



ALL-COUNTY BOYS SWIMMING & DIVING

Swimmer of the Year SHANE COURTOIS

URBANA SOPHOMORE

■ Courtois was involved in three wins at the Frederick County Public Schools meet to help the Hawks successfully defend their boys team title by beating second-place Oakdale 166-109.
■ He won both of his individual events at the county meet, the 50 freestyle (21.87) and the 100 freestyle (48.77). He also swam the last leg of Urbana's winning 200 freestyle relay team, which set a county record with a 1:29.58.



Diver of the Year GABE SILVER

URBANA SENIOR

■ Silver concluded his career by becoming just the second boys diver in Frederick County history to win four county meet titles.
■ Silver's winning score of 264.65 points was the highest of his career at the time, the culmination of a process that saw his scores start to soar when he began visualizing dives and blocking out noise as a junior.
■ Silver won the 4A/3A West region diving title with a score of 384.05.



FIRST TEAM

ANDREW DAVIS SENIOR WALKERSVILLE

■ The Monmouth commit was one of just two boys swimmers to win two individual events at the Frederick County meet, where he successfully defended his 100 fly title and won the 200 freestyle.



RUSSELL DLUGOSZ JUNIOR URBANA

■ Helped the Hawks win the county meet team crown. He won the 100 back, placed third in the 200 IM and anchored the winning 400 freestyle relay team. Won the 100 back at the 4A/3A West meet and placed second in the same event at states.



NICK GETZ SENIOR OAKDALE

■ Had a productive day at the Frederick County meet. He was second in the 50 freestyle, fourth in the 100 butterfly and swam on the Bears' victorious 200 medley relay team.



AMIR HUSSEIN SOPHOMORE URBANA

■ Got plenty of points to help the Hawks win the team title at the Frederick County meet. He won the 200 IM, was third in the 100 butterfly and swam on the winning, record-setting 200 freestyle relay team.



JR MAY SENIOR OAKDALE

■ Capped off his high school career with a big day at the Frederick County meet, winning the 100 breaststroke and placing second in the 100 freestyle.



ELIJAH PRICE JUNIOR BRUNSWICK

■ Standout for the Railroaders who placed third in both the 50 freestyle and 100 freestyle at the Frederick County meet.



DALTON WINTERS SENIOR OAKDALE

■ At the Frederick County meet, he placed second in both the 100 IM and 100 backstroke and swam on the winning 200 medley relay team.



NATHAN WEIR SENIOR URBANA

■ Finished his high school career by helping the Hawks successfully defend their team title at the Frederick County meet. He placed second in both the 200 freestyle and 100 butterfly.



JARRET ZHOU FRESHMAN URBANA

■ Made an immediate impact for the Hawks this season, including at the county meet. He won the 500 freestyle and was sixth in the 100 breaststroke.



SECOND TEAM

Name	School	Grade
JACKSON DEVINE	OAKDALE	JUNIOR
NIKOLA DRAGIC	MIDDLETOWN	JUNIOR
LUKE JACOBS	OAKDALE	FRESHMAN
JASON KOSTER	MIDDLETOWN	SENIOR
WANGLOK NG	THOMAS JOHNSON	JUNIOR
BRIAN PARK	TUSCARORA	SENIOR
CONNOR STANLEY	URBANA	FRESHMAN
JACKSON STEELE	URBANA	JUNIOR
RAYMOND ZHOU	URBANA	JUNIOR

HONORABLE MENTION

Brunswick— Manfred Konter, Lucas Ku
Catoctin— Aiden Barrera, Jack Fordham
Frederick— Micah Wirth, Brady Miller
Linganore— Tyler Gibson, Juaquin Medina
Middletown— Adam Baird, Prosser Leberherz
Oakdale— Parker Garland, London Kulikov
Thomas Johnson— Earl Belt, Emerson Harne
Tuscarora— Ian McCullough, Camden Slater
Urbana— Luke Courtois, Jeremy Dwoskin
Walkersville— Dominic Bureau, Quaid Ireland

Man believes he has one-of-a-kind Babe Ruth-signed baseball

By MICHAEL HOWES
Baltimore Sun

Gregory Kitchen didn't think much of the ball at first.

