the team in runs batted in (25) and doubles (7).

McQuade batted .314 with 48 hits in 153 at-bats. She was tied for second on the team in home runs (2) while her 48 hits were also second on the team, McQuade was third in total bases (57) and hits (48), while placing fourth in runs batted in (22), batting average (.314), and walks (14). She led the team in being hit-by-pitch (4).

Shepherd completed its season at 31-24, with an 18-8 conference mark.
Shepherd University announces baseball forfeits; moves to third in WVIAC

SHEPHERDSTOWN— After finding out nearly a month ago that it played a temporarily ineligible baseball player, Shepherd announced last week that the WVIAC has taken action on the matter. The conference will force the Rams to forfeit three games it won that the ineligible player participated in -- two wins over Wheeling Jesuit and one win against Davis & Elkins.

The freshman athlete has become eligible again and is currently a member of the Rams’ team.

Before the forfeits were called for by the WVIAC, Shepherd was in second place in the conference’s North Division with an 18-8 league mark. And the Rams were 26-15 overall and ranked fifth in the NCAA Division II’s Atlantic Division.

After the forfeits were put in place, Shepherd’s conference record was adjusted to 15-11 and its overall record made 23-18.

The Rams subsequently defeated Glenville in a doubleheader and moved their North Division record to 17-11 and their overall record to 25-18.

Following the two-game sweep of Glenville, Shepherd trailed North Division leader Seton Hill (26-3 in the WVIAC with a 196.55 power rating) and second-place Alderson-Broaddus (17-10 in the WVIAC with a 150.00 power rating).

Shepherd’s 17-11 WVIAC record left it with a 141.43 power rating and in third place.

The top four teams in the North Division final standings will all qualify for the WVIAC tournament. At the time the forfeits were announced, Fairmont was in fourth place with a 15-12 conference record and a 118.15 power rating.

The Rams had just three regular season games remaining, and those were at home against North Division rival Pitt-Johnstown. Shepherd had two games against Bluefield rained out and one conference game against Wheeling Jesuit lost to the weather. It is unlikely that any of those three games will be made up.
Behind by six, Rams complete successful rally

BOB MADISON | Sport Staff

SHEPHERDSTOWN—With its wealth of hitters, Pitt-Johnstown shelled Shepherd starting pitcher Paul Hvozdevic for eight hits and six runs in the first two innings of Saturday's crucial WVIAC game at Fairfax Field.

Shepherd spent the gloomy, rain-threatened afternoon trying to overcome the early-game bad fortune it had seen. It finally did. And then the Rams scored twice in the ninth to haul away a much-needed 8-7 win.

There were Ryan Messina's two-run homer, Nathan Minnich's two-run single, and Aaron Scoville's two RBIs...and the Rams had it tied at 6-6 after five innings.

Hvozdevic had blanked the Mountain Cats in the middle innings.

Freshman right-hander Matt Copley took Shepherd's pitching reins in the sixth. And he threw strikes -- not walks.

After it had to forfeit three of its thought-to-be conference wins, Shepherd needed every win it could wring out of its few remaining WVIAC games.

Copley started strong. He was hitting batters and striking out any Mountain Cats -- for three innings as the scheduled seven-inning game rolled along still deadlocked at 6-6.

In the Pitt-Johnstown ninth, Copley bent. But just a little. A lead-off bunt single by Andy Ebersole and a sacrifice bunt had the go-ahead run at second...when Rams' coach Wayne Riser brought in senior Andrew Gallant to replace Copley. Jeff Campbell's single had base runners at first and third for Zach Vignero, who delivered a sacrifice fly and a one-run lead was returned to the Mountain Cats.

Even though it had successfully scattered Pitt-Johnstown's once-impressive six-run lead, Shepherd looked as if it were going to fall in a one-run verdict.

But let not your blue and gold heart be troubled. Shepherd had still another comeback waiting for the pitching-poor Mountain Cats.

In the Rams' ninth, Nath Hutter had a lead-off single. He was successfully sacrificed to second. Travis Sliger came through with a single...but pinch-runner Bryan DiRosario could only reach third.

Kenny Beyer lifted a shallow sacrifice fly to center and DiRosario slid head-first just in front of catcher Kyle Morrow's late tag. It was a 7-7 game. But not for long. Sliger had smartly moved to second on the sacrifice fly.

Brandon Coffey lined a hit just over the leap of shortstop Nathan Pape...and Sliger flew home with the second run of the second extra inning...with the Rams cascading out of their dugout to mob Coffey whose clutch hit had brought an 8-7 win.

