

THE NASHVILLE GRAPHIC

PIGSKIN

PREVIEW
— 2022 —



**NASH CENTRAL
BULLDOGS**



**SOUTHERN NASH
FIREBIRDS**



**ROCKY MOUNT
GRYPHONS**



**NORTHERN NASH
KNIGHTS**



NASH CENTRAL

BULLDOGS



KEYWORDS - OVERALL TEAM SPEED, OPPORTUNISTIC
'DOGS SET TO DEFEND

By GEOFF NEVILLE
Graphic Sportswriter

ROCKY MOUNT

What was supposed to be a rebuilding season turned into a magical stroll last fall for the Nash Central High School football team.

During preseason drills, veteran NCHS head coach Chris Lee was extremely worried about his club's low turnout, thanks in part to the pandemic.

Nash Central then got off to a slow start, and hardly seemed like a contender heading into its Big East Conference schedule.

But an incredible trick-play, final-minute victory over Franklinton set the stage for the coming excellence, and Central would win the Class 2-A portion of the Big East Conference.

The Bulldogs, however, didn't stop there, moving all the way to the third round of the state playoffs, thanks in part to another miraculous triumph -- this time over Southwest Onslow (with the same trick play, no less).



NASH CENTRAL
BULLDOGS

CHRIS LEE

Years at School:
8
Last Season:
7-6
Record at School:
36-41
Starters Returning:
0-4, D-5



OUTLOOK

Nash Central defied expectations last season, using a late surge to push all the way to the third round of the state playoffs. Now brimming with confidence and veteran leadership, the Bulldogs will be in the mix to defend their 2-A portion title in the Big East.

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19.....SOUTHEAST HALIFAX
Aug. 26.....SMITFIELD-SELMA
Sept. 9.....NORTH JOHNSTON
Sept. 16.....at Southern Nash*
Sept. 23.....FRANKLINTON*
Sept. 30.....at Rocky Mount*
Oct. 7.....NORTHERN NASH*
Oct. 14.....at Bunn*
Oct. 21.....at Louisburg*
Oct. 28.....ROANOKE RAPIDS*

* Denotes Big East Games

Fast forward to the 2022 campaign, and things seem different within the NCHS program. Much different.

Central now has veteran leadership, plenty of overall player numbers and the expectation of building up last year's heroics.

"I'm pretty happy with where we are at right now," Lee said. "We are going to be around 32 kids for both our varsity and JV teams. We have some good players back.

"One thing about getting to the third round of the playoffs is that you get your JV kids up to the varsity, and you have three extra weeks of practice. We not only got



THIS WILL HAPPEN QUITE OFTEN. Javaris Jones (with ball) is expected to carry much of the Nash Central load on offense this fall in the Bulldogs' wing-T formation. (Graphic photo by Geoff Neville)



NASH CENTRAL DB
DARYL WATSON

some experience, but we got a taste of winning. So we come into this year with a good taste in our mouths."

Defense played a huge role in Nash Central's success in 2021 as the Bulldogs, who went 7-6, allowed 17 points or less in eight of their 13 outings.

Lee expects the Bulldogs to be sharp once again on that side of the ball with a small-but-fast group.

Jordan Williams, Ezekiel Whitfield, D'Angelo Johnson and Oliver Belhomme will anchor Central's solid front, while

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NASH CENTRAL VETERAN QUARTERBACK JAYDEN ELLIS



ZAY DRAUGHN



NCHS ASSISTANT COACH KENT COX



NASH CENTRAL'S JAVARIS JONES



KEY AREA. Nash Central High School veteran football coach Chris Lee thinks the development of his young offensive line will be an important intangible this season. (Graphic photo by Geoff Neville)

NORTHERN NASH

KNIGHTS



KEYWORDS - FOUNDATION IS BUILT, THIRSTY FOR MORE
NN BREAKS ON THRU

By GEOFF NEVILLE
Graphic Sportswriter

RED OAK

Aside from the major metropolitan areas, there are few counties in North Carolina that feature three elite-level football programs. It just doesn't happen.

