



HOME RUNS

Stories of your great moments in sports

The fans of Cherryville Post 100

A few years ago during the American Legion baseball season, you could not find any more loyal fans of Cherryville Post 100 than three residents of a local nursing center. This was the year that Cherryville won at the local and state levels and went on for the National Championship in Oklahoma.

These three diehard fans would take a portable radio out onto the front porch of the nursing center and listen to all of the games. It was hard to get them to come inside. They always begged to stay outside on the porch until all the games were over. Sometimes it would be after 10 or 11 p.m. before they were over. They were very loyal listeners, and they never liked to miss a game. Even though Cherryville lost the championship that year they gained some loyal fans.

That September, for one of the fan's birthdays, I invited the coach of Post 100 to come visit him at the nursing center. He not only visited, but he brought the fan a signed baseball and gave autographs to the other fans.

I'll never forget the excitement of these games for the residents and the terrific sportsmanship of Post 100 and Coach Reynolds.

Sue Dallman | Dallas | Rutherford EMC

Focused on a full count

It was the Junior League baseball championship game in my Little League. We were in the bottom of the sixth inning, and there were two outs with a man on first. We were down by two runs.

I came up and quickly got pitched three balls. One more and I could walk. Next thing I knew the pitcher threw two strikes, and I had a full count.

I stepped back and looked to my dad, who was an umpire. I came back in the box and focused. The pitcher threw a fast-ball, and I swung at the baseball as hard as I possibly could. The ball sailed up. I lost track of it in the clouds, so I just jogged. I looked again, and the ball had fallen at the fence. Everyone was screaming! I ran as fast as my little legs could carry me and reached home plate. Home run! My team later came back to win the game, 10-6. That day was unforgettable.

David Manley | Winston-Salem | EnergyUnited

My floor routine

My finest moment in sports occurred March 25, 2006—the day of the North Carolina Gymnastics State Championship. This was my first year as a competitive gymnast at North Raleigh Gymnastics. I like all my gymnastics events—floor, vault, bars, and balance beam—but my very favorite is my floor routine. I perform it to the theme of the movie “Finding Nemo.”

When the judges were ready for my routine, I walked to the middle of the floor and took my position. While I was waiting, I felt very excited about performing. When the music began, I performed a few dance moves and continued with my running split leap. I stepped into the corner and turned around to do my round-off back handspring. Throughout my routine I couldn't stop smiling, even when I was doing my back-walkover.

At the end of my routine, I could see that my teammates and coaches were cheering for me. During the award ceremony, they called my name to receive the first-place medal for my floor routine. I was so excited. It's great to be part of a team where we all cheer and encourage each other to do our very best.

Emerson Schulz | Wake Forest | Wake EMC



Thanks to everyone who sent in stories and pictures about your greatest sports moment. You can see more at our Web site. Next month we'll publish photos and stories of the best Halloween costumes. (Deadline was August 15.) For more themes and the rules of this series, see page 24.



Beating Ledford for the coach

In my senior year in high school my volleyball coach was pregnant, and our team knew that her baby was due sometime within our season. However, we didn't know it would occur on our biggest game of the season.

When I arrived at school the day of the big game I found out that our coach was having her baby, and she wasn't going to make it to Ledford. Anyone who plays a sport and loves the game knows that playing your biggest rival is the most important game of the year.

As we stepped on the court the adrenaline rush was overwhelming. During the pep talk, the last words said were, "Let's do this for Coach." From the time that first whistle blew, until the last hit landed on their side, our team didn't quit. We won the first match in extra points after battling back from an 11-point deficit, but we lost the second match. The third game we were down by 8, but we rallied back again and won.

This was it—the last match—just 25 points away from beating Ledford which Coach hadn't seen happen in the eight years she was at East Davidson. It was a rush, but it also felt like things were moving in slow motion, until the last point was ours. We had fought back two hard games, and we buried them in the fourth game winning 25–13.

The fans were screaming. We had done it. We went crazy, jumping into each others' arms and diving on the floor. This was an unbelievable moment. We grabbed a phone, ran outside and called Coach, who was lying in her hospital bed. We could hear her crying; she was so proud of us. Although she wasn't there to see it, her heart was there. We told her we did it for her. She said, "No, you did it for yourselves."

It was a game I'll never forget. We didn't make it to playoffs, but we beat Ledford. As a senior, that's all I asked for.

Stacey Watkins | Thomasville | EnergyUnited

Running for the cure

At age 50, after a fairly sedentary life, I decided to begin running. I joined the Carolina Godiva Track Club in March and started training for the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure held in June. The race is a 5K. I began my training by running one minute and walking one minute. It was all I could handle. I trailed along behind the group, panting like a tired old dog, but I kept running. With lots of practice, my stamina grew, but I still didn't think I'd be able to run the entire 5K race.

On race day, I joined hundreds of runners at the starting gate. I wore a card on my back with the names of two friends who were breast cancer survivors—I wanted to run in their honor. Forty-five minutes later, I crossed the finish line. I ran the entire race.

