

# Sports

## Six baseball players ink with D-I universities

**Len Hayward**  
Corpus Christi Caller Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK - TEXAS

South Texas and Corpus Christi's baseball acumen was apparent on Wednesday as the early signing period began for sports outside of football and baseball players signing with Division I schools outpaced football.

As many as 10 area baseball players signed or will sign their letters of intent, including six to Division I schools, continuing a trend that continues to show the depth of baseball talent in South Texas. In February on National Signing Day, a total of seven football players signed on signing day with four going to Division I schools.

"Man, it's a blessing that South Texas



Calallen's Hambleton Oliver signed with Baylor Wednesday and is one of six area baseball players that have or will sign with D-I teams. LEN HAYWARD/CALLER-TIMES

is able to produce top notch athletes every year," said Sinton baseball coach Adrian Alaniz, himself a former college baseball player at Texas. "It speaks volumes of the baseball that's played down here. Sometimes you feel like it gets overlooked just because we are in the South Texas area by putting out athletes and going to colleges."

One of Alaniz's players, Brett Brown, signed with Texas State joining Gregory-Portland pitcher Isaac Ponce in signing with the Bobcats. Left-handed pitcher Jon Barrera is slated to sign with Texas Tech and Calallen's Bryce Balusek is signing with Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. Balusek's Calallen teammate Hambleton Oliver inked with Baylor,

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Calallen's Shenan Price carries the ball against Port Lavaca Calhoun on Friday. Calallen won the game 23-20 to win the district title. RACHEL DENNY CLOW/CALLER-TIMES

# END OF AN ERA

Price brothers share amazing legacy at Calallen, sharing hardships along the way

**David Sikes**  
Corpus Christi Caller Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK - TEXAS

This year marks the end of an era for Wildcats football. • No, Phil Danaher, Calallen's longtime coach is not planning to retire. But the Wildcats will be Priceless for at least a generation after 2018. • Senior running back Shenan Price is the fifth and final Price brother of his generation, which represents a stretch of stellar offensive power that spanned 22 years, beginning in 1997 with Shenan's oldest brother, Victor. • And they each wore the number five on their jersey at some point in their careers. • Calallen historian Steven Floyd said the Price brothers brought something special to the Wildcats. • "It's going to be a really strange feeling after this season is over, knowing that the 22-year run of the Price boys is over," said Floyd, who is vice president of the Calallen Touchdown Booster Club. "But

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Chris Price played at Calallen from 2012 to 2014, with his best season in '13 when he rushed for 701 yards.



Marcus Price rushed for 1,779 yards in 2001 for Calallen. CALLER-TIMES FILE PHOTOS



Tailback Victor Price played at Calallen from 1997 to 1999 and gained 3,242 yards from scrimmage.



Michael Price totaled 2,861 rushing yards for Calallen from 2001 to 2004.





Calallen's Shenan Price runs the ball in the first quarter against Flour Bluff at Hornets Stadium on Sept. 7. COURTNEY SACCO/CALLER-TIMES

## Price

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Calallen has been blessed to have such talented and outstanding young men wear the Wildcat uniform."

The family has endured its share of hardships between the highlights.

Their mom, Mary Tipton Price, died of breast cancer in June 2016, on Victor's birthday, and the summer before Shenan's sophomore season. Robstown City Councilwoman Sybil Tipton, the boys' maternal aunt, filled as much of the void as possible to soften the loss of her sister.

Wildcat fans know for many years Mary Price was a vocal fixture at games, supporting her sons until the end. Tipton said her sister was able to enjoy a majority of her sons' performances on the field.

Collectively, during 15 varsity seasons, the five brothers gained 14,315 all-purpose yards, made 155 touchdowns, scored 938 points, and ran for 10,868 yards, and scored 944 points, according to Floyd's records. And Shenan isn't done yet.

Tipton said getting the brothers to talk about themselves is more difficult than getting any one of them to talk about their brothers. She said each of the brothers possess special strengths and talents, but with a measure of humility.

"They're all quick to be very complimentary of each other and they don't like being compared to one another," Tipton said. "They all have been truly blessed with exceptional athletic skills, but are very thankful for their blessings."

Shenan said Victor, who played for Calallen before Shenan was born, has always been among his greatest supporters, encouraging him to play hard, but never really providing specific advice.

Victor Price Jr., 37, played running back three seasons, from 1997-1999. He holds the school record for a single-game performance against Robstown in 1999 for a remarkable 66.5 yards per-carry average.