Such was the challenge Andrew Farriss encountered five years ago when he became the head coach at Northern Nash.

Southern Nash and Rocky Mount were already entrenched as powerhouses, so it was up to Farriss to find a way to break through in order to be a competitor for supremacy in the Big East Conference.

Through hard work and commitment -- and the quest to build a program from the foundation up -- Farriss has succeeded in that quest at Death Valley.

NN's rebuild reached its apex in 2021 as the Fighting Knights won the Big East Conference championship for the first time in 12 years before reaching the third round of the Class 3-A State Play-offs.



NORTHERN NASH
KNIGHTS

ANDREW FARRISS

Years at School: 5
Last Season: 11-2
Record at School: 26-16
Starters Returning: 0-5, D-7



OUTLOOK

Northern Nash's long-term building plan continues to harvest dividends as the Fighting Knights have developed into a Big East Conference powerhouse. Look for that trend to continue this fall as NN looks to defend its league championship with a veteran group.

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19.....at SW Edgecombe
Aug. 26.....at Wilson Fike
Sept. 1.....CORINTH HOLDERS
Sept. 9.....DH CONLEY
Sept. 23.....at Bunn*
Sept. 30.....ROANOKE RAPIDS*
Oct. 7.....at Nash Central*
Oct. 14.....FRANKLINTON*
Oct. 21.....SOUTHERN NASH*
Oct. 28.....at Rocky Mount*

* Denotes Big East Games

"I definitely feel like we have made some strides in the right direction," Farriss

said. "Winning the conference championship and having a good play-off run -- that was a big thing for us. But you need to have great players, and we've been fortunate with that. We

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ON THE MOVE. Northern Nash's Azariah Loring (with ball) takes a handoff from backup QB Bryson Jenkins during the Knights' football scrimmage against Hunt. (Photo Submitted by Carl Copeland)



NNHS HEAD COACH ANDREW FARRISS



SOLID ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BALL. Look for Ashton Rhodes to excel on both offense and defense this season. (Graphic photo by Geoff Neville)



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SOUTHERN NASH

FIREBIRDS



KEYWORDS - DOUBLE-WING DOMINANCE, TRADITION
DEFENSE A KEY FOR SN

By GEOFF NEVILLE
Graphic Sportswriter

STANHOPE

Southern Nash's list of offensive stars is almost limitless through the years -- and is showing no signs of slowing down. But while SN is expected to pile up the points once again this fall, the Firebirds' true success might depend on their fortunes on the other sides of the ball -- especially in the Big East Conference, which is loaded with elite-level offensive performers.

Whichever team shows the most ability to stop others will probably walk away with the league crown, something SN has become accustomed to over the past decade -- though Northern Nash was last year's champion.

SN second-year head coach Brian Batchelor feels like he has the pieces in place to form a stand-out defense. The Firebirds are blessed with speed, athleticism and experience on defense and welcome back seven starters from that side



SOUTHERN NASH FIREBIRDS

BRIAN BATCHELOR

Years at School: 2
Last Season: 9-2
Record at School: 9-2
Starters Returning: 0-7, D-7



OUTLOOK

Brian Batchelor's first season at Southern Nash was a successful one as the Firebirds reached the second round of the playoffs. With a strong group returning, look for the Firebirds to once again be one of the top teams in the ultra-competitive Big East Conference.

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19.....EAST WAKE
Aug. 26.....at Corinth Holders
Sept. 1.....WILSON FIKE
Sept. 9.....at South Granville
Sept. 16.....NASH CENTRAL*
Sept. 23.....at Roanoke Rapids*
Oct. 7.....BUNN*
Oct. 14.....ROCKY MOUNT*
Oct. 21.....at Northern Nash*
Oct. 28.....at Franklinton*

* Denotes Big East Games

of the ball.

