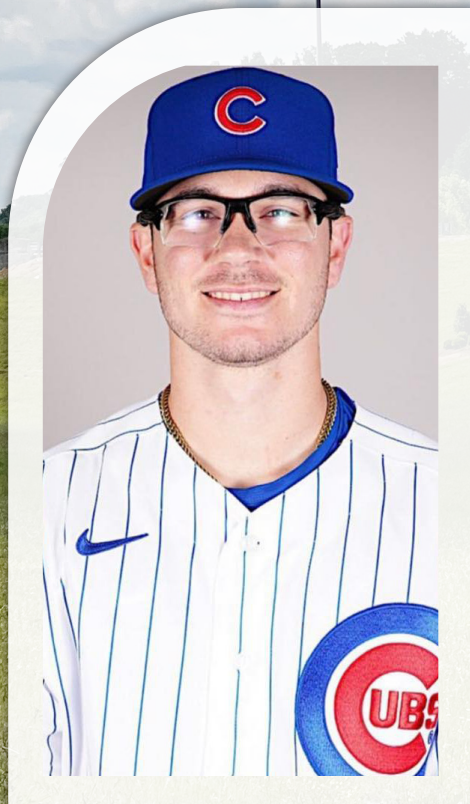


ALL ROADS LEAD HOME

Honoring **ETHAN ROBERTS**

Special Supplement to
THE EXPOSITOR

MAY 2022



Ethan Roberts – From his father, Mike Roberts

RACHEL AUBERGER

contributor

Ethan Roberts is a competitor who loves playing ball and hates to lose. Because of that, he spent his childhood developing into the best baseball player he could be.

“He loved playing anything, but he hated to lose,” Roberts’s father, Mike, said that his son played basketball, football, and baseball until he made the decision to put all of his focus into baseball when he was twelve years old.



“I did not know anything about baseball, I never played,” Mike said and then laughed, “but as he got older, I helped [with his Little League teams] because if they could get me to coach with them, they got Ethan.”

According to his father, Roberts developed as both a player and a teammate very quickly, understanding that in the game of baseball it’s win as a team and lose as a team.

“He always wanted to get better, knowing his size would be an issue at every level he would take,” Mike said, acknowledging that Roberts was never a big kid, and that today his 5.10” stature is still considered small for a professional athlete. “He was always very passionate in the game, always a competitor, always was a winner. He hated to lose.”

Mike Roberts said that he and his son put a lot of miles on the car over the next six years, playing in baseball tournaments everywhere from Atlanta, Georgia to Louisville, Kentucky and all points in between. “We grew close riding together

and talking about getting better and what he wanted to accomplish as a player,” Mike said. “He had big dreams, and all I did was encourage him. I would say, ‘If you’re going to fulfill those dreams, it’s going to take a lot of work and commitment. He would just respond with, ‘I can do it, Dad.’”

As proof that he would live up to his claim, Roberts, along with his father, sacrificed a lot of time going to practices, lessons, workouts, and baseball tournaments.

“His work ethic is off the charts,” his father admitted. “Even at a young age we would do extra after practice because he knew that there would be better athletes out there, but he was determined that they were not going to out-work him. We didn’t get to do a lot of things most fathers and sons do, because we were playing ball or working on getting better at what became his passion for the game.”

While his father is happy to have learned alongside him and been a part of his skill-development years, he said that it was in college that Roberts developed the most, focusing on both the physical and mental aspects of the game.

“Coach Bragga helped him so much and he gave him opportunities,” Mike said that his son took advantage of every opportunity he was given while a member of the Tennessee Tech Golden Eagles Baseball team. “That’s when I thought that this boy might just get drafted.”

“2018 season was a big year for him. He opened a lot of eyes, and this little guy from a small town where baseball



was not big at all was drafted in the fourth round to the Cubs,” Mike said with pride. “His dream came true with this opportunity to play professional baseball.”

Roberts and his father both knew that being drafted was just another step, and that he had many more steps to take his way to fulfilling his dream of being a big-league pitcher.

“He would start at the bottom and start working his way through the system,” Mike said about the next few years after Ethan was drafted by the Chicago Cubs. “He would have ups and downs on his way, but never lost sight of his goal.”

