



# 2021 SEASON RECAP



**In the 2021, the Big Train amassed an offensive record not previously seen. Combine that with an excellent pitching staff and it was no surprise the team marched to its fifth consecutive League championship.**

The team's .306 batting average is the highest in team history. The team also set five league records for team offensive performance, including On Base Percentage (.448), Slugging Percentage (.467), OPS (.915), Runs Scored (343), and Runs Per Game (9.80). Yes, on average they scored nearly ten runs per game! What a fun team to watch!

The leader in helping to get to these numbers was Kemp Alderman (Mississippi). Alderman drove in 47 runs, the second highest total in team history trailing only current Milwaukee Brewer Hunter Renfroe's (Mississippi State) 53 RBI in 2012. But Alderman accomplished his total in only 25 games. On a per game basis, Alderman set a new team record with 1.88 RBI per game compared to Renfroe's 1.47 per game. Alderman was paired with Matt Thomas (William & Mary), the league's offensive player of the year, who hit .350, scored 34 runs, and drove in 32 runs in 31 games.

## Regular Season

After the Covid-induced hiatus of the 2020 summer, the Big Train eagerly jumped into the 2021 season with its first game against the Gaithersburg Giants on June 7. Its fourth batter, Rocco Peppi (Long Beach State), became the 500<sup>th</sup> player to wear the Big Train uniform in a league game and Bethesda dominated the game, 12-6, with Austin Gauthier (Hofstra), Nolan Schanuel (Florida Atlantic), and Matt Thomas each contributing two RBI. Ryan Metz (Virginia Tech) hurled 2.1 innings of shutout ball to close out the contest.

Big Train would continue winning through its home opener on

June 9. It was another lopsided victory, this time 12-5 over the South County Braves. Peppi drove in three with a homer and a double. Kyle Velazquez (St. Mary's CA) hit two doubles and stole two bases. Matt Howat (William & Mary) earned the win by pitching four innings without yielding any earned runs. Following a loss to the Alexandria Aces on June 12, the Big Train took off on a six-game winning streak. Over that period, they outscored their opponents, 73-18. On June 13, Bethesda whipped the Gaithersburg Giants, 14-5, as Matt Thomas went 3/4 with a walk. On June 15, the Big Train crushed the South County Braves, 15-3, with a huge contribution from Kemp Alderman, who drove in five runs. Showing no mercy, Bethesda was back at it against the Braves the next day and thrashed them 16-0. Darius Foster (San Francisco) had three hits and stole four bases. Kemp Alderman drove in another four runs. Matt Bedford (Notre Dame) started the game and earned the win with four innings of shutout ball for the seven-inning contest. On June 16, the Big Train bested the Thunderbolts 10-3 and 12-3 in a doubleheader. Starter Luke Baker (Jacksonville) hurled an impressive four innings, yielding only one run, to keep the first game in hand until the bats picked up. The second game was tied, 3-3, going into the ninth until





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Darius Foster led off and manufactured the winning run. He singled, stole second, and scored on a single by the next batter. The inning exploded, and the Big Train scored nine runs, but Foster's was the lead run that held up through the end of the game. On June 17, Big Train edged the D.C. Grays, 6-4, in the only close contest during the streak. Bethesda dominated most of the game, leading 5-0 heading into the eighth. Noah Carbajal (Long Beach State) started the game and earned the win. Ryan Lynch (Notre Dame) hurled a shutout inning in relief. Grant Knipp (Alabama) had one of his best days, going 2/3 and Matt Thomas homered. The Grays scored four runs in the last two innings, but Rocco Peppi homered to tally one more run for Big Train and Jesse Barron (San Francisco) held on to earn the save.

The Big Train lost to the Gaithersburg Giants on June 18, 6-4, and then began another six-game winning streak. On June 19, they beat the Alexandria Aces in a doubleheader, 13-1 and 8-4. In the first game, Ryley Johnson (East Carolina) led off and went 3/4. Luke Baker pitched one-hit, one-run ball for four innings, and Cooper Rons (UC Santa Barbara) threw the other three innings yielding one hit and no runs. In the second game, Trevor Doyle (Sacramento State) went 2/3 and scored two runs. Grayson Hitt (Alabama) earned the win with four shutout innings. On June 20, Big Train bats were on display again as the team beat the Thunderbolts, 18-5. It was another five-RBI day for Alderman. Austin Gauthier and Keith Torres (Sacramento State) had three RBI apiece. Jack Cone (William & Mary) hit his seventh double of the year. On June 23, the Big Train crunched the D.C. Grays, 13-1. Rocco Peppi starred in the game with two homers and five RBI. Jake Eddington (Alabama) started the game and allowed only one run in three innings. Zach Locke (Long Beach State) was credited with the win with two shutout innings. Everett Catlett (Georgetown) and Josh Grosz (East Carolina) took the mound for short, but effective, stints. On

