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Commemorative pull-off section

Red Devils

UNDEFEATED CHAMPS

Players, fans, coaches, points, wins, trophies make for a memorable undefeated, championship season

All stories and photos by veteran sports reporter Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi, unless otherwise indicated. She has been covering Red Devils sports for the Rappahannock Record for 34 years.



Coach Dwayne Pinn holds up the VHSL Class I trophy as the Lancaster High School varsity basketball players, coaches and supporters gather around for a picture following the Red Devils win in the state championship.

Lancaster defeats George Wythe, 62-40, for state trophy

A relentless defense and two smooth-shooting brothers carried Lancaster through its first perfect season in school history and the Red Devils capped it with an exclamation point—claiming the Virginia High School League’s Class 1 boys basketball championship, 62-40, over George Wythe-Wytheville!

The March 9 final at the Virginia Commonwealth University Siegel Center in Richmond drew thousands of Red Devil fans from the Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula and beyond as alum came from near and far to cheer LHS on to its third state basketball title in 11 years.

Lancaster came close last year, losing to Westmoreland in the state semifinals after beating the Eagles three times prior. That loss only made the Devils more determined.

“Everything we wanted was accomplished,” said senior guard Tyson Henderson, who scored 14 points and grabbed three rebounds in the final. “The goal was to win the state and we did it. Us losing last year really motivated us. Winning states was like our revenge tour.”

Lancaster went 29-0 this year, beating foes from private schools and bigger divisions in its quest for the VHSL title.

“Those games are what prepared us,” said LHS coach Dwayne Pinn. “Our schedule was based upon getting to VCU. All our early season games helped get us here.”

As it should be in the state final, George Wythe and Lancaster matched



Darius Smith and Troy Henderson fall into the crowd as players join fans in the LHS student section after the Red Devils claimed the state basketball crown.

up well with the Maroons presenting one of the biggest challenges of the year for the Devils, who beat opponents this season by an average of 32.6 points per game. They had double-digit victories through the region and state playoffs.

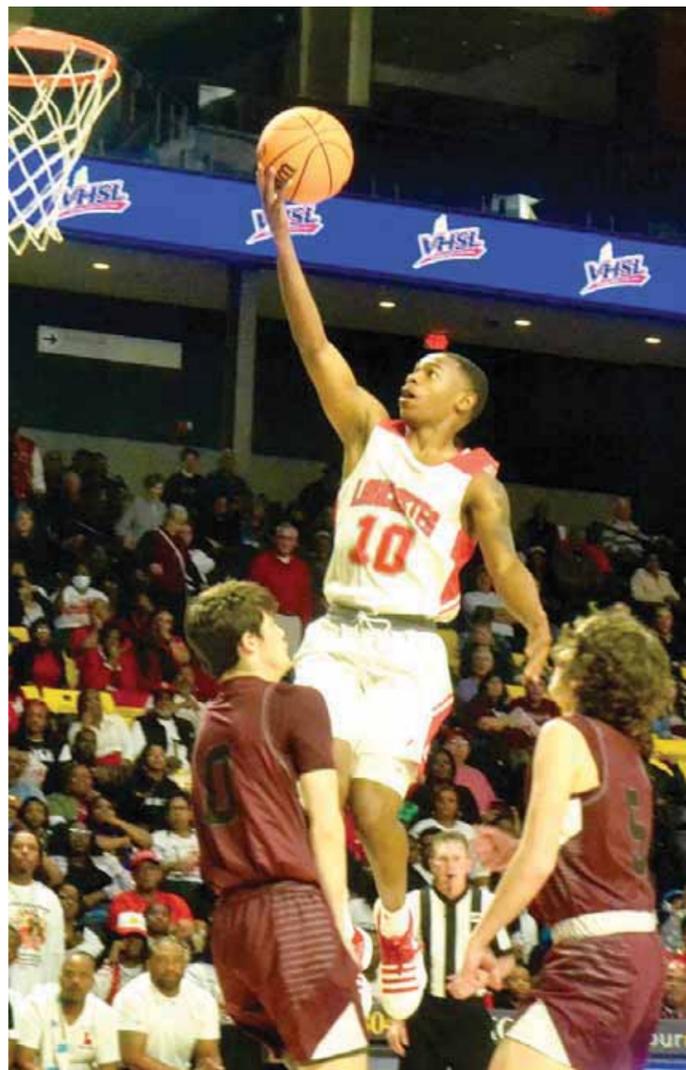
“George Wythe is a very well-coached team and they run a good backdoor offense,” said Pinn. “So we knew going in our defense had to be fundamentally sound.”

