**FEATURE**

HOLLY HEADRICK AND BUBBA PHILPOT

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**Not just dreamers, but achievers**

Bubba Philpot and Holly Headrick

Many student athletes have dreams of playing on the college and professional level someday. Few, however, get the chance to because the odds are stacked against them. While these goals for the future are unlikely, they are by no means unattainable. Two local athletes know firsthand the struggles, sacrifices, and hard work it takes to turn that dream into a reality.

As a child, Will Ford, TRHS assistant football coach and former TRHS Devildog, dreamed of playing in the pros. Little did he know that his dreams would become reality. “I set my goal in elementary school to play college and pro football, and I never looked back,” said Ford. Many kids dream of becoming pro athletes, but only a few will put in the hard work, sacrifice, and dedication it takes to achieve the dream.

Ford realized his dreams were coming true when he received several college scholarship offers for football from schools like Clemson, USC, Air Force, and UCF but ended up attending and playing for South Carolina State University. After graduating college he received the opportunity to continue his football dream and play in the Canadian football league. “Several people told me I wouldn’t make it; it’s a part of life. My mom said if you set your mind to something, and you’re willing to sacrifice, you can achieve your goals,” said Ford. Ford played football all four years he was at TRHS. He a learned how to keep his head up during those years. They shaped him as a player and showed him winning wasn’t everything. “I started varsity as a freshmen, and out of my four years of varsity, I didn’t have a winning season until my senior year,” said Ford. Ford learned that motivation and hard work will get you and your team through the tough spots of a season.

When Ford moved back to Travelers Rest, he realized he could give back to his community. “Being at home, I’ve always had love for my hometown, and seeing the struggle this high school has gone through the past two years, I know what it takes to motivate guys to keep their head up. What better way to give back to the community then coming back home,” said Ford.

Another athlete who worked to achieve his goals was Landon Powell. With a father who was a baseball player, coach, and umpire, baseball played a major part in North Greenville University baseball head coach Landon Powell’s life from a young age. “Baseball was the sport that I loved, and I always knew I was kind of good at it, so when I was seven or eight years old I told my dad that I wanted to be a major league baseball player.” From that moment on, he never looked back. He changed baseball from a hobby into a passion to be the best he could possibly be.

Landon set his mind on this goal early, which is a key component to reaching a goal. By setting his mind to this, it was anything but fun and games for Landon. “I had to sacrifice a lot of things as a kid, not going to church camp, not going to the pool with my friends on the weekends or not going to the beach, but I was playing baseball. I was always working toward that goal.” Powell led his 2000 Apex, NC, high school baseball team to the 4A state championship. After high school, Powell was the number two baseball player in the nation and was very highly recruited. “All colleges recruited me out of high school. You name it, they sent me a letter. God blessed me in a lot of ways as a kid.”

Powell chose to take his talents to the University of South Carolina and continued his success at the collegiate level. “I played in the best baseball conference in America in the SEC. I was fortunate enough to go the CWS all 4 years at USC. Powell played three years at USC before declaring for the MLB draft, where his childhood dream became a reality. “Being picked in the first round of the MLB Draft was a dream come true. It was something I dreamed of as a kid just to be drafted in general and to turn a game that you love into a job. With the Oakland Athletics, Powell played catcher from 2009 to 2011. Powell wants to make sure young people never think their dreams are out of reach. “In this day and age, if you want to be someone or do something, no matter what it is, if you set your mind to it the sky’s the limit. Sacrifices will have to be made, but that is something you have to accept and take along with the ultimate success you will achieve.”