After it had to forfeit three of its thought-to-be conference wins, Shepherd needed every win it could wring out of its few remaining WVIAC games. And with Copley's three shutout innings and the steady run-production from enough of its batters there was a victory at the end of the bumpy Saturday afternoon.

At Shepherd, Minnich has been on fire but there has also been Murphy's Law

BOB MADISON | Sport Staff

While Nathan Minnich has deservedly gained most of the attention shown Shepherd's baseball team this winter/spring, the Rams have seen another player have an all-conference type season.

Utility player Chad Murphy has played a number of positions...all well -- and has at times supplanted even Minnich with his consistent offense. And his defense is minor. And what his coach, Wayne Riser, likes most about him is that he is the son of a high school baseball coach. Just before Shepherd's season opened in February, Riser said of Murphy, "I like him. He is an intelligent baseball player. He can play a number of different positions and he will give us stability."

This is Murphy's first season with Riser at Shepherd. He came to the Rams from North Olmstead, Ohio and Cantonville (Md.) Community College and was going to solve Shepherd's catching problems.

In the first few weeks of the season, Murphy was Shepherd's catcher. But when several infielders began having fielding problems, Murphy was moved to second base. He has been a quiet second baseman -- quiet because nobody notices him and his near-flawless fielding.

While being a calming force on the right side of the Shepherd infield, Murphy has made his noise as a hitter.

Riser could have found himself wondering just who might be behind Minnich to keep the opposition from walking the .500-hitting first baseman at nearly every turn.

Riser put Murphy behind Minnich in the season's first game and he -- especially to his left -- there was no reason to alter Murphy's place in the Shepherd batting order.

Murphy doesn't look like the prototypic second baseman. He has the body of a catcher. But at a generous listing of 5-feet-10 and 190 pounds, he has covered ground and he -- especially to his left -- and made all the plays required of a quality defensive player. His range has also been valuable on pop flies and Texas League pop-ups near the right field foul line and into shallow centerfield.

At the plate, Murphy has drawn 41 walks and has an on base percentage of .515 going into next week's WVIAC tournament in Johnstown, Pa.

Murphy started all 46 of Shepherd's regular season games. He batted .372, second on the team to Minnich's .500 average. His offensive statistics showed him with 54 hits in 145 official at-bats. Murphy scored 39 runs and led the Rams with his 14 doubles. One of his three homers came on the final weekend of the year when Shepherd clinched its postseason berth in the tournament with two wins in three games against Pitt-Johnstown.

Among the eight Shepherd regulars, he has struck out the fewest: times, and only Minnich moved more baserunners (50).

Occasionally, Murphy has caught a game in a conference doubleheader. But he always bats cleanup and always brings his quiet and fundamentally sound and consistent game with him. At Shepherd this spring/summer, "Murphy's Law" has meant a consistent player whose contributions have meant Riser can worry about other things and other players because his first-year coach's son has been his second-most valuable player.

"Murphy's Law" translates into a high-average hitter, a hitter with one of the WVIAC's best on-base percentages, a skilled defender whose talents have allowed Riser to revise his inner defense more than once or twice, and a consistent run producer.

Riser just penciled in the names of Minnich and Murphy in the three and four spots in his batting order...and started to tinker with the bottom of his lineup card.

Chad Murphy is a junior. Wayne Riser won't have Minnich next season...but he will still have the next best thing in Chad Murphy.

At Shepherd, "Murphy's Law" has been spelled out in clear win-loss terms as the Rams have recovered from a sub-par 2011 season and won 30 of their 46 games that were decided on the field.

The coach's son has made life easier for the long-time Shepherd coach.
Runs, runs, run just enough to overcome near-futile pitching

Nash Huter, facing camera, is greeted by teammates after hitting a grand slam homer.

ROB MADISON / Staff

SHEPHERDSTOWN — On Sunday, after allowing an even dozen runs in losing a 12-7 decision to visiting Pitt-Johnstown in the completion of a WVIAC game suspended from Saturday, Shepherd allowed another even dozen runs in the regularly scheduled nine-inning game . . . but its hitters crashed three home runs (including Nash Huter’s grand slam) to provide just enough fodder for a 14-12 victory that gave the Rams a two games-to-one series win over the hit-happy Mountain Cats.

Three forfeit losses had plunged Shepherd’s conference record to 17-11 from its glittering 20-8 record that had it positioned solidly in the second place in the North Division of the NCAA Division II league.

The forfeits stationed Shepherd in a precarious third-place niche that just could have eventually forced it out of the WVIA tournament coming soon in Johnstown, Pa.

