

Calvert Hall athletics caps a spring to remember

At Calvert Hall College High School in Towson, athletes expect to play into late spring.

That was never more evident than this year, when historic runs by the lacrosse and baseball teams capped a memorable season for the Christian Brothers school's varsity programs.

Calvert Hall had more than 200 athletes participate in six varsity sports, and each performed well in the Maryland Interscholastic Athletic Association postseason. In addition to the top-ranked baseball and lacrosse teams, its golf, tennis and track and field squads all earned second-place finishes, and rugby lost in the semifinals.

It called to mind the winter enjoyed by Mount St. Joseph in 2016-17, when the Gaels ruled the MIAA A Conference in basketball, ice hockey, indoor track and field, and wrestling.

The building blocks are in place for continued success at Calvert Hall.

"No. 1, you have to win and we have a great winning tradition here," said Lou Eckerl, athletic director and baseball coach. "When you add the great facilities that we have, why wouldn't a kid want to come here and play? It's great facilities, great tradition and a chance to win a championship every year."

Calvert Hall's success is a mix of attracting top athletes and developing them. There are more in the pipeline, as the junior varsity teams in soccer, cross country, indoor track and outdoor track won MIAA titles. The freshman-sophomore soccer and lacrosse teams also brought home titles.

"We have a great tradition here," Eckerl said. "Everyone knows it's such a great school. We have everything a kid needs as far as a support system academically."

Christian Brother John Kane, president of Calvert Hall, noted that athletics are just

one part of extracurricular activities that, in the Lasallian tradition, aim to develop the whole person.

“For some it is robotics or music or stage, or speech, and for some it is in sports,” he said. “Students learn to be part of a team, the value of hard work and sacrifice for the good of all. They also learn to deal with setbacks and defeat as well as success.”

In this social media age, all that success has resonated.

“This has been a great spring for us and certainly has energized our community, including students, parents, faculty/staff and alumni,” Brother John said.

A breakdown of spring highlights follows.

Baseball

The Cardinals won their first MIAA title since 2013 with a 4-2 victory over Gilman May 20. Calvert Hall has been to the A conference playoffs in each of the 18 years Eckerl has served as the head coach. It was their 16th championship game appearance in that time, and eighth title.

“We’ve won half of the championship games we’ve been in,” Eckerl said. “No one is even close to that.”

Senior shortstop Jose Torres, a prospect in next month’s draft, was a main cog for the Cardinals (24-6). He has accepted a scholarship to play at North Carolina State, while first baseman/pitcher Pete Marchineck is headed to Towson University, catcher Parker Landwehr to Boston College and outfielder Garrett McIlhenney to Misericordia University.

Those seniors played a key role, as Eckerl called McIlhenney a “catalyst” after he collected three hits, two runs and three stolen bases in the championship game.

“The key with us is the guys finally bought in to playing as a team,” Eckerl said. “They have to root for each other. They have to sacrifice for each other. There are little things you need to do to win and they did them. The seniors were really hungry. They understood they had to play as a team. If they didn’t, it wasn’t going to

happen.”

Lacrosse

Calvert Hall became the first team in MIAA history to win three consecutive A Conference titles when it ran past St. Mary's 15-7 in the **title game May 17** at Towson University's Johnny Unitas Stadium.

It was the Cardinals' fifth MIAA title, also a record. Coach Bryan Kelly said this year's squad, which went 17-1 overall and unbeaten in MIAA play, continued to impress him each week.

“Our theme this year was gratitude and we just wanted to play with gratitude and thankfulness,” Kelly said. “I thought our guys showed up every game and they competed. And I've never been a part of a team that has been this – I don't mean it arrogantly – but we were dominant. I don't know if that will ever happen again.”

Senior Jack Sawyer typified the Cardinals' unselfishness with a goal and five assists in the title game. His 67 points, on 39 goals and 28 assists, were second on the team behind junior Daniel Kelly's 72 (42 and 30). Cole Herbert, a junior, had a team-high 39 assists, and freshman Truitt Sunderland collected 35 goals.

Headed to the University of Maryland, Sawyer is part of a senior class that will send the Mitchell twins, Connor and Grant, as well as defender Jacob Snyder, to Ohio State.

Golf

While the Cardinals fell to Loyola Blakefield in the A Conference team final at Caves Valley, junior Michael Crowley won the MIAA individual tournament in late April with rounds of 73-71 at Eagle's Nest Country Club.

He was part of a young lineup that included freshman Lorenzo Sanz, who went 9-1-2 and was the highest-scoring ninth-grader in coach Drew Forrester's seven years at Calvert Hall.

He cited offseason preparation for building the Cardinals' staying power.

“We put in six really good weeks of fitness training before the season,” Forrester said. “We played well down the stretch in several key matches. We didn’t always get off to great starts, but we played the final three or four holes well, as a team, in almost every match.”

Austin Steckler finished sixth in the individual tournament, and teamed with Lorenzo in the 3-4 pairing, where they went unbeaten. After playing in just two matches as a sophomore, junior Matt Cover played in 10 this season, winning the “Coach’s Distinction Award” for his excellent play and clutch putting in wins over Loyola and Archbishop Spalding.

After splitting with the Dons in the regular season, Calvert Hall was bested in the final.

“We knew going in that Loyola was going to be challenging for us,” Forrester said. “We beat them once during the regular season and they beat us once, but we had great respect for them.

“We did everything we set out to do at the start of the season except win that last match at Caves Valley. That’s the only goal that eluded us.”

Track and field

After claiming their first-ever indoor title, the Cardinals’ bid for their first outdoor crown in 20 years came up 16 points short against Gilman in the championship meet at Archbishop Spalding May 11.

Coach Peter Frein’s team got wins from freshman Thomas Smith in the 300 hurdles (39.18 seconds), Lehigh University-bound Amondo Lemmon in the 400 (50.29) and Luke Whitty in the discus (143-9). Smith and Whitty are among the football players on a roster where the assistant coaches include football coach coach Donald Davis.

Junior Owen Johnson, the MIAA cross country champion, was among those taking a back seat to Loyola Blakefield’s Camden Gilmore, but he had a solid distance triple, taking second in the 3,200 (9:20.67), third in the 1,600 (4:17.78) and fifth in the 800, 1:57.72.

Tennis

Russell Wilenborg, a junior, won the No. 1 singles in the MIAA individual tournament, and classmate Ian Hewes and Tyler Mast were finalists in the No. 2 and 3 flights, respectively, as were both of the Cardinals' doubles teams, No. 1 Jordan Aparece/Paulo Gonzal and No. 2 Finn Gaudreau/Josh Orozco.

"The goal is to always win the championship," said coach Joey Atas, of a team title won again by Gilman. "We have made it to the championship the last three years, and my guys are hungry for a win."

Paul McMullen contributed to this article.