Lancaster and George Wythe were locked at 11-11 at the end of the first quarter, a rare happening for the Devils.

“At the start of the game I was a little worried when it was so close,” said LHS senior forward X’Zaveion Owens. “I told my guys, ‘lock in mentally. It’s time to focus.’ Their guys were very skilled so we had to lock on defense to win. Number two [Shane Huff] was very skilled, very shifty. I loved how he played the game.”

Huff did his best to keep the Maroons in the game with 15 points as the only GW player in double digits but he was no match for Lancaster sophomore Troy Henderson, who finished with 30 points, six rebounds and was a momentum shifter every time George Wythe made a run.

In a game with four ties and seven lead changes, the Maroons actually led 18-17 with 5:30 remaining in the second quarter after a Huff three-pointer. But that was the last lead for



Tyson Henderson soars above defenders for a lay-in during the state final. Photo by AnnGardner Eubank

GW, which fell victim to a 15-4 Red Devils run that lifted Lancaster to a 32-22 lead at the half. GW’s biggest lead was by two at the 7:54 pair in the first quarter.

“After that first quarter we knew we had to stay focused, keep going hard and we had to play our game,” said LHS senior guard Gerrion Owens, who scored seven in the final. “The coaches told us to focus on the backdoor cuts and rebounding the ball.”

Lancaster, which wowed fans all season with its three-point game, was

struggling to drill the long shots in the first half.

“It’s not that we live or die by the three but that’s definitely a big part of our game,” said Pinn. “We have a really good team that can shoot the ball, but we can also drive the ball.”

“If we’re the better team, we’re gonna change things up and make them adjust,” he said.

When the threes weren’t falling, “that was okay, we stuck with our game plan,” said Ty. Henderson. “We knew it was a big court going in and that might



X’Zaveion Owens (35) goes one-on-one against Brayden Rainey (3) of George Wythe.

A salute to Lancaster High School’s successful winter sports season



Sophomore guard Troy Henderson trots through a tunnel of cheerleaders during introductions of Lancaster's starting five for the state final.

effect our three-pointers, but we stayed confident and drove to the basket."

Ty. Henderson drew two fouls early and had four by the end of the third, which forced Pinn to sit him longer than he'd liked.

"Tyson getting in foul trouble, I admit, troubled my mind," said Pinn.

It did the opposite for his brother, Troy.

"When I seen Tyson go down with four fouls, I thought, it's

take-over time," he said.

Tr. Henderson put up 11 of Lancaster's 13 points in the third and scored 24 of Lancaster's first 47 in the game.

George Wythe had one final surge when Reed Kirtner hit a three-pointer to pull the Maroons within 48-40 with 4:41 remaining. But GW wouldn't score again with Lancaster going on a 14-0 run that included 11 free throws.

"I wasn't really worried about



Lancaster High varsity cheerleaders keep the crowd engaged.



Coach Dwayne Pinn celebrates as the seconds click off the clock during the Class 1 state championship.



Darius Smith pushes by Maroons defender Brayden Rainey.

the offense [when they got close] cause Troy's on fire," said Smith. "I was doing my best on defense to let the offense flow."

Lancaster's defense did its job, forcing 22 turnovers. The Devils had 10.

"Everybody was playing at their highest level," said Pinn. "I said to them at the half and I've said it many times before, I just think no team can match us in four quarters."

Lancaster had eight players contribute to its offensive output in the final with X. Owens scoring four, Jeremy Smith, Sean Thomas and Daveon Smith two each and Dar. Smith one.

As the season progressed and the Devils continued to rack up the wins, it became evident to Pinn and staff they could pull off a perfect run.

"You know at some point I realized we're not just a good team, we're better than what I even thought we were. Once we got to regions, I put it in their minds we could have a perfect season," said Pinn.

Last year's one-loss record and that crushing blow in the state semifinals was on the coaches' and players' minds all season. The Devils were determined that wouldn't happen again.

"We grew up, we were children [last year]," said Pinn. "Though the experience last year was awesome, it was a terrible feeling. The last thing they were going to do was to take a loss to

teams that they thought they were better than. This team really grew up. I was really surprised at the maturity in November. The maturity really set the tone."

The Devils returned home last Friday to a heroes' welcome with an escort by fire, rescue and sheriff's units from the Robert O. Norris Jr. Memorial Bridge in White Stone through Kilmarnock to the high school where a crowd waited to greet them. The celebrations will likely continue for several weeks and months.

"We want to thank everybody for everything, all the support. We have the best fans in the Northern Neck, in the state," said Pinn. "We have had some faithful fans and it made for a really memorable season."