But despite the fact that its pitchers allowed 24 runs in what amounted to a doubleheader, the Rams remained in third place with a 19-12 league mark and a 27-19 overall record.

The first two innings of the thumping the Rams’ pitchers endured in the 12-7 Sunday-opening loss were played on Saturday before a drizzle halted play.

Pitt-Johnstown led, 3-1, because Drew Westover had crashed a two-run homer.

Shepherd pitcher Andrew Gallant came back again — for six batters — on Sunday. But he couldn’t retire any of them . . . and the Mountain Cats scored another four runs to sprint ahead to a 7-1 lead.

Justin Byrd replaced Gallant and went an obstacle-filled 4-2 innings, allowing eight hits and a walk and another five runs (all earned) as his ERA advanced to 5.93 and the batting average against him by all Rams’ opponents went to .308.

Byrd’s failure to check the Mountain Cats didn’t keep Shepherd from winning even though the Rams did finally count seven runs on eight hits and four walks.

Nathan Minnich had two RBIs on sacrifice flies and Michael Loe had two doubles and an RBI.

Pitt-Johnstown landed no fewer than 15 hits against the combined arms of Gallant and Byrd. Kyle Morrow and Jeff Campbell slugged home runs. Mike Palkovitz went 4-for-5 with three runs scored and Ram-killer Drew Westover went 3-for-4 and scored three runs.

Shepherd needed a win in the nightcap to secure its place in the postseason tournament. It got the win . . . overcoming another desultory pitching performance by starter Brandon Coffey and his replacement, Trevor Appleby.

And the wild, wild win was fabricated from still another long comeback — this time from a 5-1 deficit.

Coffey left after allowing five runs on four hits (including Westover’s 400-foot homer), three walks, and two hits batters . . . in three lackluster innings.

Shepherd realized three runs in its half of the third when Huter had a two-run homer and Jake Cook scored on a wild pitch.

When the Rams scored eight times in the fourth (Huter drilled a grand slam home run), they had been gifted with no fewer than six walks and a hit batsman in the uprising.

After four, it was Shepherd holding a still precarious 12-9 lead.

Appleby surrendered four runs in the sixth (on five hits and a hit batsman) and the Shepherd lead was a more precarious, 12-9.

Morrow’s next homer made it a 12-10 game.

But then Minnich found the roof of Thacher Hall with his solo homer and steady-as-a-rock Chad Murphy drove in a run to give the Rams a 14-10 cushion.

Freshman right-hander Brian Martin had replaced Appleby after Morrow’s solo homer. And Martin had scoreless innings in the seventh and eighth. His lead was at four runs when the ninth began.

He fanned Morrow with a man he had walked at first. He passed Westover on a 3-2 pitch. It was then that second baseman Murphy ranged far to his left and grabbed Palkovitz’s bid for a ground single.

With two outs — and still holding to a four-run lead — Martin saw Nathan Pope poke a two-run single to center. But with the tying run at the plate, Martin ended the final Pitt-Johnstown bid to score more than a dozen runs by getting Ebersole to ground to Minnich at first.

Huter had driven in six runs. The eight-run inning had been enough. Shepherd was firmly in third place in the North Division. Pitt-Johnstown couldn’t sweep despite scoring 24 runs . . . and could win only once despite scoring 31 runs in the three games it plowed through against the Shepherd pitchers.
Shepherd football tickets on sale

SHEPHERDSTOWN, W.Va. — Reserved season football tickets are now on sale for the 2012 Shepherd University football season through the university’s bookstore. Upper and lower reserved seating is available. For information, contact the bookstore at 304-876-5219 or visit www.shepherdbook.com.

The Rams have home games Sept. 8 vs. American International, Sept. 29 vs. Concord, Oct. 6 vs. West Virginia Wesleyan (homecoming), Nov. 3 vs. Glenville State and Nov. 10 vs. Fairmont State. All home games will have a noon kickoff.
NFF Announces Members of the 2012 Hampshire Honor Society

National Football Foundation & College Hall of Fame
May 2, 2012

DALLAS - The National Football Foundation & College Hall of Fame (NFF) announced today the members of the 2012 NFF Hampshire Honor Society, which is comprised of college football players from all divisions of play who each maintained a cumulative 3.2 GPA or better throughout their college career. A total of 721 players from 232 schools qualified for membership in the society’s sixth year, marking this year’s class as the largest since the program’s creation in 2007.

"The growing number of students involved in the Hampshire Honor Society each year shows that football student-athletes not only play at the highest level but that they are some of the best students on campus as well," said NFF President & CEO Steve Hatchell. "We salute each one of these young men for their commitment to education and their leadership on and off the football field."