"We've got a lot of guys back on defense," Batchelor said. "The biggest thing is that we don't have a lot of depth there. We can't have a lot of injuries. But this is probably the most experience we've had coming back on defense in a



NEXT IN LINE. Southern Nash High School has a rich tradition of producing elite-level running backs, and look for senior Tralon Mitchell to continue that lofty trend. (Graphic photo by Geoff Neville)

long time."

SN allowed 14 points or less in five of its outings in 2021, which closed with the Firebirds going 9-2 overall while reaching the second round of the Class 3-A State Playoffs.

Southern should be

tenacious up front on defense, led by Dusty Hall, Malakai Dobbins, TJ Whitaker and Chris Harris. John Tolleson, also a standout tight end, will also be in the rotation.

At linebacker, the Firebirds will rely on Logan Saunders, Darray Lynch, Madison Jones and Isaac Joyner, while the secondary will be paced by Thomas Copeland and Jaden Whitaker.

Southern's offense will have to find a

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SOUTHERN NASH'S LOGAN SAUNDERS



SOUTHERN NASH'S LEVI ROGERS



SOUTHERN NASH'S DUSTY HALL



SOUTHERN NASH'S MALAKAI DOBBINS



LEADING THE WAY. Southern Nash High School's Darray Lynch runs behind a sturdy group of blockers during recent scrimmage action at the annual Wilson Fike Football Jamboree. (Graphic photo by Geoff Neville)



SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL DEFENSIVE END JOHN TOLLESON

ROCKY MOUNT

GRYPHONS



KEYWORDS - VETERAN LEADERSHIP, REDEMPTION TOUR RETURN TO THE NORM?

By GEOFF NEVILLE
Graphic Sportswriter

ROCKY MOUNT

Great expectations are part of grid-iron equation at Rocky Mount High School -- and for good reason.

Year in and year out, the Gryphons compete for Big East Conference supremacy and beyond, and even have two state finals appearances (and one championship) to their credit over the past decade.

So it's big news when Rocky Mount has a losing season, such as the one the Gryphons experienced in 2021.

Things started out well enough for RM, beginning with a campaign-opening victory over perennial powerhouse Tarboro.

At one point, the Gryphons were 5-2, but Coach Jason Battle's club lost all of its games down the stretch against Big East Class 3-A foes, including a stunning setback at Franklinton.

RM's slate then ended with a defeat at Havelock in the opening round of the playoffs.

Such work is unexpected and unacceptable at Rocky Mount -- one of the area's most tradition-rich program.

So it's safe to say that motivation was a key

ROCKY MOUNT GRYPHONS

JASON BATTLE

Years at School:
11
Last Season:
5-6
Record at School:
84 - 38
Starters Returning:
0-6, D-4



OUTLOOK

A return to regular form is the priority this season at RM, which went through an uncharacteristic 5-6 campaign last fall. The Gryphons have the talent and veteran presence to once again be a factor in the Big East Conference under long-time head coach Jason Battle.

2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19.....at Tarboro
Aug. 26.....NORTHEASTERN
Sept. 1.....at Edenton Holmes
Sept. 9.....GOLDSBORO
Sept. 16.....at Bunn*
Sept. 30.....NASH CENTRAL*
Oct. 7.....at Roanoke Rapids*
Oct. 14.....at Southern Nash*
Oct. 21.....FRANKLINTON*
Oct. 28.....NORTHERN NASH*
* Denotes Big East Games

part of the Gryphons' off-season workouts -- and RM is more than ready to make amends for its 2021 disappointment.

The Gryphons have a wealth of talent returning, so look for Battle and Company to once again be a factor in the Big East race.