June 24, Big Train bested the Gaithersburg Giants, 7-4. Starter Brock Guffey (Alabama) hurled an impressive four innings, giving up only a single hit and no runs. On June 25, Bethesda was the winner over the Alexandria Aces, 5-2. The pitching quartet of Grayson Hitt, Noah Carbajal, Matt Howat, and Jesse Barron kept the Aces at bay.

After a loss to the Thunderbolts on June 26, the Big Train won four of the next five heading into the Fourth of July break. On June 27, they edged the Grays, 9-7, as Brady Gumpf (Notre Dame) had a big day, going 4/4. On June 29, Danny Neri (Notre Dame) scored the winning run in the bottom of the 10<sup>th</sup> on a Jack Cone sacrifice fly to give Big Train a 7-6 win over the Braves. The next day, Bethesda beat the Braves again, 17-2, as Kemp Alderman drove in six, and the trio of Brock Guffey, Jack Braley (Christopher Newport) and Josh Grosz sparkled on the mound. The 14 Big Train runs in the 8<sup>th</sup> inning constituted a team record for runs in one inning. The Giants beat the Big Train, 5-1, on July 2, but the Big Train rebounded to beat the Thunderbolts, 4-2, the next day.

The Big Train started the second half of the season slowly, splitting the first two games. They beat the Grays, 6-3, on July 6, and lost to the Braves, 14-7, the next day. Then they took off, winning six of their next seven games -- all by wide margins. On July 8, they beat the Giants, 9-1. Grant Knipp (Alabama) contributed a double and two RBI.

Chris Bookhultz (Maryland) closed out the ninth with a hitless and scoreless outing. On July 10, the Big Train whipped the Grays in both ends of a doubleheader, 16-3 and 10-1. In the first game, Matt Thomas drove in seven, and Kyle Robinson (Texas Tech) registered the win. In the nightcap, Ryley Johnson and Keith Torres each drove in three runs, and Matt Bedford threw five masterful innings of no-hit ball. The seven-inning game was completed as a no-hitter, with Bookhultz and Locke hurling the final two innings. On July 11, Big Train trounced the Braves, 15-3. Austin

## 2021 Final Regular Season CRCBL Standings

	W-L	%	GB
Bethesda Big Train	27-8	.771	-
Alexandria Aces	20-15	.571	7
Gaithersburg Giants	19-17	.528	8.5
SS-Takoma T'Bolts	16-20	.444	11.5
South County Braves	14-22	.389	13.5
D.C. Grays	11-25	.306	16.5

## Sal Colangelo's 2021 Big Train Manager's Awards



### Most Valuable Player

Matt Thomas (William & Mary)

### Most Outstanding Hitter

Rocco Peppi (Long Beach State)

### Most Outstanding Starting Pitcher

Grayson Hitt (Alabama)

### Most Outstanding Relief Pitcher

Ryan Metz (Virginia Tech)

### Most Outstanding Defender

Keith Torres (Sacramento State)



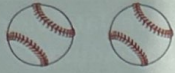
## CRCBL Offensive Player of the Year

**Matt Thomas**



Congratulations to outfielder Matt Thomas of the Bethesda Big Train (College of William & Mary) for being named Offensive Player of Year. Matt batted .350 with 7 home runs, 4 doubles, 32 RBI's, 7 stolen bases and scored 34 runs. Matt helped lead the Big Train to the regular season and LCS title.





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Gauthier had a perfect day at the plate, hitting a homer and a triple, and taking three walks, while scoring four runs. Grant Knipp went 4/5 and drove in three runs. The Thunderbolts beat Bethesda on July 12, and then the Big Train turned around and whipped the Aces, 14-2, the next day. Continuing to dominate the Aces, the Big Train beat them, 17-3, on July 14. Keith Torres went 4/4 in this game and drove in four. On July 15, Big Train lost to the Giants in a squeaker, 3-2. On July 20, Big Train bounced back and walloped the Thunderbolts, 14-1. Nolan Schanuel was the big hitter in that game, going 3/4 with four RBI. The regular season ended with a doubleheader split with the Grays on July 21. The Grays took the first game, 7-4. Big Train came from behind in the seventh and final inning of the second game with six runs to edge the Grays, 9-8. A Kemp Alderman homer finished it and set off the celebration as Big Train headed into the playoffs as the regular season champs.

