

Big Train, Redbirds named co-champs

Team sets numerous records en route to third straight CRCBL title

With each minute that the rain beat down on Shirley Povich Field, Bethesda Big Train players grew more and more nervous. It was mid-afternoon on July 30, and Big Train was just a couple hours away from a date with the Baltimore Redbirds, with the 2018 Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League crown on the line. But Mother Nature had other plans, saturating the field to the point that even as the rain let up and the sun emerged close to game time, the playing surface was a lost cause.

League Commissioner Jason Woodward crowned the Big Train and Redbirds as 2018 co-champions - Big Train's third straight league title - and the teams posed for a picture in the grandstand behind home plate, gazing out at the water-laden Povich Field. But despite ending the season with a shared championship, Big Train put together a summer to remember.

With a whopping 34-6 regular season mark, the 2018 Big Train squad set five league records and broke or tied three additional franchise records. In the league books, the team set new marks in runs scored (326), runs batted in (273), walks drawn (238), on-base percentage (.413) and winning percentage (.850). The 34 wins broke the team record of 33 victories, set in 2011, and **Justin Wylie's** (Arizona) .417 batting average mark set a new single-season best for a Big Train hitter. Wylie also tied Jarrod Parks' team-best .526 on-base percentage mark set in 2009.

REGULAR SEASON

Coming off back-to-back league championships, Big Train stormed out of the gate in 2018, winning nine straight contests to kick off the campaign. They established dominance both offensively and on the mound right away, plating a whopping 58 runs in their first four contests, while surrendering just eight. On June 5, opening night in D.C., **Wylie** and **Fox Semones** (James Madison) each went yard, as four different Big Train players drove in two runs in an 11-2 victory. A night later, Big Train put on a show in the home opener, defeating the Gaithersburg Giants 20-1 on the wings of four-RBI nights from **Wylie** and **Carson Taylor** (Virginia Tech).

Wylie stayed hot throughout the first



Crowned co-champions due to inclement weather, the Big Train and Redbirds pose together with the championship trophy. Photo by Niamh Brennan

week, driving in runs in five of the first seven contests, and homering in four. On the mound, **Carlos Lomeli** (St. Mary's CA) turned in the first dominant pitching performance of the season for Bethesda, firing five shutout innings in Loudoun on June 7, allowing just two base runners while striking out five Riverdogs. When Big Train's bats finally cooled off, **Quinn Flanagan** (Arizona) stepped up, tossing four innings of one-hit ball in a 4-1 victory over Rockville on June 9.

Off to a 6-0 start, including a road win against the rival Redbirds, the Big Train traveled to Annandale High School on June 13 for a date with the FCA Braves. **Wylie** homered again - his fourth of the season - and **Jacob Westerman** (San Francisco) finished a double short of the cycle, but it was newcomer **Alec Burleson** (East Carolina) who stole the show. The two-way star's arrival had been delayed by East Carolina's NCAA Regional appearance, but in his first game with Big Train, he made up for lost time, hitting two home runs and a double while driving in five to lead Bethesda to a 10-7 victory.

This was just the start for **Burleson**, as over the next two weeks he put together a stretch that far overshadowed 2017 CRCBL MOP James Outman's dominant streak at the plate the summer before. Two nights later, he made his Big Train debut on the mound. The southpaw from ECU carved

up the D.C. Grays, tossing four perfect innings in relief while striking out three. **Tyler Villaroman's** (San Francisco) two-run homer proved the difference in the 2-1 win.

Saturday, June 16, Big Train traveled to Silver Spring to take on the Thunderbolts in their first doubleheader of the year. Bethesda took the first game, 6-0, thanks to three hit performances from **Taylor** and **John Glenn** (California Baptist) and a dominant performance on the hill by **Lomeli** and the bullpen. Despite **Burleson's** third long ball of the young season in the nightcap, the T-Bolts handed Big Train its first loss of the season, snapping a team-record 9-0 start.

The squad bounced back upon its return to Povich, however, winning the next two games, 14-5 over the Rockville Express and 14-0 over the Loudoun Riverdogs. **Burleson** stole the show in both contests, knocking two doubles and his fourth homer of the season - this one a grand slam - in the June 17 drubbing of the Express. **Udie Summerall** (Florida Atlantic) added a grand slam of his own in the contest. The next night, **Burleson** homered twice more and drove in another five runs, giving him 17 RBIs in less than a week's time. **Carter Bach** (Wake Forest) twirled four shutout innings while whiffing seven Riverdogs.