He touched the ball twice and scored two touchdowns in the first plays of the first two Calallen possessions.

Michael Price, 30, also played running back from 2001 to 2004. He gained 3,237 all-purpose yards during his four seasons. Floyd said Michael displayed his competitive spirit early on as a freshman during a playoff game Calallen won handily.

"Danaher put in the entire freshman squad in the fourth quarter against PSJA Memorial in 2001," Floyd said. "He asked them who wanted the ball, and little Michael immediately raised his hand. He went on to become the main running back after we switched to the spread offense with a single back in 2003 and 2004."

Victor and Michael have similar personalities, Tipton said. Victor is shy and quiet, while Michael is serious, reflective and deeply devoted to his faith.

In 2012, Michael suffered a minor stroke. He had to relearn how to walk and undergo speech therapy. He continues to struggle with the after effects.

"Simple things people take for granted, I have to use twice the effort to do," he said. "Whether it's tying my shoes, brushing my teeth or carrying things. I thank God every day for his promise of never leaving or forsaking me, and for the talent he gave me so people could see his glory and I could play the game I love."

Marcus, 23, on the other hand, is "quite the character," Tipton said. "He might be considered the class clown and certainly is the most talkative one in the family. He's always liked to do impressions of people, but in a fun way. He keeps us all in stitches at family gather-

## THE PRICE LEGACY

Since 1997, the five Price brothers have played at Calallen in different years. Senior Shen Price is the final of the five playing running back for the Wildcats in 2018.

Here's a glance at what the five accomplished.

**Victor Price (1997-99)** — Rushed for 2,918 yards during his career and 28 touchdowns. Holds school record for rushing yards per attempt in a game at 66.5 yards a carry.

**Michael Price (2001-04)** — Rushed for 2,861 yards and 41 touchdowns and 3,141 yards from scrimmage.

**Marcus Price (2010-11)** — Rushed for 2,154 yards and had 824 receiving yards in his career and holds nine different school records.

**Chris Price (2012-14)** — Rushed for 1,751 yards and 17 touchdowns and is the only one of the five brothers to have complete a pass. It was 43 yards.

**Shenan Price (2016-18)** — Rushed for 883 yards and 12 touchdowns this season with 181 receiving yards.

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Marcus holds many school records, including longest kickoff for TD (99 yards), most kickoff returns for score in a game (2), most average yards per carry in a game and season (12.44 yards), and several others earned during his three years from 2010-2012.

"As the smallest of the brothers, Marcus had a slow start, but busted through as a running back and stud return man his senior year," Floyd said. "His shifty moves, incredible balance, and speed dazzled opponents and the Calallen faithful."

Chris Price, 21, also played three seasons, from 2012-2014. Floyd describes Chris as a "workhorse running back, receiver and return man, who could be counted on to break a big play." He gained 2,029 all-purpose yards in a Wildcat uniform.

Tipton describes her fourth nephew's personality as quiet but with a humorous side. He enjoys joking around, she said.

Shenan, which is short for Shenandoah, is outgoing, yet soft spoken and thoughtful. After his mother died, he had a tough time, Tipton said.

Shenan, the running back and kick returner, is making his mark as a player this season. He's gained at least 100 yards in seven games this year and gained 200 or more yards in two games.

His grandmother, Clarice Tipton, refers affectionately to Shenan as the "Last of the Mochicans."

Danaher said what the Price brothers accomplished on the field and in the classroom are fitting tributes to their mother, in addition to being a lasting legacy for the family and school. Calallen was lucky they chose to wear the Wildcats uniform, which they served and honored so well, he said.

"You know, I think every year we had a Price brother on the team we went to the playoffs," Danaher said with a trace of a smile.

Most Wildcat fans know Danaher has taken his teams to the playoffs every year since the mid-1980s, with or without a Price brother.

Floyd went a step further in lamenting the end of an era.

"Knowing we had a Price on the team was knowing we had an impact player, with speed, toughness and play-making ability," Floyd said. "Each of them have an explosiveness that Calallen fans love. Plus, they are really good people, part of a good solid family."

"For those of us who have been around Calallen football for any length of time, the number five will always be associated with the five Prices."

# Ray's Breckenridge wins statewide honor

**Quinton Martinez**  
Corpus Christi Caller Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK - TEXAS

Ray quarterback Brad Breckenridge was named the Built Ford Tough Class 5A Player of the Week for Week 11 on Wednesday.