On the fast-track

Coach Dwayne Pinn has done in two short years what some coaches don't ever do in a lifetime—win a state crown.

The Lancaster High alum led the Red Devils to the Class 1 championship last week, capping an incredible two-year run that included back-to-back Region 1A championships, a perfect season and multiple team and personal accolades.

Pinn, who was named both the Northern Neck and Region 1A coach of the year this year, led a group of underclassmen—there were only two seniors on the team—to the state semifinals in his first season in 2022.

This year, with that near-miss on their minds, the Devils dominated, beating opponents by an average of 32.6 points. Lancaster amassed 2,065 points and gave up 1,021. During his two-year reign, Pinn's team has scored a total of 3,511 points and held opponents to 1,901.

Lancaster's perfect 29-0 mark in 2023 brings Pinn's overall record to 49-1 as head coach.



Coach Dwayne Pinn, with players Troy Henderson (left) and Tyson Henderson, answers questions during a post-championship press conference. Photo by AnnGardner Eubank

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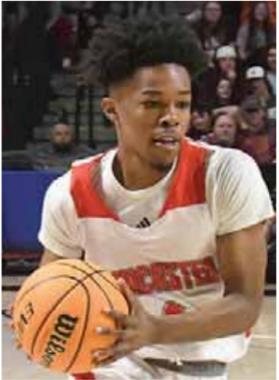
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Tyson Henderson can't hold back tears of joy after winning the state championship.



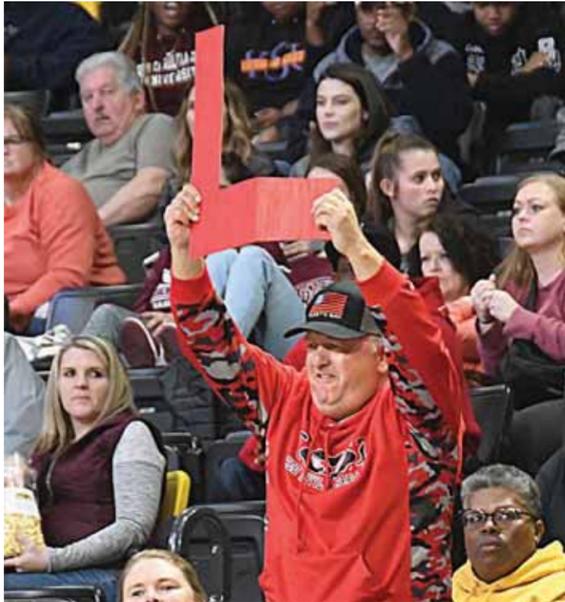
"Na-na-na-na, na-na-na-na, hey, hey, goodbye" sings the LHS student section as the state championship game nears its end.



Brannonn Wade on the break.



Kelvin Davis screams out to get the crowd on its feet as the close of the game, and the season, draws near.



LHS fan Travis Pittman throws up the "L" in LHS.

Recapping the tournament run

Lancaster completed the first perfect season in school history March 9, capping a 29-0 campaign by beating George Wythe in the Class 1 state championship.

On the way, the Red Devils picked up the Northern Neck District tournament championship and their second straight Region 1A tournament trophy. The big stat, however, is how dominant the Devils were — beating every opponent this season by double digits.

Lancaster scored a total of 2,065 points in its 29 games, averaging 71.2 points per outing. The Devils held opponents to a cumulative 1,021 points to win by an average of 32.6 points per game.

On the road to the Class 1 championship, Lancaster beat Franklin, 70-53, in the quarterfinal and defeated Altavista, 69-40, in the semifinal.

Semifinal Lancaster 69 Altavista 40

Altavista hung with Lancaster through one quarter but when the Devils found their groove, they outran the Colonels, 13-1, to end the half with a 37-22 lead en route to a 29-point win, 69-40, in the Class 1 semifinal March 6 at Heritage High School in Lynchburg.

Altavista's defense tried to contain Lancaster's leading scorers, Tyson and Troy Henderson. What the Colonels didn't count on was Lancaster's depth. When opponents shut one, or two, Devils down, the others stepped up.

Ty. Henderson finished with 17, Tr. Henderson had 16 and Gerrion Owens came through with a double digit finish with 15 points, including a huge eight-point run of his own in the second quarter off back-to-back three pointers and a dunk that opened up Lancaster's five-point lead to 13.

Ty. Henderson, Tr. Henderson and Owens led Lancaster's seven scorers with Daveon Smith

contributing eight, X'Zaveion Owens five and Darius Smith and Jeremy Smith four each.