After a June 21 loss at Alexandria, Big Train won seven straight, including two big road victories and another home win over

2018 SEASON RECAP



the rival Redbirds. In a June 23 home game against the Braves, **Burleson** dazzled the Big Train faithful with a masterful performance on the mound and at the plate. He hit a homer - his seventh - and a double and tallied three RBIs, while tossing five shutout innings in his first start on the bump in Bethesda. A night later at Gaithersburg, he went deep again in another three-hit, three RBI performance, and he drove in four more in the following contest against the Thunderbolts.

On June 26, Big Train hosted the Redbirds to continue a contest that had been postponed due to rain in the third inning the week before. **Jacob Southern** (Jacksonville) hit a grand slam to put Bethesda up in the second inning, and **Chris Clarke** (Southern California) and **Lomeli** combined to toss eight innings, surrendering just two runs while whiffing nine.

The next night, **Semones** and **Villaroman** sparked an eighth inning rally as Big Train defeated the Grays in D.C., 10-5. **Bryan Diaz** (Nova Southeastern) contributed three hits and an RBI. Back at home on June 28, another late rally secured a victory over the Loudoun Riverdogs, 9-5. After trailing 5-2 early, back-to-back two-run doubles by **Taylor** and **Burleson** gave Big Train a lead in the sixth and the team never looked back, adding three more on a **Wylie** RBI single and a two-run homer by **Ben Martz** (Cal State Northridge).

Big Train extended its winning streak to seven with a 4-1 win over Alexandria on June 29. **Clarke** outdueled the Aces' Will Liverpool, allowing just one run over seven innings, striking out eight along the way. The Redbirds finally got the best of Big Train in Baltimore June 30 by a score of 4-1, after

Bethesda won both early-season matchups against its fabled foe.

Then, Big Train entered baseball extravaganza before the Fourth of July, playing five games in three days thanks to back-to-back doubleheaders. With the heat of the mid-Atlantic summer beating down on the field, Big Train swept a twin bill at the Rockville Express on July 1, exploding for 23 runs total. **Southern** launched his third homer of the season while **Summerall** tripled and drove in five as Bethesda took the first game, 15-10. **Brock Guffey** (Alabama) and **Scott Parker** (San Francisco) combined to shut out the Express as Big Train cruised to an 8-0 victory in the nightcap.

The next day, Big Train and the Baltimore Dodgers split a pair of seven-inning contests at Povich Field. **Westerman** and **Southern** both homered in game one, but a late three-run homer by the Dodgers gave them the early victory, 7-6. Not content with the loss in the opener, Big Train stormed out of the gates in the second contest, plating six in the first. **Bach** and **Elliot Zoellner** (Maryland) teamed up to strike out 11 Dodgers in an 11-1 Big Train win. Big Train hosted the Dodgers again a day later, using a seven-run eighth inning to win in dramatic fashion, 13-7. **Tyler Reis** (Waynesburg) hit a three-run homer, and **AJ Lee** (Maryland) collected three hits and four RBIs in the victory.

Big Train then rattled off consecutive 5-1 wins over the Braves and Riverdogs before going into the fourth and final matchup with the Redbirds on July 7 in Bethesda. Big Train alumni returned to Povich Field as part of the summer-long 20th Season Celebration, and were not disappointed, watching

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Tyler Villaroman (San Francisco) slides to touch home. Villaroman scored 33 of Big Train's league record 326 runs in 2018. Photo by Niamh Brennan

CAL RIPKEN LEAGUE AWARDS

Most Outstanding Player

Alec Burleson (1B/LHP, East Carolina)

League Championship Series

Co-Most Outstanding Player

Alec Burleson (1B/LHP, East Carolina)

League All-Star Game

Most Outstanding Player

Carson Taylor (3B, Virginia Tech)

CAL RIPKEN LEAGUE HONORS

First Team

Alec Burleson (1B/LHP, East Carolina)

Chris Clarke (RHP, Southern California)

Carlos Lomeli (RHP, St. Mary's of CA)