Breckenridge, a three-year starter for the Texans, had 309 yards and four touchdowns passing and 162 yards and five touchdowns rushing in a 63-49 win over Victoria West that clinched a playoff berth for Ray.

In addition to having a hand in all nine touchdowns for Ray in the win, the senior threw for a 2-point conversion and caught a 2-point conversion.

The honor is a statewide award. The

Built Ford Tough Texas High School Football Player of the Week program honors one student-athlete in each classification every week during the regular season.

The winners are chosen for athletic achievements on the field as well as for outstanding scholarship and community involvement.

The Texans play at Brownsville Pace in the Class 5A bidistrict playoffs on Thursday, Ray's first playoff game since 2013.

Breckenridge is the second South Texas player awarded this season. Woodsboro quarterback Kalob Jochetz won the Class 2A award earlier this month.



Ray defeats Miller 36-24 at Buccaneer stadium on Nov. 2  
COURTNEY SACCO/CALLER-TIMES

## Baseball

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and will join former Ray star Nick Loftin in Waco. And Agua Dulce pitcher Randal Garza will sign with the University of Houston.

"It's pretty awesome," Balusek said after his signing. "It's a great opportunity and not many people get to play college baseball. It's like two percent go into college, I'm very blessed."

Former coaches such as Hector Salinas, Steve Castillo and late Robstown boss Steve Castro, along with veteran coaches including Veterans Memorial's Lee Yeager and Calallen's Steve Chapman sang the praises of South Texas baseball players long before this most recent signing day and helped lay the foundation of schools coming to the area to recruit players.

In recent years, players have signed with powers such as Texas, Texas Tech and Baylor, and other players have gone out of state to Division I programs such as Kansas State. The proliferation of travel and summer baseball has helped the players as well, along with area's reputation for having competitive, high-intensity high school baseball.

"When I first got here in 2000 it wasn't that way and I wasn't from here and I would tell a lot of my friends there's a lot of guys down here to look at," said Yeager, who had three players sign with junior colleges on Wednesday. "I think more people have opened their eyes to this area a little bit."

During the fall and summer, players from South Texas are getting exposure in larger cities in Texas and around the country, which is helping them be noticed by coaches and scouts outside of the spring high school season.

"It's all about marketing yourself," Alaniz said. "I'm a firm believer if you're good enough to be looked at by people they are going to find you because there's always a spot for somebody to play somewhere. Summer ball has gotten to a point to where a lot of these kids utilize that to get that marketing and being looked at and getting exposure."

Wearing the high school jersey in South Texas still carries plenty of weight, but it is the chance to play baseball that drives players and makes days like Wednesday special.

"Once you step foot on that field, it doesn't matter what uniform you are wearing or what hat you are wearing or who you are playing for, it's baseball and that's what I want to play," Oliver said.

## ON CALLER.COM

For a photo gallery of Wednesday's signing day festivities go to [caller.com](http://caller.com).

## AREA ATHLETES MAKE THEIR CHOICES

**A list of area high school athletes that have signed or will sign letters of intent to play college sports:**

### Baseball

Bryce Balusek, Calallen (Texas A&M-Corpus Christi)

Jon Barrera, King (Texas Tech)

Brett Brown, Sinton (Texas State)

Christian Garza, Veterans Memorial (Murray State College)

Randal Garza, Agua Dulce (University of Houston)

Hambleton Oliver, Calallen (Baylor)

Isaac Ponce, Gregory-Portland (Texas State)

Eli Rivera, Veterans Memorial (Murray State College)

Ryan Stark, Gregory-Portland (Missouri Valley College)

Jo Jo Villarreal, Veterans Memorial (Alvin CC)

### Basketball

Sophia Diakomina, Veterans Memorial (Cameron)

Michaela James, Veterans Memorial (Cameron)

Hayle Campbell, Flour Bluff (Texas A&M-Corpus Christi)

### Softball

Kat Flores, Calallen (Texas A&M-Kingsville)

Samantha Gaona, Carroll (Texas A&M-Corpus Christi)

Bailey Krolczyk, Veterans Memorial (Tyler JC)

Kendall Owens, Veterans Memorial (University of the Incarnate Word)

Celeste Salazar, Veterans Memorial (Lamar State)

### Track & Field

Garrett Burns, Woodsboro (Texas A&M-Kingsville)

Riley Floerke, Gregory-Portland (Baylor)

Skylar Hall, Woodsboro (Stephen F. Austin)

### Volleyball

Kathryn Skrobarczyk, IWA (Texas A&M-Corpus Christi)