

2016 SEASON RECAP

TRAIN ROLLS TO FIFTH RIPKEN LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP



Traditionally, the Big Train has started off red hot. And so did the 2016 Big Train, but the opening winning streak lasted only three games. **Clayton Daniel** (Jacksonville State) knocked in five runs in a June 7 opening night 13-1 rout of the DC Grays at the Washington Nationals Youth Baseball Academy. **Justin Morris** (Maryland) followed suit the next night with four RBIs at Herndon High School with **John Murphy** (Maryland) getting an 8-6 win over the Braves and **Mack Meyer** (San Francisco) picking up a save. Uncharacteristically, after the three opening wins, the Big Train lost four of five, including three at Povich Field.

The Big Train got back on track winning ten of its next thirteen games. The winning ways began with a 2-1 win over the D.C. Grays at Povich Field on June 17 as **Logan Gilbert** (Stetson) struck out six and allowed just one run in six innings. A walk-off single by **Cody Brown** (Mississippi State) led to a 6-5 victory over the Alexandria Aces at Povich Field on June 25 as part of a six game late June win streak. The Big Train bats broke out in a Sunday June 26 doubleheader sweep over the Baltimore Dodgers at Povich Field, winning the first game 8-7 with a walk-off RBI single by **Garrett Kueber** (Moorpark) in the 15th inning and a 16-2 win in the nightcap. **Allen Smoot** (San Francisco) had four hits and five RBIs to lead the offensive outburst in game two. Four year Big Train player **Logan Farrar** (Virginia Commonwealth) had four RBIs and a home run in his 2016 debut to lead a 9-1 June 30 win over the River Dogs in Vienna.

Johnny York (St. Mary's CA) got the win, allowing one run over six innings. With the strong finish to end June with a record of 14-7, the Big Train had climbed back into first place in the Ripken League's South Division, one-and-one-half games ahead of the Alexandria Aces. The Baltimore Redbirds led the North Division with a record of 15-5.

The Big Train began July with three more victories, including two 1-0 nail-biters on the road. On July 1, the Big Train defeated the D.C. Grays in Washington. An unearned run in the first provided all the support starter **Logan Gilbert** and reliever **Sean Barry** (San Diego) needed. After an 8-3 come back win over the Thunderbolts the next night, Bethesda travelled to Frank Mann Field in Alexandria on July 3 to face the Aces. The game's only run came in the top of the fifth when **Vinny Esposito** (Sacramento State) doubled and scored on a single by **Michael Emodi** (Creighton) in the 1-0 win as **Drew Strotman** (St. Mary's CA) recorded his third win of the year going six innings before handing the ball over to **Stephen Schoch** (Appalachian State) who picked up a three inning save.

In a rough stretch from July 5 to 9, Bethesda lost 3 out of 5 despite playing all five games at Povich Field. With a record of 19-10, the Big Train pulled three games ahead in the South Division, but fell two games behind the Baltimore Redbirds for the regular season title. On July 10, the Big Train bats caught fire and never flamed out. From July 10 to 22, the Big Train averaged eight runs per game, scoring

89 runs in the last eleven games of the season and winning nine of those games. The hot streak started with an 8-5 win over the River Dogs at Povich Field. A two run home run in the first inning by **Allen Smoot** powered a 4-2 win over the Grays in Washington on July 11. Bethesda then clubbed Herndon 8-0 at Povich Field on July 14. On July 15, the Redbirds came to Povich Field with a two game lead in the race for the regular season title. By the time the night was over, the rivals were all even with just six games to play as Bethesda swept Baltimore 5-1 and 4-3. In the first game, a **Sean Labsan** (Florida Atlantic) solo home run in the second inning tied the game at one. With two outs in the bottom of the seventh, **Cody Brown** hit a two RBI single and **Justin Morris** followed it with a two RBI double. In the nightcap, Morris went 3 for 5 and scored the winning run in the bottom of the eleventh inning on a bases loaded wild

2016 Final Regular Season CRCBL Standings

NORTH DIVISION	W-L	%	GB
Baltimore Redbirds	29-11	.725	-
Silver Spring-Takoma T'bolts	20-20	.500	9
Gaithersburg Giants	19-21	.475	10
Rockville Express	17-23	.425	12
Baltimore Dodgers	15-25	.375	14
SOUTH DIVISION	W-L	%	GB
Bethesda Big Train	28-12	.700	-
Vienna River Dogs	23-17	.575	5
Alexandria Aces	18-22	.450	10
D.C. Grays	17-23	.425	11
Herndon Braves	14-26	.350	14

2016 Montgomery Cup

	W-L	%
Bethesda Big Train	8-4	.667
Rockville Express	7-7	.500
Gaithersburg Giants	6-8	.429
Silver Spring-Takoma Thunderbolts	6-8	.429

For the eighth straight season, the Bethesda Big Train and the Baltimore Redbirds faced off for the league championship. After winning the first three years, the Big Train dropped the next four in a row. Happily, 2016 was different as Bethesda won its fifth championship in the Ripken League's twelve year history.