RM will also have a ton of veteran leadership back, beginning with senior quarterback Stephon Jones, now in his third campaign as the



ALL FIRED UP. The Rocky Mount Gryphons are prepared to make amends for the disappointing finish to the 2021 high school football campaign under Jason Battle. (Graphic photo by Geoff Neville)



ONE OF THE BEST. Nashville native Jason Battle has a state title to his credit at Rocky Mount High School. (Graphic photo by Geoff Neville)



DOMINANT FORCE FOR RMHS. Rocky Mount High School senior veteran DeAndre Lynch is regarded as one of the top defensive standouts in Eastern North Carolina. (Graphic photo by Geoff Neville)



ROCKY MOUNT'S
JAEDON NORWOOD

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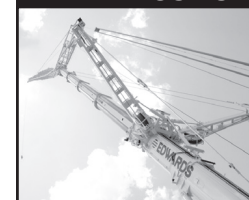
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KEYWORDS - NEW STADIUM, SAME LOFTY EXPECTATIONS
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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN'S
KERRON BALDWIN

By TROY BARANIK
NCWC Sports Info

ROCKY MOUNT
-- The 2022 North Carolina Wesleyan University football team, led by 10th year coach Jeff Filkovski, will now compete at its brand-new turf field -- "Don Stallings Field

at Vernon T. Bradley, Jr. Stadium" -- this season. The Bishops will be in a somewhat new 8-team USA South football conference as the long-time league add Belhaven Univ. (Miss.) and subtract Averett. Wesleyan returns



SIAS THE SACK MASTER. Charles Sias (48) is one of the key returnees on defense this season for the North Carolina Wesleyan University football team. The Bishops will look for another strong finish in the competitive USA Conference standings. (Photo Submitted by NCWC Sports Information)

Conference Rookie of the Year, RB Trevon Crank, as well as WRs Chase Corey and Sean Washington. There will be a quarterback battle as well between junior Storm Yarbrough and sophomores Alex Stack, Chaz Hirschman and Zach Marquis for the starting QB gig

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN'S
TREY BLACKWELL



NCWC QB
CHAZ HIRSCHMANN



NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN'S NEW ON-CAMPUS FACILITY
DON STALLINGS FIELD AT VERNON T. BRADLEY JR. STADIUM

Down East Viking Classic scheduled

From Staff Reports

ROCKY MOUNT
-- The City of Rocky Mount, in collaboration with Elizabeth City State University, has announced that the 25th Annual Down East Viking Football Classic will take place on September 10 at 4 p.m. at the Rocky Mount Athletic Stadium.

This year's game will bring Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association football to the city as Elizabeth City State takes on Livingstone College in a conference rivalry matchup. Game tickets are \$30 and are available for purchase Mondays-Fridays from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Booker T. Washington Commu-

nity Center (727 Pennsylvania Ave.) in Rocky Mount. Those wishing to tailgate must reserve a spot by visiting the Booker T. Washington Community Center.

Tailgating packages are \$100, while RV packages are \$120. Tailgating and RV packages include the spot, one

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SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL ALUM QUINTON COOLEY
NOW AT WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY
(Photo Courtesy Wake Forest University Sports Information)



SNAP IT UP. Northern Nash High School's Hayden Joyner and the rest of the Fighting Knights will look to defend their Big East Conference football championship this season. (Photo Submitted by Carl Copeland)

Big East Should Be Crazy Again

By GEOFF NEVILLE
Graphic Sportswriter

NASH COUNTY -- In just one season, the revamped Big East Conference established itself as one of Eastern North Carolina's top football leagues -- on a pair of different classifications.

When the newest version of the Big East was formed during the latest North Carolina High School Athletic Association realignment before the 2021-22 school year, it feauted a complete reshaping while moving from six to eight schools.