I sure didn't set any speed records, but I finished! It was my proudest moment. Little did I know that in a few months, breast cancer would claim my mother's life. Next time I run, it will be in her memory. One day, there'll be a cure.

Bonnie Earnhardt | Mebane | Piedmont EMC

I was picked last

I grew up playing baseball every spring and summer. In baseball, your ability is not always measured by your size and strength.

I entered the Air Force in March 1981. I arrived at Grand Forks AFB in North Dakota in July. My first week there I decided to play softball. Being 6-foot-1 and 143 pounds, I was a walking flagpole. No one really knew me, and they didn't think I could play. The friendly trash-talking began. When sides were chosen, I was picked last.

I ended up playing short field where I threw out a couple of runners at first base, which opened up a few eyes. It was at the plate where I ended the trash talking. I left my opponents and teammates with their mouths hung open and their heads shaking. My first three at bats were homeruns that bounced off the roof of a roller skating rink that was behind the left field fence.

After that game, I was immediately placed on my squadron's softball team for the remainder of the summer. Whenever my flight decided to play softball, I was the first player picked.

Kurt Rau | Lexington | EnergyUnited

A trophy for Contentnea

The year 1954 was one of the greatest years we had at Contentnea High School. That was when girls basketball teams played on half the court. Mr. Warren, our coach, had a lot of patience with us.

We started off that year winning the first game, then the second, and before long we were playing our last game without a loss before entering the tournament. We also won that one. Now if we could only win the tournament! The best I remember it was a very close game, but we won it.

After the boys game, the trophies were passed out. All the schools voted on the sportsmanship trophy to determine which school had shown the most sportsmanship.

When they called out Contentnea High School girls team for the sportsmanship trophy we went wild. We could not believe we had been all year undefeated and had also won the best trophy you could win.

The other day I went back to our old school. In the hallway, the trophy case still held our now tarnished trophies. I pointed it out to my husband and said, "Look there is the best trophy we ever won—the Sportsmanship Trophy."

Lucy Allen | Four Oaks | South River EMC





My obsession with George

I've been fishing ever since I was 7 years old, and I had never caught a largemouth bass over 4 pounds. That 4-pound bass came during the summer of 1983 from a farm pond in Lenoir County with my grandfather. I remember my grandfather holding the belt loops on my Levi's to keep me on the bank. That was a memory that had to last for over 21 years.

In early November 2004, I was fishing the banks of the Eno River when I hooked a huge largemouth bass. I had him for about 30 seconds until he jumped out of the water and threw my plastic worm back at me. I was sick to my stomach after seeing this fish run through the clear water with that beautiful black stripe. I knew that was the largest bass I had ever hooked or seen. Key word "had." I'd lost the "big 'un."

Two weeks later, I took my boys on a nature adventure through Eno River State Park. We carried three fishing rods with us just in case we ran across a few good fishing holes. About 300 yards down river, past where I'd lost this big bass, I hooked him again! I knew it was the same one. I saw that long black stripe, again! Not to mention hooking him on the same lure. My 5-year-old just about jumped out of his britches, and my 11-year-old stared in awe. I had to lie down on my stomach and reach face first down the bank to get hold of him. I yelled for my boys to jump on my feet and pull because I had begun to slide into the river along with the bass. I had a firm grip on him and knew that if I went in the water I was coming up with this fish!

After a brief struggle getting me and the bass up the bank, my boys and I celebrated. That's when we named him "George." He was 21 inches long and a little under 6 pounds. We decided to transplant George into our builder's farm pond where he'd be safe. We got him home, took pictures, and promptly placed him in the pond. However, George got away again. My wife had accidentally loaded the camera with a used roll of film. I had no visual proof of my catch!

I fished that pond looking for him at least 40 times after the release, but caught only the usual 14 to 16-inch bass. I really began to think that he didn't survive the transplant or last summer's drought.

On April 8, my luck changed. I hooked George for the third time and landed him for the second time. When he hit my top water lure, I knew it was him immediately. Our builder's wife saw me lift him up out of the water. "You got George again!" That's all I remember her yelling as she came a runnin' down the hill with a camera with good film in hand.

George is alive and well, about 23 inches long and about 7.5 pounds. He's going to be 10 pounds here soon, and I'm going to be there to weigh him in again! 📍

Tom Sutton | Hillsborough | Piedmont EMC

Send us your best Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

November 2006

My Favorite Photo

North Carolina people or places. If they are digital: 300 dpi and actual printing size.

Deadline: September 15

December 2006

Regifting Mistakes

I should not have given that away.

Deadline: October 15

January 2007

Diets and Me

What worked, or what didn't work?

Deadline: November 15

February 2007

The Way We Were

Pictures from the old days, and the stories that go with them.

Deadline: December 15

March 2007

Pests and Weeds

Tell us how you control them in your garden.

Deadline: January 15

April 2007

The Dumbest Souvenir I Ever Brought Home

Where did it come from and why? Send photos, if you have them.

Deadline: February 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616
Or by e-mail: finer@carolinacountry.com
Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com