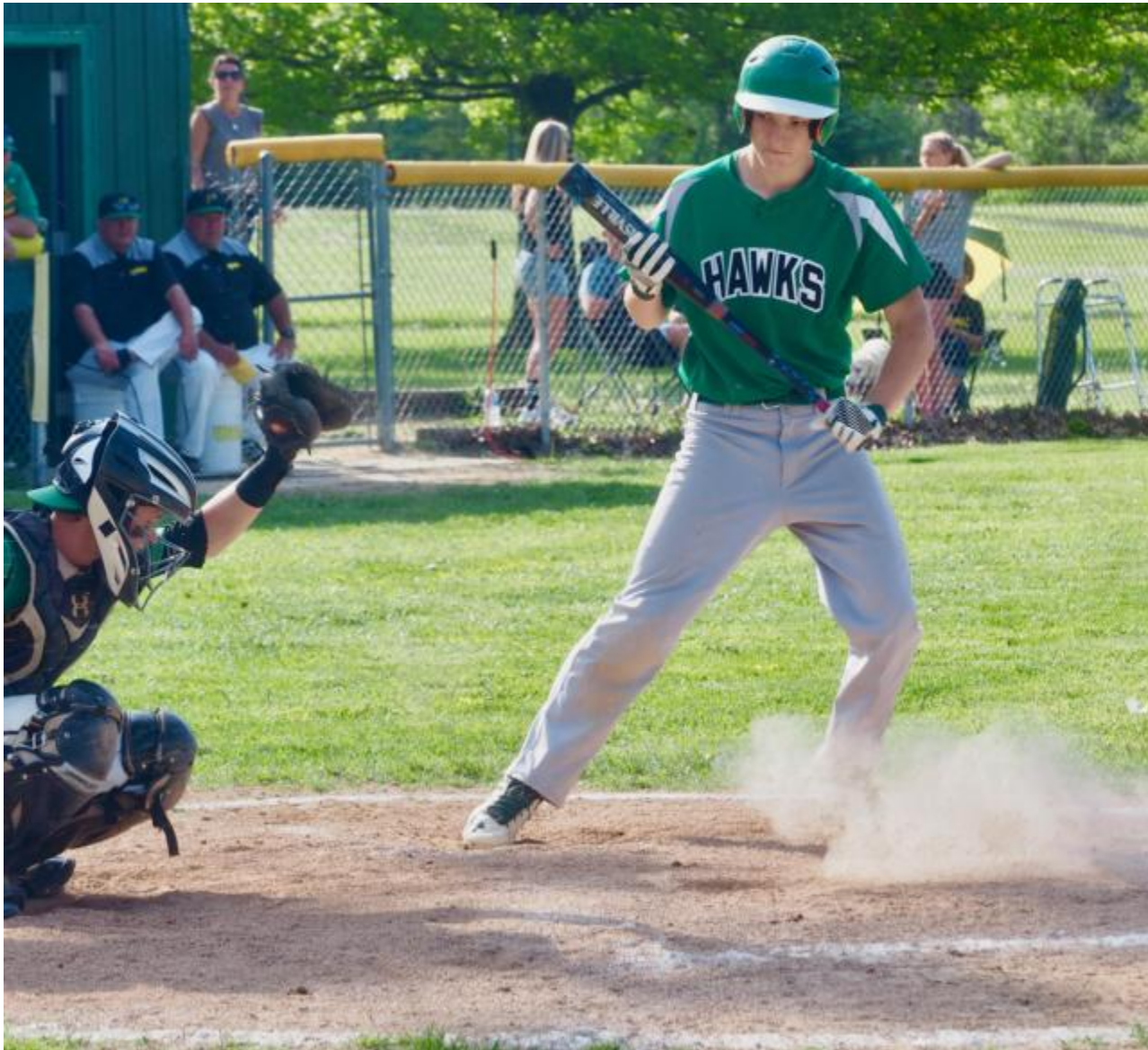


# Two times the charm: Nathan Walker talks second straight all-state baseball award

by John Hough, Sports Writer  
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CARROLLTON - Like the fathers of the first atomic bomb, Carrollton was waiting for something tremendous to explode.

That explosion is Nathan Walker, and it's been a crazy 12 months for him.

In that time span, the Carrollton senior-to-be has won three all-state awards. One in football as a wide receiver and two for baseball. An unprecedented accomplishment.

Last week, Walker claimed the third one, an IHSBCA Class 1A All-State honors for the second year in a row.

In June of 2017 it took him completely by surprise when he heard the news that he got all state, but this time around after accomplishing what he did on the field, it wasn't much of a shock for the centerfielder.

"Definitely the first all-state selection made me feel pretty good and then I felt pretty confident this year that it was going to happen. I had better stats than last year. I'm very happy with that," Walker said. "I'm excited for next year. a few more opportunities to repeat what I've done already."

His 2018 season stats consisted of a .519 batting average with 53 RBI, 27 extra base hits, three home runs and 12 stolen bases. That's the second straight season Walker batted over .500, and at one point he was hitting over .600 late on.

You would think by earning all these awards and consistently performing at a high level that Walker was also some prodigy coming out of junior high destined to be the next big thing for Carrollton athletics. Not exactly.

Blessed with natural athleticism, Walker was always playing up an age or two in baseball, but his height held back his potential for a long time. Walker claims he'd get plenty of hits, but was always a light-hitting batter. In his first two years in high school, Walker was on JV for the basketball and football teams.

Since he started high school, Walker has grown over five inches and now stands at 6-foot-1 and weighs 165 pounds.

Walker and another stand out player Gabe Jones will be senior leaders on the baseball team when next spring rolls around. The Hawks lose six players graduation. All of whom started for multiple years.

“I’ve been thinking about it since and how now I’m down to one year left. It’s going to be tough with losing those six starters. gotta fill in positions. Some freshmen coming in will have to step up too.

On the bright, side Walker claims the incoming freshmen class is, “very talented.”

Walker knows what it takes to be an impact player as a freshman. He batted .305 with 36 hits, 37 RBI, and two home runs, and was a big part of the Hawks successful 28-6 2016 season. He’s always been a star baseball player since his freshman year.

The summer will be busy as usual for Walker who is a three-sport athlete.

For football, he’ll meet up with his teammates at various locations for 7-on-7 competitions as well as getting in the weight room at school throughout June, July, and August. During this month, Walker is a part of the basketball team and will even travel to Arkansas for a tournament in the coming weeks. As for baseball, he’s on a side in the Eastern Illinois League, which consists mostly of college players.

“Right now I’m the only high schooler on the team. Last Saturday we played this one team, and they had this kid who pitched from Arkansas. threw about 95 ,” Walker said. “I got a lucky hit to right field.”

He may sell himself short there, but one thing for sure is that Walker is highly skilled and has one more year to leave his mark.