Roberts worked through the Cubs’ farm system, spent a year training in his backyard when the COVID-19 virus canceled minor league baseball and closed gyms across the country, but his work didn’t go unnoticed by the organization he and his father came to love. In the past year, Roberts was named to the Cubs’ protected 40-man roster, and then had an outstanding 2022 spring training to prove that he deserved his shot.

“I just can’t believe it sometimes. It’s just so crazy,” Mike said about Roberts being named to the Cubs’ opening day roster, and then earning some innings of pitching time in the games to come. “That little boy with major league dreams stepped out onto Wrigley Field and pitched for the



Chicago Cubs. And I’ve been along to enjoy the ride.”

But for Roberts, the ride isn’t over and his father said that there he is positive that there is still more to come for his son who has made it his lifetime goal to outwork everyone he meets.

“He’s not done yet. He always has goals,” Mike said. “Yes, there will be ups and downs still to come, but what a ride so far.”



Ethan Roberts – From Andy Southard, former Warriors' assistant coach

RACHEL AUBERGER
contributor

Ethan Roberts was one of the first kids that Coach Andy Southard met when he arrived in Sparta, and over the three years he spent coaching him as an assistant with the White County Warriors Baseball team, he watched him mature and take his raw talent to a whole new level.

"When I first met Ethan, he was a kid who had all the natural ability in the world," Southard said that he could tell from the first time he watched Roberts pitch that he was going to be something special, but said that he recognized early that Roberts would need to learn how to keep everything under control. "Something on the field would go wrong and he would let his emotions get the best of him and it would affect how he pitched the rest of the inning, sometimes even

games."

Southard and Roberts began working on the mental side of the game during Roberts' sophomore year, and the former coach said that it didn't take long for the young pitcher to apply the same discipline he used to physically improve to controlling his emotions.

Southard recalls a game during his first year with Roberts that set the stage for the pitcher to take the mental side of his game as serious as he had the physical side.

That year Coffee County was in our district, and we were playing them at Coffee County and Ethan was pitching. In the bullpen I noticed him getting mad. So, I asked him what was wrong with him. He said 'Nothing, I just want to dominate against these guys so bad,'" Southard said that the first inning was not at all what Roberts had hoped for as he gave up five

or six runs in the first frame. "When he got back in the dugout I asked him, 'How did pitching mad work for you?' He said, I guess it didn't work out too well."

Southard said he told Roberts to try having fun and enjoy his time on the mound during the next inning, and the results were what convinced the sixteen-year-old that the time to change his approach had come.

"He tried it out and didn't give up a run the rest of the game," Southard said. "During a few of the innings he was actually smiling and laughing on the mound."

"During his junior and senior season, I had to do a lot less of making sure that he stayed under control," Southard said that Roberts was a good student who learned quickly. "He started understanding it better his junior season, and then his senior season he figured it all out."

Southard remembers the day that Roberts was drafted by the Chicago Cubs, and said that the emotions he himself felt when he received the call from his former player were unexplainable.

"When someone who has worked their whole life to get somewhere finally accomplishes it, the feelings you feel inside you can't explain them," Southard said. "This was something that I knew he deserved and for him to get that shot I was so happy for him."

While Roberts's career has been a decade in the making, this past summer was when things began to make sense for him, and Southard said that part of that was having his mental game in check with clearly stated goals.

"[We] were talking about how everything was going and what he was hearing. He told me that his goal for the season was to do well and get added to the 40 man roster," Southard said of a conversation he had with his former player this past summer. "When he got added I knew that he had done enough to get the most



important call."

Southard, like all of Roberts's other coaches, pointed to work ethic as the single most deciding factor in Roberts's career continuing past the collegiate level.

"Ethan was by far the hardest worker I have ever met. He would spend hours at the baseball field even after practice was over with," he said, defining his statement that Roberts had 'done enough.' "There were times you would drive by the baseball field 2 to 3 hours after practice, and he would still be there with his dad and his future wife."

But while the 40-man roster was the goal for the season, Roberts exceeded that and Southard was not surprised that the once emotional, now-solid, gifted, hard-working ball player had made it to the big leagues.

