



Denver Brown photo

The Nicholas County seniors: Josh Earlywine, Timmy Crump and Davey Anderson. With Earlywine at third, Anderson playing second and Crump swinging the bat as



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Nicholas County senior Josh Earlywine and assistant coach Travis Sims work on the infield Tuesday afternoon before batting practice. The Jackets have rolled through the Region and the Sectionals to gain a spot in high school baseball's Final Four, the State Tournament.

**Bluejackets From A-1**

Seth Saunders' solo blast with one out in the bottom of the ninth, the community's been real the game 6-5 and grabbed their ticket to the State Tournament.

"They're just having fun," Anderson said of his players. "The experience down in the Sectionals, and then to make it to State — these were our goals to start the season."

"Once we did it, I just said to them, 'let's go on and win this thing,'" Anderson said.

With Anderson's wealth of coaching knowledge (he's in his 32nd year skipping the Bluejackets), a dugout loaded with talent and a community squarely behind its team, Nicholas County is two wins away from every team's dream.

The Bluejacket fans were several hundred strong for the games in the Sectional and the school was sent 500 tickets for the State Tournament — they've been sold out for days!

"It makes you feel real good and proud," said senior designated hitter Timmy Crump of the Bluejackets' baseball bonanza. "Like you're

actually accomplishing something — if we win it or not, the community's been real supportive and proud of us."

Anderson said there won't be any surprises in tonight's matchup with Henderson, the Blue Jackets will rely on their regular lineup and the strengths that have brought them this far.

Junior ace and 13-game winner Shane Smith will start from the mound and junior hurler Josh Fryman (10-3) will be at first, ready for relief work. Seniors Davey Anderson (second base) and Josh Earlywine (third) and junior shortstop Jay Grant will anchor the defense for the Jackets. Saunders will be behind the plate with the mask and D.J. Fincher, Eric Earlywine and Dustin Hill will be shagging fly balls in the outfield. Crump will go to the plate for Smith as DH.

"We're just having fun," Josh Earlywine said in between swings at Tuesday's batting practice. "We'll just keep having fun and maybe we'll keep winning."

"We've been hitting real

good and we've got real good pitching," the senior third baseman said. "I mean reeeaaaalllll good pitching!"

The older Earlywine leads the club with 52 runs scored and a .413 batting average. Anderson has crossed the plate 42 times. And Fryman has collected a team-best 54 RBI while batting .392, he also leads the Jackets with 16 home runs.

As a team, Nicholas County has belted a school-record 45 homers. Smith's dozen-plus wins from the mound is a Nicholas County best. And Fryman's 15 four-baggers bests assistant coach, and former Bluejacket, Travis Sims' count of 14.

"We're not going to do anything different," Coach Anderson said watching Sims feed balls into the pitching machine. "We'll put our best nine on the field and hope it's enough."

"In baseball, if you've got good pitching and defense you can pretty much hang in there," Anderson said. "And we hit the ball real well, too."

coach's son, said there's not much pressure on the boys in blue but that just getting to the State Tournament is not enough — they want two more wins and the best-in-the-state trophy to cap their remarkable run in the 2000 season.

"The pressure's pretty much off," the younger Anderson said. "The only pressure was to win the Region — now anything else is the icing on the cake."

But is just the experience enough for the scrap books and highlight film?

"Yeah, well, no," the senior second baseman feased up. "We've come this far and we're not satisfied unless we win it."

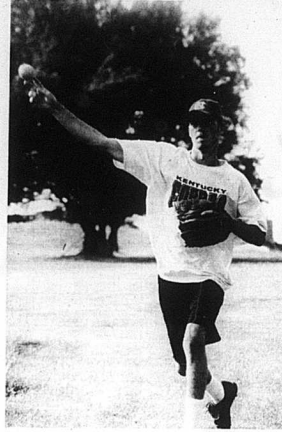
So as you drive through the streets of Carlisle, stop and ask someone about the local ball team — just don't try for that information any time this week, you may only find blue and white ribbons and signs honoring the club. Everyone else is probably in Lexington, waiting for the Bluejackets' ball diamond destiny.

**Good Luck Bat Jackets!!!**

**CONGRATULATIONS BLUEJACKETS!**



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Junior ace Shane Smith displays his 13-win form at practice Tuesday. With a dozen-plus-one wins, and no losses, this season, Smith will start from the mound Thursday night against Henderson County in the State Tournament.



Denver Brown photo

Senior second baseman Davey Anderson makes contact with the pitching machine at practice Tuesday at Nicholas County High School. The Bluejackets will rely on hot pitching and big sticks to carry them through this weekend's State Tournament in Lexington.



Denver Brown photo

Nicholas County's D.J. Fincher in the on-deck circle at the high school Tuesday. The Bluejackets are gunning for this weekend's State Championship on the ball diamond in Lexington.

**Good Luck Nicholas County Blue Jackets!**

**Beat Henderson County tonight in Final Four!**



**Good Luck Bat Jackets!!!**

**Great Job BlueJackets!**

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Future Bluejacket Wesley Hopkins, 7, of Carlisle watches the high school club take swings at batting practice Tuesday afternoon at Nicholas County High School. Wesley is the son of Robert and Charlotte Hopkins and is a member of the Little League Dodgers. The Bluejackets are hometown heroes (win or lose) for their remarkable run through the 2000 season and for advancing to the State Tournament.

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**Congratulations BLUEJACKETS!**

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**Great Job Bluejackets!**

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**THE SEASON HAS BEEN A HIT!**

**KEEP ON HITTING! GOOD LUCK, BATJACKETS!!**

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