pitch. After a ninth inning rally fell just short in a tough 8-7 loss to the Dodgers on July 17, the Big Train followed with another double header sweep on July 19 — this time over the Aces in Alexandria. On July 20, playing the Thunderbolts in Silver Spring, the Big Train scored a franchise high 27 runs to pull even in the regular season standings with the Redbirds with just two games remaining. The Big Train travelled to Towson on July 21 with the regular season title on the line. **Vinny Esposito's** two RBI double broke a scoreless tie in the third inning, but the Redbirds responded with three in the sixth. **Logan Farrar's** RBI single tied it in the top of the ninth. The Redbirds walked it off 4-3 in the bottom of the ninth with a leadoff double and a one out RBI single. On July 22, the Big Train beat the Giants 4-1, but the Redbirds defeated the Braves 8-3 to clinch the number one seed and take the regular season bragging rights Bethesda had won the previous three years.

Vinny Esposito was named the League's Most Outstanding Player. Esposito led the league in runs batted in with 38 during the regular season, one ahead of teammate **Allen Smoot**. Left-handed starting pitcher **Johnny York** led the league with a regular season earned run average of 1.36. **Clayton Daniel** led the team in hits with 55 and runs scored with 35. The 264 runs scored in the regular season were the fifth most in Ripken League history and the second highest since the league switched to a 40 game schedule in 2014. Big Train teams hold four of the top five spots on the league's record books: 2012 (319 runs in 41 games), 2009 (284 runs in 41 games), 2014 (280 runs in 40 games). Vienna fills out the list tied at third with 280 in 2012 (41 games).

LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

2016 was the second year of a new format for the League Championship Series with six of the league's ten teams qualifying for the playoffs. The top two teams in the regular season -- #1 seed Redbirds (29-11) and #2 seed Big Train (28-12) -- received byes and the next four teams in the standings played single games for the right to compete in the two semifinal series. The #6 seed Braves (18-22) defeated the #3 seed Aces (23-17) at Frank Mann Field in Alexandria to win the right to play the Redbirds, and the #5 seed Giants (19-21) defeated the #4 seed Thunderbolts (20-20) at Blair Stadium in Silver Spring to advance to the other semifinal series with Bethesda.

In game one of the semifinal series on July 25, Bethesda beat the Gaithersburg Giants 14-7 at Povich Field. The Big Train jumped out to a 5-0 lead after two innings and put the game out of reach with six runs in the fifth inning. **Logan Farrar** (Virginia Commonwealth), **Vinny Esposito** (Sacramento State), and **Cody Brown** (Mississippi State) homered for Bethesda. **Johnny York** (St. Mary's CA) was the winning pitcher striking out seven and allowing no earned runs in six innings. On July 26, the Big Train traveled to Criswell Automotive Field in Gaithersburg and swept the series with a 12-1 victory. Bethesda jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the first inning on a **Vinny Esposito** home run. **Michael Emodi** (Creighton) hit a solo home run in the fourth inning. **Drew Strotman** (St. Mary's CA) picked up the win allowing only one run on five hits in seven innings.

The Baltimore Redbirds swept the Herndon Braves winning 10-4 at home in Towson on July 25 and 7-4 on the road on July 26. This

set up a Redbirds-Big Train championship matchup for the eighth year in a row. The Big Train took the crown the first three years (2009-2011), but the Redbirds swept the next four league championships (2012-2015). Bethesda had or shared the league's best regular season record in 2013, 2014, and 2015 (shared with Redbirds), but the Redbirds won the league championship each of those

Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League Honors

League Most Outstanding Player

Vinny Esposito (1B, Sacramento State)

League Championship Series Most Outstanding Player

Vinny Esposito (1B, Sacramento State)

First Team All-League

Vinny Esposito (1B, Sacramento State)

Clayton Daniel (2B, Jacksonville State)

Cody Brown (OF, Mississippi State)

Sean Barry (RHP, San Diego)

Logan Gilbert (RHP, Stetson)

Johnny York (LHP, St. Mary's CA)

Second Team All-League

Allen Smoot (3B, San Francisco)

Logan Farrar (OF, Virginia Commonwealth)

Justin Morris (UTL, Maryland)

John Murphy (RHP, Maryland)

League South All-Star Team

Vinny Esposito (1B, Sacramento State)

Clayton Daniel (2B, Jacksonville State)

Allen Smoot (3B, San Francisco)

Justin Morris (C, Maryland)

Cody Brown (OF, Mississippi State)

Logan Farrar (OF, Virginia Commonwealth)

Sean Barry (RHP, San Diego)

Logan Gilbert (RHP, Stetson)

Mack Meyer (RHP, San Francisco)

Drew Strotman (RHP, St. Mary's CA)

Johnny York (LHP, St. Mary's CA)

Perfect Game

Ripken League 2016 Player of the Year

Vinny Esposito (1B, Sacramento State)

Perfect Game

Ripken League 2016 Top Prospects

#2 **Logan Gilbert** (RHP, Stetson)

Perfect Game

Ripken League 2016 Best Tools

Best power: **Vinny Esposito** (1B, Sacramento St.)