"When this happened, I knew he had made it. He had accomplished the goal that he had set for himself when he was a little kid. To be able to step foot on a mound at Wrigley Field is one of the greatest accomplishments that any baseball player can have," Southard said about seeing his student take the field on one of the biggest stages in the game. "I was just glad that I got to be a small part of his baseball career."



Ethan Roberts – from Warriors' Head Coach Shaun Floyd

RACHEL AUBERGER

contributor

Before Ethan Roberts was a Chicago Cub, before he was even a TTU Golden Eagle, he was a White County Warrior, and then head coach Shaun Floyd says he knew then that there was something different about the 5'10" pitcher.

"He studied the game and was able to quickly learn not only how to manage his game but how to control the controllables," Floyd who moved from being the head coach of White County's middle school team to being the head coach of White County's high school team at the same time Roberts transitioned to high school, giving him the advantage of coaching the young pitcher for six full seasons. "Ethan always had the physical tools, and over the years he worked hard to fine tune those skills. His biggest development during high school was his mental approach."

Floyd went on to say that Roberts's work ethic was beyond his years and the leadership he showed and the examples he set for his teammates were qualities that set him apart and landed him where he is now: in Chicago as a member of the Cubs' major league baseball team.

"Ethan is the most determined athlete

I ever had the privilege to coach. He understands what it takes to work hard and what it takes to separate yourself from other athletes," Floyd said.

The former Warrior head coach pointed to Roberts's work during the COVID pandemic as an example of his work ethic and determination.

"When all minor leagues were shut down and most facilities were closed, Ethan kept working to improve and keep his arm in shape for when his opportunity would come. Many people would have given up, but Ethan just worked harder than anyone else during that time," Floyd said. "He understands the concept of work while you wait. It is a term I used many times over the year with our team. It simply means to work harder than anyone else while you are waiting for your turn so that you will be ready to take advantage of it."

And the work and the patience paid off for Roberts, because when the opportunity came, he was ready.

Roberts, who had been drafted by the Chicago Cubs in 2018, had been working his way through the organizations' minor league system and needed to land on the teams' 40 man protected roster this season or he could be wearing different colors this summer. But that work ethic

that he had relied on in middle school and carried through high school, college, minor league ball and even quarantines, wasn't going to let him down.

"Ethan and I had talked several times prior to him being placed on the 40-man roster. We knew that if he wasn't there was a good chance he would be picked up by another team. I remember telling him back in July/



August I just had the gut feeling they didn't want to let him get away and they would add him to the 40 man roster," Floyd remembered conversations with Roberts in the summer of 2021, but admitted that it was all speculation at that time. "To actually see it come across was just another proud moment to know that he was that much closer to reaching that dream he told me he was going to do all the way back in middle school."

Roberts didn't let making the protected roster slow him down, in fact, if anything, he became more focused and disciplined, knowing how close he was to stepping on a mound as a major league baseball player.

"That was one of those moments that was surreal," Floyd said about the moment that he heard Roberts' had made it. That he had been named to the Chicago Cubs' Opening Day Roster. That he was officially a major leaguer. "His dad sent me a text. I was on the little league field at practice with my son's team and I remember calling my coaching staff over and said, 'Guys, we have to take a minute to let this soak in.' It honestly sent cold

chills over my whole body. It was that vindication that all that hard work and dedication had finally paid off!"

Floyd's pride in his former pitcher didn't stop at his making the roster. The former coach said that he was sure to purchase the MLB Network television package so that he could watch the boy he coached as a teen fulfill his dream.

"I watched the opening day ceremony and as they introduced the entire team. To know that it had finally come was just amazing," Floyd said, "Then he made his first appearance I believe that Saturday and I was at home watching the game. It was surreal seeing his name come across that screen and seeing him run out from the bullpen at Wrigley Field. I was cheering him on at home and once again just had cold chills!"

While once a Warrior, always a Warrior holds true, Floyd is among a thousand from Warrior-nation who are now wearing Blue and White and are cheering for the Cubs as their favorite pitcher has taken proven that all you need is a dream ... and an extremely strong, unbeatable work ethic.





Owen Lewis and Ethan at baseball training

Ethan and Brennan Burchett

From Left to Right, Braden Rollins, Ethan Roberts, and Aidan Rollins. Picture was taken at a Myrtle Beach Pelicans game on July 31, 2019.



