

RICK RUFFIN -- A TRUE NASH COUNTY LEGEND AS A COACH & PERSON  
**EVERYBODY LOVES RICK**



**RICK RUFFIN IN ACTION**  
**Ruffin touched lives as a great coach, person**

By CHANCE PUCKETT  
*Correspondent*

**NASH COUNTY** -- A legendary longtime Nash County boys basketball coach recently announced his retirement from the same role at Halifax Academy in Roanoke Rapids, ending his career with a remarkable 41 years of basketball coaching experience.

Rick Ruffin led the Northern Nash and Southern Nash Boys Basketball programs for a combined 22 years, spending 12 years as the head man on the hardwood at Northern while the prior 10 were spent directing Southern's program.

More recently, Ruffin's last 11 seasons were spent at Halifax Academy leading the boys basketball program -- and six of those the veteran coach pulled double time, leading both the boys and girls programs at the school.

"Obviously it was a lot of hours coaching two teams at Halifax," Ruffin said of his time leading both Vikings programs. "I had never coached girls and it was a great time, a lot of good memories with both teams."

As both a head coach and an assistant, 26 of Ruffin's 41 seasons were spent within the confines of Nash County.

He began his career at Chicod Middle School in Greenville before entering the high school ranks at Fike in Wilson.

After three years at

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**NASH COUNTY'S OWN RICK RUFFIN CONTINUED TO COLLECT CHAMPIONSHIPS AS A BOYS AND GIRLS BASKETBALL COACH AT HALIFAX ACADEMY IN ROANOKE RAPIDS**



**ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF RICK RUFFIN'S COACHING CAREER CAME IN 2011 WHEN HE COACHED IN THE EAST-WEST ALL-STAR BASKETBALL GAME. HE IS SECOND FROM RIGHT IN THIS PHOTO**

**Nash Clubs Ready For Preseason Events**



**(L TO R) NORTHERN NASH'S ANDREW FARRISS AND SOUTHERN NASH'S BRIAN BATCHELOR WILL HAVE THEIR CLUBS IN ACTION DURING THE PRESEASON AHEAD OF THEIR RESPECTIVE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL OPENERS ON AUGUST 22**



**NASH CENTRAL QB WINSTON LEE**

By CHANCE PUCKETT  
*Correspondent*

**NASH COUNTY** -- As the calendar flips to August, the athletics focus in Nash County officially turns to football season with scrimmages and jamborees next up on the calendar.

Each of Nash County's local high school football programs will be running a de facto dress rehearsal before the season gets under way on Aug. 22, starting off with both Nash Central

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AFTER AN EXCEPTIONAL CAREER IN NASH COUNTY, RICK RUFFIN BECAME A VITAL AND RESPECTED PART OF THE COMMUNITY AT HALIFAX ACADEMY SCHOOL, WHICH IS LOCATED IN ROANOKE RAPIDS

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Chicod and one season at Fike, he then moved to Southern Nash where he spent four seasons as an assistant before becoming the Firebirds' head coach.

After 10 years at Southern, he then made the switch to Northern before rounding out his career at Halifax Academy.

While x's and o's were obviously a large part of Ruffin's life for many years, inspiring and leading young student-athletes was always what he enjoyed the most about his coaching career.

"I have always enjoyed working with kids," remarked the Rocky Mount High School and East Carolina University graduate. "I always tried to share life lessons with them and I tried to be a positive role model in the classroom and on the court."

Backing that up, Ruffin said that some of his favorite memories from his years on the hardwood included spaghetti dinners at his house with his teams before big games.

Ruffin also coached his fair share of big-time athletes throughout his career, including NFL Hall of Famer and former Carolina Panther Julius Peppers during his time at Southern Nash.

In an unsurprising note, Ruffin was straight-to-the-point when it came to describing Peppers' résumé.

"Definitely the best athlete I coached in my career," Ruffin said of Peppers, who graduated from SNHS in 1998.

Peppers acknowledged and thanked Ruffin during his enshrinement speech for the Southern Nash Athletics Hall of Fame back in April.

Ruffin also coached Northern Nash High School legend and Norfolk State University Hall of Famer Michael "Moe" DeLoach.

DeLoach played professionally in Europe for ten seasons before retiring, now having relocated back to his hometown of Rocky Mount where he is a major contributor and advocate within the community.

Another career highlight for Ruffin came in 2011 when he served as a coach at the North Carolina Coaches Association's prestigious East-West All-Star Boys Basketball Game at the historic Greensboro Coliseum.

Previously coaching football, baseball and golf at various points throughout his life, Ruffin now has much to look forward to in his next chapter now that his teaching and coaching career is behind him.