Best defender: **Austin Hale** (C, Stetson)

Baseball America

Ripken League 2016 Top Prospects

#4 **Logan Gilbert** (RHP, Stetson)

Sal Colangelo's 2016 Big Train Manager's Awards

Big Train Most Valuable Player

Vinny Esposito (1B, Sacramento State)

Big Train Most Outstanding Hitter

Clayton Daniel (2B, Jacksonville State)

Big Train Most Outstanding Pitcher

Logan Gilbert (RHP, Stetson)

Big Train Most Outstanding Relief Pitcher

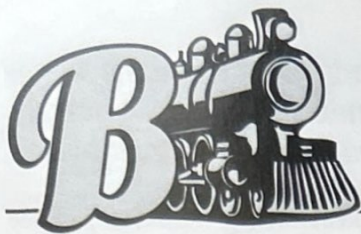
Mack Meyer (RHP, San Francisco)

Big Train Hustle Award

Cody Brown (OF, Mississippi State)



*Vinny Esposito
2016 Big Train MVP*



2016 SEASON RECAP



Clayton Daniel (Jacksonville State) slides ahead ahead of the tag. Big Train went on to win this game against the Vienna River Dogs.

years. Would the curse of winning the regular season title continue in 2016 or would the Redbirds' lock on the championship crown be extended another year?

The League Championship Series got off to a sizzling start on July 29 at Povich Field as the Redbirds plated two runs in the top of the first and the Big Train responded with five runs. **Vinny Esposito** started the fireworks with a two RBI triple. Starting pitcher **Logan Gilbert** (Stetson) settled in and picked up the win completing six innings and leaving with a 5-3 Big Train lead. **Sean Barry** (San Diego) got the save pitching three scoreless innings as Bethesda added an insurance run in the seventh inning for a 6-3 win.

As the Redbirds had the best record during the regular season, games two and three of the best of three championship series were scheduled to be played at Carlo Crispino Stadium at Calvert Hall High School in Towson where the Redbirds had defeated the Big Train twice by a single run each time — 5-4 on June 10 and 4-3 on July 21. The Redbirds took a 3-0 lead in the third inning, but the Big Train scored five runs in the top of the fourth powered by a double by **Logan Farrar** and a triple by **Clayton Daniel** (Jacksonville State). The Redbirds responded with three of their own in the sixth. Bethesda knotted the score at six in the top of the seventh on another **Vinny Esposito** RBI. The Redbirds took the lead for good with a

run in the eighth. The 7-6 Redbirds win — its third one run victory at home in three 2016 games — set up a winner-take-all final game.

After retiring the Big Train in order in the top of the first inning, the Redbirds jumped in front with a run in the bottom of the first. Bethesda scored four runs in the fourth inning as **Clayton Daniel** was hit by a pitch, **Vinny Esposito** doubled, and **Cody Brown** hit a two RBI single. **Michael Emodi** singled and **Garrett Kueber** (Moorpark) walked to load the bases with two outs. **Austin Hale's** (Stetson) double scored Brown and Emodi for a 4-1 lead. The Redbirds responded with a run in the fifth inning. Big Train starting pitcher **Johnny York** completed six innings and left with a 4-2 lead. The Redbirds leadoff hitter in the eighth homered to close the score to 4-3. After a leadoff single, the Redbirds had the winning run at the plate for three at bats in the bottom of the ninth. **Drew Strotman** retired the next three

batters, the last two by strikeouts, to get the save and bring the championship crown back to Bethesda after a four year drought. York got the win, his second of the playoffs. Five of the seven Big Train-Redbirds contests in 2016 were decided by a single run.

Vinny Esposito was named the LCS Most Outstanding Player after hitting .550 with two home runs, seven RBIs, and seven runs scored in the five playoff games. With a co-championship in the league's inaugural 2005 season, the Big Train became the first team to win five Ripken League championships. The Redbirds have four. The Silver Spring-Takoma Thunderbolts shared the inaugural crown with Bethesda in 2005 and won it outright in 2006. The Rockville Express won in 2007, and Youssef's Orioles won in 2008.

Big Train Manager Sal Colangelo summed up the championship season this way: "The 2016 season started slowly as players trickled in after finishing their college seasons. We fought hard to win our division and make the playoffs for the twelfth year in a row. The Big Train bats got hot the last two weeks of the season scoring an average of eight runs per game. Quality pitching and the hot bats continued in the playoffs to help the Train win our fifth Ripken League Championship in twelve years." *Collegiate Summer Baseball* ranked the Big Train number 14 in the nation for 2016.



Cody Brown (Mississippi State) prepares for the pitch as Justin Morris (Maryland) edges off first base. Brown hit a two-run homer on this pitch.