

Summerlin Amongst Hall Of Fame Inductees

Lincoln Herald Staff

MOUNT HOLLY––Jamie Summerlin is among this year's inductees into the Mount Holly Sports Hall of Fame.

Summerlin enjoyed stand-out status as a catcher for East Gaston High School's baseball team, 1996-98, and he followed that with a four-year career for the baseball team at Belmont Abbey College, 1999-2003. And he hasn't strayed too far from baseball in the years since. He has served as a baseball coach for several different age groups, from youth and high school to American Legion ball, and his childhood baseball dreams have transitioned it into many successful years of sports-related greatness.

"When I was told (about the hall of fame), it was kind of a surprise," Summerlin said recently. "I don't really feel worthy, to be honest. I'm just honored and humbled to be chosen. I have a close, personal friend who was inducted a few years ago (basketball player Stewart Hare, in 2022), so it's an honor to be in there with him. And my wife's grandfather (the late bandleader and trombonist, Bob Black) was inducted in the first class."

Summerlin's introduction to organized baseball was a Stanley 10-and-under Dixie Youth team that, when he was 10 years old, finished as the state runner-up.

"We were one of the first teams in Stanley to accomplish that," he said.

He alternated playing first and third base. In seventh grade, he switched to catcher.

“I’d never caught before,” he recalled. “And the coach told the team, ‘Hey, we need a catcher,’ and I’d never caught. But I thought it would be a way to get on the field. It was rough for a while, getting used to it, and it wasn’t a whole lot of fun getting beat around. But it was a way to be on the field. Slowly but surely, by ninth grade, I had it down.”

Summerlin started as catcher for three years at Stanley Junior High and then four years at East Gaston High, where he was senior captain when EGHS was the MEGA-Seven Four-A co-champion in 1998.

“Looking back,” he said, “one thing I laugh about is how times have changed. Back then, we would always take the school’s 15-passenger van to away games. And I was considered one of the more responsible guys, so I would drive one of the vans, with all the players in it. It just amazes me. That would never happen today. I can’t believe I was a senior on the team and responsible for 15 other lives.”

High school summers meant American Legion ball, and Summerlin played for the Gaston Braves. He was recruited by Belmont Abbey and a handful of smaller schools. But he chose to stay local and go to the Abbey, where he earned a degree in finance.

“Fun fact: it was an interesting transition having grown up as a Southern Baptist kid in a Southern Baptist church, and here I go off to a Catholic college with a monastery,” he said. “It opened up my eyes to a lot of new things.”

Summerlin would go on to spend some of his college summer days in Fort Mill, S.C., as a warm-up catcher with the Charlotte Knights.

“It was a wonderful experience, because I got to go on the field and hang out with the players, kind of live the life, and warm up some of the guys,” he said. “It put money in my pocket but also helped me develop my skills, because I was catching pitchers who were really, really good.”

He has also worked with Gaston Christian School’s team. For the last three years, he been an assistant coach to Devon Lowery, formerly with the Kansas City Royals.

Summerlin works for a financial services firm that specializes in retirement plans and finances for ministry-based organizations. It’s part of the Southern Baptist Convention.

He and his wife, the former Anna Black, have three children: Cooper, 17, Sadie, 13, and Maggie May, 7. Like his dad, Cooper Summerlin also plays baseball. A veteran of the under-10 league, also just like his father, he’s a left-handed pitcher/ outfielder who is being looked at by a few colleges.

“I did some Stanley Parks and Rec coaching,” Mr. Summerlin noted, “and it kind of came full circle. When I was 10, we lost in the championship game. When my son was 10, he played for the same recreation department, and I was head coach. And we won the state championship! It was a neat little moment.”