Ethan posing with the Pryor family after he closed a Smokies game. L-R Slade Pryor, Melony Pryor, Ethan Roberts Front- Annie Pryor, Kolt Pryor, Lane Pryor



Pictured with Ethan are Tate, Tripp, and Tucker Pinion

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L to R: Jackson Bouldin, Lucy Porter, Josie Porter, Ethan Roberts, Jolie Goff, Oliver Porter, Joel Goff

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Ethan has worked with my son Eli Scoggins since 2018. He has been an excellent teacher, role model, and friend. As a pitching coach Ethan is able to see the smallest of details that the student needs to correct or work on. He's also been a great weight training coach to prepare Eli to be a stronger pitcher. Ethan has made a huge impact on mound presence and how to handle yourself during the game. One of his greatest attributes is being able to pump kids up about baseball and helping them develop greater confidence. We wish Ethan the best and hope he continues working with these kids.

-Thank you, Casey Scoggins

This is a picture of Will Thomas taking lessons from Ethan. He has been an amazing coach, friend and role model to Will. Will has learned so much and really sharpened his skills while working with Ethan. He has been taking pitching lessons from Ethan since 2019 and actually had a session scheduled the day after Ethan got the call to "come now". So, even though it disappointed Will to miss that lesson as well as future lessons for a while, He was super excited for Ethan. We continue to watch every detail of his progress wish him the very Best.

-Dena Simmons



Trenton Wilson (our son) with Ethan during Ethan's senior year and then we were blessed to watch him at the Smokies this past season

-Derek Wilson



We welcomed Ethan into the world on July 4, 1997, and he has proven to be our "firecracker boy" ever since. I remember Ethan loving to play T-ball on the Bill Boruff team T-ball team. You could tell he had a passion for the game even at that young age. I remember in Ethan's little league days that he would get upset if it rained and a game or practice was cancelled, when most others were glad for a break. Ethan would practice signing his autograph dreaming of being in the MLB someday. Well son you have made it to the MLB with the Chicago Cubs and you are signing your autograph for real! You have worked so hard for this! Your mama is so incredibly proud of you! I love you to infinity and beyond! Mama :)

-Regina Roberts :)





After the Game -- Ethan & Family --After the Tennessee Smokies Game July 2021



“ ”
**Dad,
we
made
it!**

Ethan Roberts



Music Night at Grandma's in Moberry -- Ethan Roberts & Jack Chadwell -- Photo by Betty Jo Bryant



Ethan Roberts with his mom, Regina Roberts

GREAT JOB ETHAN!