The NFF Hampshire Honor Society capitalizes on the NFF’s current National Scholar-Athlete program greatly expanding the number of scholar-athletes the NFF can recognize each year. The program further strengthens the organization’s leadership role in encouraging academic performance by the student-athletes who play football at the more than 700 college and universities with football programs nationwide. Jon F. Hanson, the chairman and founder of The Hampshire Companies, provided the endowment to launch the NFF Hampshire Honor Society in 2007. He made the contribution as part of his legacy to the organization after serving as NFF chairman from 1994-2006. He currently serves the organization as a chairman emeritus. Each player awarded with membership in this year’s Honor Society will receive a certificate commemorating their achievement.

"Thanks to the generosity of Jon Hanson, we have honored more than 3,000 student-athletes in the last six years," said NFF Chairman Archie Manning. "The Hampshire Honor Society allows us to showcase how much football matters in building tomorrow’s leaders, and we strongly encourage every football-playing school in the country to get involved."

Qualifications for membership in the NFF Hampshire Honor Society include:

- Being a starter or a significant substitute in one’s last year of eligibility at an accredited NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision, Football Championship Subdivision, Division II, Division III, or an NAIA college or university;
- Achieving a 3.2 cumulative grade point average throughout entire course of undergraduate study;
- Meeting all NCAA-mandated progress towards degree requirements and graduation.

The Hampshire Honor Society represents a powerful component in the organization’s rich history as an innovator in promoting the scholar-athlete ideal. Launched in 1959 with a donation from Hall of Fame coach Earl "Red" Blaik, the NFF’s National Scholar-
Shepherd pair honored

DALLAS - Senior cornerback Elijah Davis and senior defensive lineman Jon Heavner of the Shepherd football team were named to the 2012 National Football Foundation (NFF) Hampshire Honor Society, which is comprised of college football seniors from all divisions of play who maintained a 3.2 GPA or better.

Qualifications for membership in the NFF Hampshire Honor Society include:

* Being a starter or a significant substitute in one's last year of eligibility at an accredited NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision, Football Championship Subdivision, Division II, Division III, or an NAIA college or university;
* Achieving a 3.2 cumulative grade point average throughout entire course of undergraduate study; and
* Meeting all NCAA-mandated progress toward degree requirements.

COLLEGE LACROSSE

Shepherd players honored

NEWBERRY, S.C. - Four members of the Shepherd women's lacrosse team have been named to the 2012 Division II All-Independent Team.

Junior midfielder Nicole Ruane, sophomore attack Christina Ferrara and freshman attack Georgia Karr were first-team selections, while junior midfielder Krista Tippett earned second-team honors.

The Division II Independent Women's Lacrosse awards were voted on by coaches who elected to participate in the selection process. Schools participating were Catawba College (N.C.), Florida Southern College, Grand Valley State University (Mich.), Lenoir-Rhyne University (N.C.), Newberry College (S.C.), Shepherd, Tiffin University (Ohio) and Urbana University (Ohio).

Ruane led the Rams in goals (62), points (73), draw controls (60), ground balls (44) and caused turnovers (26, tied with Alyx Albano). She set single-season records this year in all of those categories. Ruane is ranked fourth nationally in goals per game (4.13), sixth in goals (62), and 10th in points per game (5.2).

Ferrara recorded 26 goals and 25 assists for 51 points on the season. She added 30 draw controls, 18 ground balls and six caused turnovers. Her 25 assists were second on the team, while her 26 goals were fifth on the squad.

Karr, who was also named to the All-Independent Freshman Team, tallied 40 goals and a team-best 26 assists for 66 points. She also added 24 ground balls, 15 draw controls and seven caused turnovers. She ranked in the top-30 nationally in four different categories.

Tippett had 39 goals and seven assists for 46 points. She added 49 draw controls, 27 ground balls, and six caused turnovers. Tippett had four five-goal games on the season.
COLLEGE BASEBALL

Rams eighth

INDIANAPOLIS - The Shepherd University baseball team is tied for eighth in the latest NCAA II Atlantic Region Poll. Shepherd, coming off a 4-1 week, is one of two West Virginia Conference teams listed in the poll.

The Rams will return to action on May 10 at the league tournament in Johnstown, Pa.


Correction

A picture of a pole vaulter appearing in The Journal on Sunday should've identified the athlete as being Brandon Sandy.

The name was incorrect.

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The Rams open their home slate against American International. Other home games include Concord (Sept. 29), West Virginia Wesleyan (Oct. 6), Glenville State (Nov. 3) and Fairmont State (Nov. 10).