## League Semifinals

As the #1 seed in the playoffs, Bethesda sat for a bye in the first round. The last place D.C. Grays beat the Gaithersburg Giants in the first round to earn the right to face the Big Train in the semis. It proved to be a lopsided series. In Game One, Bethesda was already ahead 4-0 by the end of the first inning, partly propelled by a two-run homer by Nolan Schanuel. At the end of two, it was 6-0, and with the use of his speedy base running, Darius Foster had already scored his second run. In the third, Foster hit a 3-run homer, and that inning ended with Big Train ahead 10-1. Continuing the bombardment, the Big Train scored another three runs in the fourth inning, two of which came on a single by Danny Neri. Grayson Hitt cruised to the win, with Cooper Rons and Matt Howat finishing up for a 14-2 romp. In Game Two, the Big Train got off to a first inning lead again, but it was not as pronounced. Ryley Johnson and Matt Thomas got on base and after a double steal of second and third, Grant Knipp drove them in with a single to give his team a 2-0 lead. Nolan Schanuel led off the second with a single, and advanced around the bases to score on a single, a walk, and a double play. The Grays answered with a run in the bottom of the second to make the score 3-1. Big Train opened things up in the fourth inning with five runs. The big hit was a three-run triple by Ryley Johnson. Big Train scored two in the top of the fifth, matched by two by the Grays in the bottom of the inning. The Grays scored their fourth and final run in the seventh. Big Train notched another pair of runs in the eighth. They closed



out the game with two more in the ninth. Ryley Johnson singled to score Colin Tuft (Virginia) and Christian Martin (Virginia Tech) singled to score Brady Gumpf. Matt Bedford hurled five innings while yielding only one run. The final score was 14-4.

## League Championship Series

The Alexandria Aces entered the playoffs as the #2 seed. In the semifinals, they topped the Thunderbolts, 4-1 and 10-0. It was clear that the league's top two teams were meeting for the championship.

Game One was held at Povich Field on July 29. Jake Eddington was sent to the mound for the Big Train and was on his game from the start. He would throw four innings and yield only one hit and no runs. In the meantime, the offense went to work. In the first inning, Darius Foster singled, stole a couple of bases, and scored on a wild pitch. Grant Knipp walked, advanced to second on a wild pitch, and scored on a single. In the second, Rocco Peppi hit a home run to extend the lead to 3-0. Nolan Schanuel led off the fourth with a single and scored on a Keith Torres double. Luke Baker took over on the mound in the fifth and would toss three innings to earn the win. In the bottom of the fifth, Matt Thomas reached on a single, advanced on an error, and scored an unearned run on a single by Grant Knipp. In the sixth, Keith Torres scored a run after slamming a double. The final run for Big Train came in the eighth as Trevor Doyle homered. At this point, the score was 7-0. The Aces managed to tally two runs in the ninth, but they fell short, and the Big Train took Game One 7-2.

The next day, Game Two was played at Frank Mann Field in Alexandria. Again, Manager Sal Colangelo chose a pitcher ready to come through for the team. This time it was Josh Grosz. Josh pitched six innings of shutout ball, striking out nine. It took a little longer for the Big Train bats to get going in this game. At the end of one, the game was scoreless, but the Aces came close to scoring. Behind two hits and a Big Train error, they had runners on first and second. Then came a single through the infield. Jack Cone fielded it and pegged it to catcher Danny Neri, who tagged the Aces runner at home plate to end the inning and squelch the rally. In the second, Kemp Alderman singled, Nolan Schanuel struck out, Rocco Peppi singled, moving Alderman to second. Trevor Doyle singled to right field and while Alderman was out at the plate, Peppi kept coming and scored to give the Big Train the lead. In the third inning, Darius Foster got aboard on an error and moved to third base on a passed ball and a wild pitch and eventually scored on a sacrifice fly. Jack Cone walked and scored on a two-run homer by Kemp Alderman. Those three runs gave Big Train a 4-0 lead, which the pitching staff would hold up. Ryan Daugherty (St. Mary's CA) pitched the final three innings for Big Train and blanked the Grays with no hits. Once again, for the fifth consecutive time, the Big Train were the champions of the Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League.