Ryan Metz (RHP, Virginia Tech)

Fox Semones (2B, James Madison)

Carson Taylor (3B, Virginia Tech)

Tyler Villaroman (OF, San Francisco)

Justin Wylie (OF, Arizona)

Second Team

Gavin Hinchliffe (RHP, Virginia Tech)

Honorable Mention

Jacob Southern (C, Jacksonville)

All-Star Team

Alec Burleson (1B/LHP, East Carolina)

Carter Bach (LHP, Wake Forest)

Hunter Brown (RHP, Wayne State)

Chris Clarke (RHP, Southern California)

John Glenn (1B, California Baptist)

Gavin Hinchliffe (RHP, Virginia Tech)

AJ Lee (SS, Maryland)

Carlos Lomeli (RHP, St. Mary's of CA)

Jacob McCarvel (RHP, California Baptist)

Fox Semones (2B, James Madison)

Jacob Southern (C, Jacksonville)

Carson Taylor (3B, Virginia Tech)

Tyler Villaroman (OF, San Francisco)

Justin Wylie (OF, Arizona)

Jacob Westerman (OF, San Francisco)

PERFECT GAME HONORS

Ripken League Top Prospects

#2 **Alec Burleson** (1B/LHP, East Carolina)

#10 **Fox Semones** (2B, James Madison)

#12 **Carlos Lomeli** (RHP, St. Mary's of CA)

#15 **Carter Bach** (LHP, Wake Forest)

First Team All-American

Alec Burleson (1B/LHP, East Carolina)

Second Team All-American

Justin Wylie (OF, Arizona)



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the 2018 squad topple the Redbirds, 12-10. Big Train held the lead for most of the game, but Baltimore surged ahead 10-6 with a five-run eighth. Big Train responded with six of their own in the bottom half. After **Glenn** tied the game with a two-run single, the go-ahead run came home on a walk to **Martz**, and **Hunter Brown** (Wayne State) closed it out with a 1-2-3 ninth. Big Train took the regular season series with the Redbirds, three games to one.

Wylie's seventh homer helped Big Train to a 10-5 win over the Aces in game one of a July 8 doubleheader, as **Anthony Piccolino** (James Madison) threw 2.2 scoreless innings out of the bullpen. That night, the bats couldn't back up **Lomeli's** nine-strikeout outing in a 2-1 game two loss.

In a season in which Big Train dominated every facet

of the game, few games had a flare for the dramatic at the end. But with Bethesda down 5-4 in the bottom of the ninth against the Braves on July 10, **Taylor** doubled to tie the game and came around the score on a wild pitch, as Big Train walked it off for the first, and only, time in 2018. The game that followed, July 12 against the Dodgers, lacked the nail-biting tension of the Braves game, as Big Train plated 12 runs in the sixth inning of an 18-0 shutout victory. **Burleson**, **Taylor** and **Southern** each drove in four. On the mound, **Burleson**, **Zoellner**, **Jarret Krzyzanowski** (Nova Southeastern) and **Benji Post** (San Francisco) combined to toss a two-hit shutout.

Bethesda's second offensive outburst in as many nights - a 14-3 win over Silver Spring-Takoma on July 13 - was followed by a 4-1 stretch to close the season, in which Big Train played in four games decided by two runs or fewer. A 4-3 ten-inning loss at Loudoun on July 15 marked the team's only extra-inning affair of the season, but Big Train responded in the following contest with a 5-4 win over D.C. at home. **Burleson** hit his tenth long ball of the season in the victory, joining **Hunter Renfroe** as the only players in team history to tally double-digit home runs in a single season.

Big Train finished out the regular season

with back-to-back road wins. At Gaithersburg on July 19, **Guffey** tossed six strong innings in a 7-1 victory. **Wylie** went 1-for-4 with his 13th double his final game of the regular season, cementing his .417 batting average as the best mark in team history.

In the season finale against the Braves, **Andrew Shebloski** (St. Mary's CA) doubled home a pair of runs in the top of the ninth to give Big Train a 6-4 victory, the regular season championship, and a new team record with 34 regular season victories.

LEAGUE SEMIFINALS

After clinching the regular season title, Big Train awaited the results of the first round of playoff games to see who they would host in the best-of-three semifinal series.