It sat largely forgotten for decades, an old, scuffed relic from another era. He acquired it in New York in 2006 in a \$1,500 trade with a fellow collector that included a Mickey Mantle-signed baseball and a Joe DiMaggio-signed photograph, believing he had a Babe Ruth autograph.

"I had it tucked away, not doing anything with it," said Kitchen, now 72.

Every so often, he would take it out, turning it over in his hands and studying the signature — not just the name, but how it was written.

Top Videos Bryce Elder talks his start against Marlins

Now, nearly 20 years later, the question isn't what the ball is.

It's whether it can be proven, and what, exactly, is still there.

That question eventually led Kitchen, of Petersburg, Virginia, to Baltimore and the Babe Ruth Birthplace and Museum on Tuesday,

housed in the rowhome where Ruth was born in 1895.

The ball itself is unusual before even considering the autograph.

Stamped with the name of the Kelly-How-Thompson Company, a Duluth-based sporting goods wholesaler in Minnesota, the ball traces to a narrow window in baseball history. Founded in 1902, the company sold equipment under its "Sportland" brand before phasing out that retail identity after a 1928 name change, making items with the original branding increasingly rare.

The name appears to have been written in two inks. "Babe" appears lighter and more faded, while "Ruth" is darker and more defined, suggesting the use of different ink. Kitchen said the slugger may have switched pens mid-signature.

"It's a beautiful baseball," said Shawn Herne, executive director of the Babe Ruth Birthplace and Museum. "The interesting thing about it, of course, was the two inks on the signature. That's a little odd."

To better understand that difference, Kitchen turned to science.

He had the ball examined in

February by Federal Forensic Associates, Inc., and forensic chemist Albert H. Lyter III tested the ink and materials.

The analysis found the baseball and signature were consistent with products used during Ruth's playing era, from the 1920s through the 1940s, and confirmed two distinct inks, one dye-based and one iron-based, both common to the period.

Ultraviolet imaging showed no fluorescence, indicating the ball and signature had no modern additions.

"A thorough examination failed to detect the presence of any materials inconsistent with the time frame associated with the use of the item," Lyter wrote. "It is, however, unusual to find the two parts of the signature prepared with two different ink formulations."

To Kitchen, that was enough to believe.

"I felt it was definitely real," he said.

But belief and proof are different things, especially with one of the most forged signatures in sports.

When Kitchen brought the ball

to the Baltimore museum, it could not confirm the autograph's authenticity, a determination reserved for licensed third-party authenticators. Kitchen said he now has one reviewing the ball.

Even if the ball proves authentic, its value and historical significance may hinge on a detail as small as the ink.

Michael Provenzale, a production manager at Heritage Auctions, estimated the ball could sell for between \$25,000 and \$30,000.

But the presence of two different inks introduces a more complicated possibility.

"My worry would be that someone traced over the signature," Provenzale said, noting that faded autographs were often retraced decades ago, before their long-term value was understood. "If that happened, it essentially eliminates most of the value."

Provenzale said third-party authenticators such as PSA and Beckett Authentication Services use imaging techniques to analyze pen pressure and ink layering, helping determine whether a signature was

written once or altered later.

It's a distinction that could define the ball's future.

At Heritage Auctions, a Ruth-signed baseball tied to the capture of Nazi spies sold for \$15,250 in March, while another featuring signatures from Ruth and Lou Gehrig brought \$23,180 that same month.

Kitchen built a career recognizing value in art, antiques and signatures, buying and selling at flea markets such as New York's once-famous 26th Street market. Still, he left this ball untouched for decades before a neighbor recently urged him to have it examined.

Through research and communication with museum staff, Kitchen learned of a Nov. 6, 1926, event in Duluth, where Ruth reportedly signed baseballs during a promotional appearance tied to a local company.

The details line up. The manufacturer. The ink. The style of the signature, crisp and legible, consistent with fountain pens of the era.

"This could be one of them," Kitchen said.