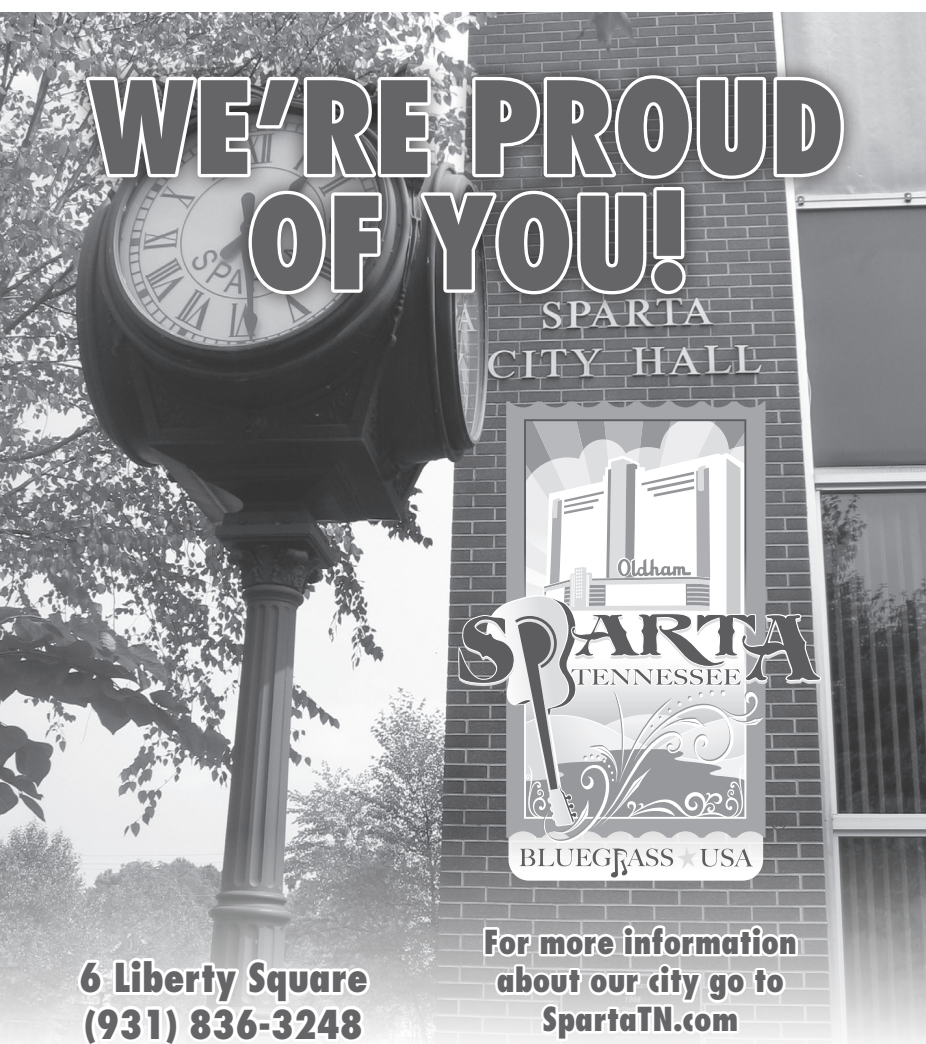
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From Ethan's wife, Hopelyn Roberts

I could talk about so many stories and fun experiences we have shared through our 9 years together. From the first time watching you play in high school to travel ball weekends to college ball to now. I have spent countless days and nights watching you play the game you love. I honestly don't know why this specific time sticks out in my mind but it always does, it was the one time I went with you and Mike all the way to White House, TN I rode behind you in the little tiny bench seat in your black Nissan Frontier and if I remember correctly it was a week night, I had so much fun tagging along to watch you play travel ball in high school! Another time that sticks out to me is being with you the night you committed to play ball at TN Tech! Then another time Mike and I drove from Alabama to watch you play in the OVC tournament and then that turned into a Florida trip to watch you play Florida State Sophomore year all of this right after Mike had knee surgery (he was not going to miss a single second of time watching you play), so I was the driver for these trips. Then comes Junior year of college which brought on many nights in the freezing cold watching you pitch, getting married in the middle of baseball season, a trip to Ole Miss, the life changing call of you getting drafted by the Chicago Cubs, and to end a trip to Texas. Then comes our crazy life now, I'll never forget our first flight together

was to Arizona together, the feelings of leaving our families and traveling across the country together was surreal. Lots of tears and hugs and see you soon. Then you traveled to Oregon while I traveled back home to get things together to go live in Oregon. And if things weren't crazy enough during all of this we find out we are going to have a baby! So here I am newly pregnant traveling by car across country to Oregon with my mom and Nana. After your season in Oregon we go to South Bend, Indiana for our next season of baseball. This was our first time together as a family with our new baby in our own place (super scary, super fun). I will never forget traveling during all star break that year to Chicago and touring Wrigley for the first time thinking, wow we could be here one day. Fast forward through our time with the Pelicans in South Carolina, to the Smokies in Tennessee, and the Cubs in Iowa to where we are now. And let's throw some more crazy in there with another baby! So now as a party of 4 we get a call that your contract was selected to the Cubs 40 man roster which means Big League Spring Training. And if things weren't crazy enough throw in a lock out which you get to be a part of now because your apart of the 40 man roster, it was so great having you home during that time though, we were able to experience so much together! Then the lock out was over and you headed out to Big League



Spring Training. As that comes to an end I get the MOST LIFE CHANGING CALL from you that you have made the Opening Day roster with the CHICAGO CUBS, que the tears. Now we are living in Chicago while the kids and I getting to watch you live your childhood dream

of being a Professional Baseball Player. That in itself gives me chills. Although this is the craziest life I could have ever imagined for myself, I would not change a single second of any of it. I am beyond proud of you.