Then, the rain came. Torrential downpours postponed the start of the semifinals, with fields all around the D.C. area unplayable for virtually all of that Monday and Tuesday.

Finally, on Wednesday, July 25, the clouds parted as the Silver Spring-Takoma Thunderbolts traveled around the beltway to Povich Field to face the Big Train. **Burleson** took the mound for Bethesda and dazzled yet again, firing five innings of two-hit, one-run ball with six strikeouts. The lefty ace sparked an early rally for Big Train as well, blasting a one-out double to right field in the fourth and coming around to score the game's first tally on **Glenn's** RBI single. A subsequent **Westerman** double extended the Big Train lead to 2-0 before Silver Spring got a run back in the top of the fifth.

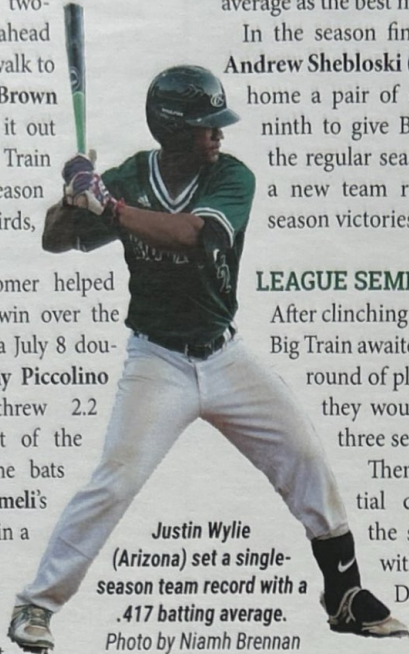
In the seventh, **Martz** reached on a two-out error to extend the inning, and **Semones**

made the Thunderbolts pay, launching a two-run homer over the left field fence to make it 4-1 Bethesda. Real thunder and lightning then rolled in, and a sudden deluge flooded the field in the eighth inning, suspending the game until the next day. When game one resumed Thursday, **Jacob McCarvel** (California Baptist) made quick work of the T-Bolts, setting them down in order on 11 pitches in the ninth to close out the victory.

After a low-scoring pitchers' duel, the second game was anything but that. Playing as the away team at Povich Field, Big Train jumped out to an early 4-1 lead after two innings. **Villaroman** and **Burleson** drove in runs in the first, and **Jacob Westerman** and **Semones** plated two more in the second. After a pair of scoreless frames, things quickly unraveled for **Bach** and Bethesda in the fifth.

The Wake Forest left-hander loaded the bases with one out, and manager **Sal Colangelo** went to the pen, lifting **Bach** in favor of **Jordan Poore** (Florida Atlantic). Two runs scored on a walk and an error, before Silver Spring's **Nicholas Atkinson** cranked a grand slam to give the T-Bolts a 7-4 advantage - their first lead of the series.

Big Train immediately began to chip away, as **Wylie's** first playoff home run cut the Thunderbolt lead to just one run in the sixth inning. **Villaroman's** eighth inning RBI single tied the game, and the next hitter, **Taylor**, plated two more on a single to left to put Bethesda back on top, 9-7. In the ninth, pairs of RBIs from **Villaroman** and **Taylor** and a bases-loaded walk to **Semones** added much-needed insurance. After surrendering a run in the bottom half, **Gavin Hinchliffe** (Virginia Tech) shut the door on the T-Bolts, 14-8, sending Big Train to the league championship for the tenth straight summer.



Justin Wylie
(Arizona) set a single-season team record with a .417 batting average.
Photo by Niamh Brennan

SAL COLANGELO'S 2018 BIG TRAIN MANAGER'S AWARDS

Most Outstanding Player

Alec Burleson (1B/LHP, East Carolina)

Most Outstanding Hitter

Justin Wylie (OF, Arizona)

Most Outstanding Pitcher

Carlos Lomeli (RHP, St. Mary's of CA)

Most Outstanding Reliever

Ryan Metz (RHP, Virginia Tech)

Most Outstanding Utilityman

Fox Semones (INF, James Madison)



Carlos Lomeli (St. Mary's of CA) pitched to a 1.76 ERA with 37 strikeouts in 30 regular-season innings. Photo by Niamh Brennan