Quarterfinal Lancaster 70 Franklin 53

The Devils hit four three pointers in the first quarter and went on to stun Region B runner-up Franklin, 70-53, before a crowd of 1,400 at New Kent High School March 3.

The Devils finished with 11 three pointers, hitting three in the first four minutes to help build a 24-8 first-quarter lead.

Franklin brought a much taller team that struggled against a quick-handed Lancaster defense. The Devils held a 45-19 lead at halftime and came out of the locker room to slow the pace down in the third and try to work the ball inside.

Franklin cut the margin to 20 before Lancaster put up a quick seven in 30 seconds for a 61-36 lead after three.

The Devils, who shot 53% from the floor, got 25 points including 12 beyond the arc, from Tr. Henderson. Ty. Henderson finished with 21 and sank five three-pointers, including four in the first half. X. Owens had nine points and Dar. Smith sank two threes in the first half to finish with six points.

Red Devils 2022-23 Season (29-0)

Lancaster	Opponent	Score
81	Cape Henry Collegiate	51
57	Christchurch	44
74	Northampton	57
67	Middlesex	35
80	Hampton Christian	43
65	Northampton	55
88	Mathews	36
66	Westmoreland	38
63	Colonial Beach	24
81	Altavista	66
73	Northumberland	34
78	Rappahannock	33
78	Essex	42
58	Westmoreland	39
50	Life Christian Academy	38
81	Bruton	46
93	Colonial Beach	31
76	Rappahannock	16
77	Essex	32
Northern Neck District Tournament		
Semifinal		
76	Northumberland	20
Final		
60	Westmoreland	36
Region 1A Tournament		
Quarterfinal		
81	Northumberland	25
Semifinal		
60	Essex	32
Final		
64	Middlesex	50
Class 1 Tournament		
Quarterfinal		
70	Franklin	53
Semifinal		
69	Altavista	40
Championship		
62	George Wythe	40

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Meet the starters

Although every player on the Lancaster roster contributed to its successful 2022-23 campaign and coach Dwayne Pinn and company had a deep bench with lots of talent to call on, five players did most of the heavy lifting.

In fact, the combo of four seniors Tyson Henderson, Darius Smith, Gerrion Owens, X'Zaveion Owens and sophomore Troy Henderson started every game as a unit except for one. Each brought a different skillset to the floor.

Troy Henderson

Not surprisingly, Henderson, a 5'8" sophomore guard, is already getting courted by colleges.

The master of the three, Henderson hit 68 times from no man's land this season and led the team in scoring with 652 points, bringing his two-year career total to an amazing 1,178 points.

The 17-year-old is already getting nods from George Mason and University of Richmond to name a few, with offers from Radford and University of Charleston.

"Honestly, Troy's play speaks for itself," said coach Dwayne Pinn. "He was our go-getter; when we needed a bucket, he was our go-to."

"Troy has a very high basketball IQ, which makes coaching him easy," he added. "His IQ for the game is through the roof. He sees the whole court and reads it."

Henderson, who has earned back-to-back player of the year honors for the Northern Neck District and Region A as a freshman and sophomore, scored 30 points in Lancaster's state championship win over George Wythe.

"Troy's gonna knock down the big buckets. He's gotta be one of the best players in the state."

Tyson Henderson

The other half of the dynamic Henderson duo is 5'10" senior guard Tyson, who also had a record-breaking season for the Red Devils. The 18-year-old scored 564 points with 58 three-pointers this year to also surpass the 1,000-career points mark in two years. He reached the milestone in the Region 1A championship.

"Tyson is our playmaker, he's gonna guard the best player on the other team. He sets up our defense," said Pinn. "I call him our glue guy because he holds this team together."

"He scores, rebounds, defends, he's a great teammate and he makes everybody around him play better. When he's [on the court], you can see a difference in how we play."

Tyson and Troy have a family basketball legacy. Dad Donte Henderson, a 1997 graduate of LHS who went on to play



Gerrion Owens



Troy Henderson



Darius Smith



X'Zaveion Owens



Tyson Henderson

at Christopher Newport University, is an assistant coach at Lancaster.

X'Zaveion Owens

A 6'2" senior forward, X'Zaveion Owens was a presence under the goal.

The 18-year-old played 10 games at center his junior year before suffering a knee injury that took him out of the starting line-up.

He came back strong this year, averaging just over nine points per game and leading the team with 6.3 rebounds an outing.

"I knew going into it what my role was and I did my best to do it," said Owens. "We have enough offensive guys that can score, so I tried to do my job as the big man."