My Journey with Ethan Roberts started the day he stepped on a ball field for the first time in uniform, for tee-ball and officially ended the summer after he graduated from high school with travel baseball. I had the pleasure and opportunity to Manage and help coach Ethan on more teams than I can count. In 2018, when Ethan was drafted in the fourth round by the cubs, he had done what less than one percent of all young athletes get to do, go pro. When his dad text me this past April 4th and said, "Ethan is going to the show", the hair on the back of my neck stood up as I officially became a Cubs fan. Ethan always had a huge smile and an even bigger heart but what stands out even more than that was Ethan's faith. Getting to watch him pitch in his first MLB experience was and is a blessing for us all and should be lesson for all kids to never give up on your dreams. I knew his believing in himself was officially at it a high point when I saw him K the third batter in a recent Cubs out-ing, while screaming and pointing at the ground, "I am right here". I am very proud to have had the chance to spend what seems like a few "tiny moments" of Ethan's carrier with him and even more proud of the way he gives parts of himself and what he's learned back to kids all over the country.

-Kenneth Temple



Kolt and Lane Pryor showing off their Smokies hat autographed by Ethan.

Ethan was a unified partner with wchs special Olympics while he was in high school. Ethan was a fantastic partner and won gold medals in bocce events! Later that evening Ethan and Hopelyn went to the Big Celebration Dance and helped us keep up with our athletes and both of them were friends to all!

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Nancy Benningfield



Ethan Roberts giving Lane Pryor pitching lessons

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Left to right, are Nick Mele, Andy Mele, Ehtan Rotbers and Michael Guidara. All 3 are cousins of Betty Bryant of Moberry, Tennessee, Ethan's step-grandmother. Michael Guidara is a former Tennessee Tech baseball player (1969-1973).

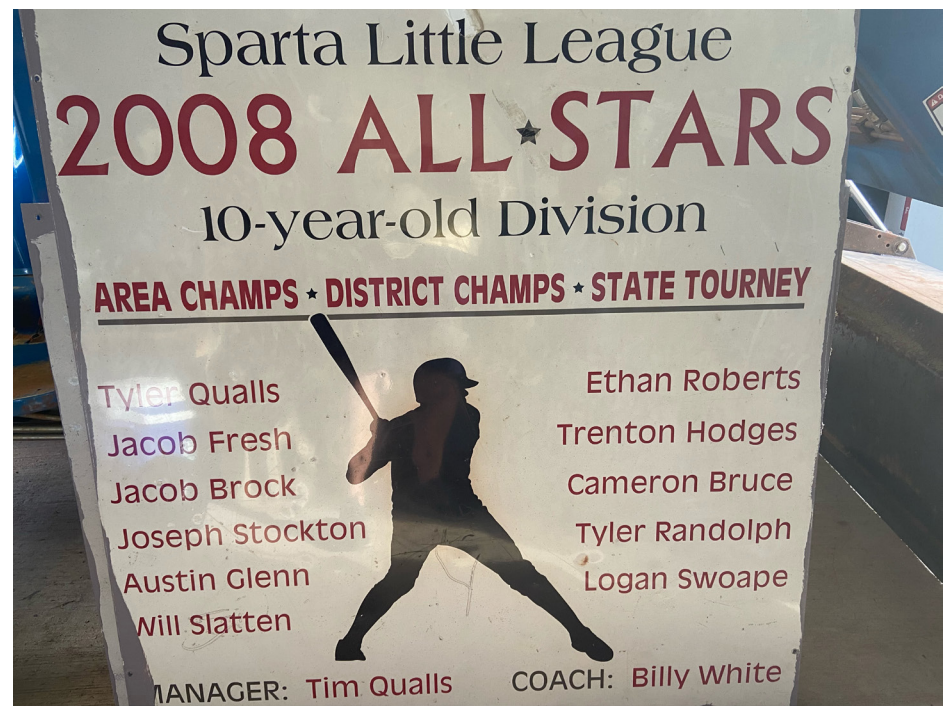


Liam Pelfrey with Ethan Roberts last year during Ethan's youth camp



Joel Goff, Jolie Goff, Ethan Roberts







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Ethan Roberts pictured with Brennan Burchett

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