2018 SEASON RECAP



Alec Burleson (East Carolina) won League Championship Series Co-Most Outstanding Player after hitting .400 with three doubles and three RBIs in four playoff games. Photo by Niamh Brennan

LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

The stage was set. Bethesda Big Train. Baltimore Redbirds. A tenth straight showdown for the Cal Ripken League title, set to start Friday, July 27 at Povich Field. But, just like earlier in the week, storms rolled through, pushing game one back to Saturday. Clarke, the Bethesda starter, blinked first, allowing a run in the top of the second, but Big Train responded, plating two in the second on a Martz single, and adding one run each in the third and fourth. Fortune swung back in the Redbirds' favor, as they scored in three straight innings to take a 6-4 lead in the seventh before Big Train tied it at 6 in the bottom half.

McCarvel took the hill in the eighth looking to stifle the Baltimore bats, but back-to-back homers again staked the Redbirds to a two-run lead. But, just as they had so many times throughout the summer, the Big Train hitters refused to give in. After loading the bases to start the bottom of the eighth, Villaroman and Taylor each plated runs on ground outs, tying the contest, 8-8. Now, with a man on third and two out, Burleson stepped to the plate. He lined the second pitch he saw into left-center, scoring Semones and putting Big Train on top for good. Hinchliffe set Baltimore down in order in the ninth, and Bethesda took a 1-0 lead in the final series.

The next day, at Calvert Hall College High School in Baltimore, the Bethesda bats were potent again, but could not come through in the clutch the way they had at Povich Field Saturday night. Every Big Train

starter reached base as the team tallied 11 total hits, but they only crossed home once, on Westerman's fourth-inning sacrifice fly. Lomeli fired six strong innings, his only blemish being a three-run second, but the Redbirds came out on top, 3-1, sending the series back to Bethesda for Monday night's decisive contest.

Monday's forecast was grim: a threat of rain all day, culminating with big thunderstorms in the late afternoon - right as the players and coaches were set to arrive at Povich Field. The deluge took place with both teams huddled underneath the picnic pavilion, their hopes of a decisive game three quickly washing away.

Big Train's Alec Burleson and the Redbirds' Carl Gindl were crowned League Championship Series Co-Most Outstanding Players, posing together with the trophy in the grandstand behind home plate. Burleson hit .400 with three doubles and three RBIs in four playoff games, including the game-winning RBI in game one of the LCS. Additionally, his five-inning, one-run start against Silver Spring in the semifinals got Big Train on the right track at the start of their playoff push.

Collegiate Summer Baseball listed Big Train as the No. 15 team in the country at the end of the summer, a ranking that undoubtedly would have been higher had the team won the championship outright. Nevertheless, the 2018 squad was one of the most successful in the team's 20-year history, and they have the franchise and league records to prove it.

BIG TRAIN RECORDS

.417 Batting Average
Justin Wylie (OE, Arizona)
Old Record: .414 (Adam Barry, 2011)

34 Team Wins
Old Record: 33 (2011 Big Train)

LEAGUE RECORDS

.850 Winning Percentage
Old Record: .833 (2008 Orioles)

.413 On-Base Percentage
Old Record: .409 (2012 Riverdogs)

326 Runs Scored
Old Record: 319 (2012 Big Train)

238 Walks Drawn
Old Record: 233 (2012 Big Train)

273 Runs Batted In
Old Record: 271 (2012 Big Train)

2018 CAL RIPKEN LEAGUE REGULAR SEASON STANDINGS

North Division	W-L	Pct.	GB
Baltimore Redbirds	31-9	.775	--
Gaithersburg Giants	20-20	.500	11
Silver Spring T-Bolts	18-22	.450	13
Rockville Express	18-22	.450	13
Baltimore Dodgers	12-27	.308	18.5
South Division	W-L	Pct.	GB
Bethesda Big Train	34-6	.850	--
D.C. Grays	19-20	.487	14.5
FCA Braves	18-21	.462	15.5
Alexandria Aces	17-22	.436	16.5
Loudoun Riverdogs	11-29	.275	23

2018 MONTGOMERY CUP STANDINGS

	W-L	Pct.	GB
Bethesda Big Train	11-1	.917	--
Gaithersburg Giants	7-7	.500	5
Silver Spring T-Bolts	6-8	.424	6
Rockville Express	3-11	.214	9