"X'Zaveion makes really good decisions on the court. He plays smart and defends other 'bigs' really well," said Pinn.

Owens was obviously emotional after accepting the championship trophy with the three other starting seniors.

"This meant a lot," said Owens. "Bringing a championship back to my community, doing it for my guys, especially since we couldn't get it done last year."

As a senior, "it was nice going out with a bang," he said.

Darius Smith

Darius Smith, a 5'7" senior guard, took a bigger role on the defensive side of the floor this

year, said Pinn.

"He decided he wanted to be a better defender and play full court basketball," said Pinn. "And he found a role for himself, guarding the point guard and he accepted that role well."

Although he found his niche as a defensive specialist, Smith still managed to sink 21 three pointers this season.

"Winning the championship was definitely a little emotional for me cause I've been playing since I was real young, like third grade, and this is what every player dreams of," said the 18-year-old Smith. "And it really meant a lot to us after losing last year [in the semifinal to Westmoreland]. We hadn't lost since then and we were all thinking about that."

Gerrion Owens

A 17-year-old senior guard, Gerrion Owens averaged 9.6 points per game and hit 28

three pointers this year.

Gerrion, along with Darius and junior Daveon Smith were "one of those three guys that had a huge role on defense this year," said Pinn. "Tyson's gonna guard the best guy, but those three are gonna take care of the rest and make the turnovers happen."

Owens plans to go to Old Dominion University in the fall and would love to continue his basketball career there.

"This felt so good, winning the championship in my last year," he said. "We worked hard for what we wanted and we got it."

Pinn will lose nine seniors including G. Owens, X. Owens, Ty. Henderson, Dar. Smith, Brannonn Wade, Antavion Thomas, Kelvin Davis, Sean Thomas and Jeremy Smith.

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2022-23 RED DEVILS ROSTER

No.	Name	Grade	Position	Height
1	Terrill Diggs	10	Guard	5'11"
2	Antavion Thomas	12	Guard	5'10"
3	Gerrion Owens	12	Guard	5'11"
4	Brannonn Wade	12	Forward	6'0"
5	Lamar Mattocks	11	Guard	6'1"
10	Tyson Henderson	12	Guard	5'10"
11	Darius Smith	12	Guard	5'7"
12	Daveon Smith	11	Guard	5'9"
21	Kelvin Davis	12	Center	6'5"
22	Sean Thomas	12	Guard	5'8"
23	Jeremy Smith	12	Guard	6'2"
24	Troy Henderson	10	Guard	5'8"
25	Jaquarrias Morris	11	Forward	5'8"
30	Tylil Walters	11	Guard	6'3"
35	X'Zaveion Owens	12	Forward	6'2"

Head coach: Dwayne Pinn

Assistant coaches: Donte Henderson, Troy Henderson, Eddie Hall, Jovante Smith and Mark Saunders

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LHS girls basketball coach Kim Crockett cheers on the boys team in the state final.

Luck of the Red Devils

March 9 is a lucky day for the Red Devils.

Lancaster has won all three of its state boys basketball championships on March 9, including last week's 62-40 win over George Wythe in the Class 1 final.

The Devils claimed their first boys basketball championship in school history on March 9, 2012, when LHS beat George Mason, 66-51, in the Class A, Division 2 championship.

Coach Tim Rice and the Devils won a second state crown on March 9, 2018, when Lancaster defeated Coeburn, 52-49, in the Group 1 tournament final.

All three of the Red Devils championship wins have come on the court at the VCU Siegel Center in Richmond.

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WRESTLING

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Hunter Sebra - 4th place (144 weight class)

GIRLS INDOOR TRACK

Ayla Saunders - 8th place (500 meter dash)
Ayla Saunders, Kiera Coleman, Allison Foulkes, Grace Lawrence - 7th place (4x400 meter relay)

BOYS INDOOR TRACK

Overall the team placed 3rd in the state



Trajan Waddy - 2nd place (500 meter run)
Matthew Kane - 4th place (1000 meter run)
Joshua Woolard - 8th place (1000 meter run)
Matthew Kane - 6th place (1600 meter run)
Jeremia Laws, Creston Saunders, Joshua Woolard, Trajan Waddy - 2nd place (4x400 meter relay)
Creston Saunders, Trajan Waddy, Joshua Woolard, Matthew Kane - 2nd place (4x800 meter relay)
Brannonn Wade - 7th place (high jump)
Matthew Kane - 8th place (pole vault)
Reece Rhodes - 2nd place (shot put)
Brady Vanlandingham - 8th place (shot put)