The grandfather to four grandchildren, Ruffin remarked that he looks forward to spending more time with them and the rest of his family in retirement, as well as traveling and playing more golf.

A notorious family man, Ruffin gave a special thank you to his two children Kristin and Ben, the latter of which he coached, for the roles that each of them played throughout his career on the hardwood.

It would be remiss to not mention his wife Mary as well -- as Ruffin stated that one of his fondest memories as a coach was a Valentine's Day victory over archrival Rocky Mount with her in the stands while he was the head coach at Northern Nash.

"My family was so inspirational in my career, I couldn't have done this without them," Coach Ruffin said.

And to top all of that off, you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone who has a negative thing to say about Coach Ruffin-- one of the nicest people you would ever have the pleasure of meeting.



RICK RUFFIN (TOP RIGHT) COACHED SOME GREATS IN HIS CAREER, INCLUDING THE LIKES OF JULIUS PEPPERS (44) AND BRIAN BATCHELOR (43) AT SOUTHERN NASH

HERE'S OUR PITCH....CATCH YOUR TEAM'S SCORE IN

the Nashville GRAPHIC SPORTS

FOOTBALL

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and Northern Nash, who are in action exhibition-style for the first time this Friday night, Aug. 8.

Chris Lee's Nash Central High squad will be partaking in two different jamborees before the start of the regular season, with the Bulldogs set to travel to Vance County on Friday.

Central will be one of three teams competing on the campus of Vance County High School this week, as alongside the Vance County Vipers the Bulldogs will get a look at Southern Alamance High School of Graham as well.

A week later on Aug. 15, Central will travel for yet another jamboree, this time to Fike High School in Wilson for a three-team jamboree between the host Golden Demons and D.H. Conley.

Of course, this all leads up to the real thing which gets started on Aug. 22. The Bulldogs will be kicking off their 2025 campaign against a former conference foe, SouthWest Edgecombe.

This season will be a new-look year for Lee's squad, as like their Nash County counterparts the Bulldogs will be in a new conference.

A six-team league split between three Class 4-A schools, two Class 3-A schools and one Class 2-A institution, Nash Central's conference slate now includes American Leadership Academy -- Johnston, Louisburg, Wake Prep, Bunn and Roanoke Rapids.

The Bulldogs' first game in their new league is currently slated for Oct. 3, with Louisburg making the short trip over from Franklin County.

As for Central's across-the-bridge rival Northern Nash, the Knights are set to scrimmage Ayden-Grifton at home this Friday at 6 p.m. on the campus of Northern Nash High School.

The Chargers are led by first-year head coach Garrett Wingate, a name well-known around the Nash County football scene for his role with Northern Nash's football program during the 2022 season.

Wingate was the team's offensive coordinator who helped the Knights reach the Class 3-A State Championship game for the second time in school history.

Just one year prior at J.H. Rose, Wingate helped the Rampants reach the state championship in the same role.

The scrimmage between Northern and Ayden-Grifton will be the first of two preseason outings for the Knights, as on the 15th head coach Andrew Farriss' group will be participating in a jamboree at Corinth Holders with the Pirates hosting, alongside four other participants -- Cary, Franklinton, Roxboro Person and West Johnston.

Year Eight of the Andrew Farriss Era will begin on Aug. 22, with the Knights chase for a fourth Big East Conference title in five seasons beginning at home against J.H. Rose, the team whose impromptu run to the fourth round of the Class 3-A State Playoffs began with an upset win over the Knights in the first round a year ago.

Northern's first game as part of its new league will be played on Sept. 26 at Fike, the school which Farriss most recently coached at before joining the Knights as an assistant in 2017.

Southern Nash -- who will meet the Knights in a highly-anticipated contest on Oct. 24 -- will be playing in just one preseason exhibition before kicking off its season against Knightdale.

Like Nash Central, the Firebirds will be scrimmaging Vance County on Aug. 14 on the campus of Southern Nash High School.

It will be the lone chance for the Firebirds, entering the fifth year of Brian Batchelor's head coaching tenure, to see themselves in action against another opponent before beginning the season.

Alongside longtime county foes Northern Nash and Rocky Mount, Southern Nash will be joining a new league during this upcoming season as well. In addition to the Gryphons and Knights, Southern will now be partnered with C.B. Aycock, Fike, Hunt and Southern Wayne.

Southern's conference opener will be played at home on Sept. 19 against the Southern Wayne Saints, immediately following a four-game nonconference slate that includes Knightdale, Clayton, James Kenan and Nash Central.

The Firebirds' Aug. 22 season opener against Knightdale is slated for a 7 p.m. kickoff on the campus of Southern Nash High School.

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