Holdovers Rocky Mount, Northern Nash, Southern Nash and Franklinton remained in the Big East on the 3-A level, but four 2-A newcomers were brought in to create



NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL'S
SEBREYON GIBSON

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COLLEGE SKEDS

APPALACHIAN STATE
Coach: Shawn Clark

• September 3 --

NORTH CAROLINA

• September 10 -- at Texas A&M

• September 17 -- TROY*

• September 24 -- JAMES MADISON*

• October 1 -- THE CITADEL

• October 8 -- at Texas State*

• October 19 -- GEORGIA STATE*

• October 29 -- ROBERT MORRIS*

• November 3 -- at Coastal Carolina*

• November 12 -- at Marshall*

• November 19 -- OLD DOMINION*

• November 26 -- at Georgia Southern*

* -- Denotes Sun Belt Conference Games

BARTON COLLEGE
Coach: Chip Hester

• September 1 -- at Chowan

• September 10 -- at Davidson

• September 17 -- at Virginia-Wise*

• September 24 -- MARS HILL*

• October 1 -- TUSCULUM*

• October 8 -- at Newberry*

• October 15 -- LENOIR-RHYNE*

• October 22 -- at Wingate*

• October 29 -- CATAWBA*

• November 5 -- at Limestone*

• November 12 -- ERSKINE*

* -- Denotes South Atlantic Conference Games

CAMPBELL
Coach: Mike Minter

• September 2 -- THE



SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL ALUM
DAE'ONE WILKINS
NOW AT FURMAN UNIVERSITY
(Photo Courtesy Furman Sports Information)

CITADEL

• September 10 -- at William and Mary

• September 17 -- at East Carolina

• October 1 -- NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL

• October 8 -- CHARLESTON SOUTH-EERN*

• October 15 -- ROBERT MORRIS*

• October 22 -- at Jackson State

• October 29 -- at North Carolina A&T*

• November 5 -- at Bryant*

• November 12 -- GARDNER-WEBB*

• November 19 -- at Delaware State

* -- Denotes Big South Conference Games

DUKE

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CLASSIC

continued from page 6

stadium parking pass and two game tickets.

Game tickets are also available via <https://bit.ly/3zbYuWN>.

For more information regarding tailgating, call 252-467-4925.

The Down East Viking Football Classic is known for the tremendous economic impact it brings to Rocky Mount each year.

This year will prove to be no different with additional events including a concert on Sept. 9 at 7:30 p.m. at the Rocky Mount Event Center featuring

nationally known rap artists Jeezy and Plies.

Tickets for the concert are available at rockymountevents.com.

Fans may interact with Elizabeth City State University players and coaches during a Fan Fest that will be held on September 9 at 5:30 p.m. at the Doubletree Hotel in Rocky Mount.

Information will soon be announced regarding the Classic's annual golf outing, as well as educational opportunities for local high school students.

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Northern Nash High School Knights

Rocky Mount Academy Eagles

Rocky Mount High School Gryphons

Southern Nash High School Firebirds



SOUTHERN NASH'S LANDEN BAKER

BE

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a split-classification conference -- Louisville, Bunn, Roanoke Rapids and Nash Central.

Wilson Fike and Wilson Hunt, both of which were Class 3-A schools, left the conference.

In football, the highest-finishing 3-A and 2-A schools were guaranteed automatic berths in the state playoffs, but there was certainly plenty to play for on the wild-card level.

As it turned out, only Louisville in Class 2-A did not qualify for the playoffs. Northern Nash (3-A) and Nash Central (2-A) were the Big East's top finishers in their respective classification, and each of them would ultimately reach the third round of the state playoffs.

Look for Big East action to once again be intense this fall as NN and NC look to defend their crowns.

Northern Nash has ascended to the top of the Big East as part of Coach Andrew Farriss' building plan, and the Fighting Knights should once again be strong this fall thanks to a strong group of returnees.

But Farriss understands nothing comes easily in the Big East, especially when 3-A foes Southern Nash and Rocky Mount have a rich tradition -- and annual expectation -- of winning.

"It will be interesting to see how it goes," Farriss said. "Last year, it seemed like so many of the top guys in the conference were juniors.

"So, when you look at everybody's roster, you feel like nobody really lost that much. You're going to have to come to play every week."

Southern Nash looks poised for a potential crown run this fall, with several standouts back from the 2021 group, which reached the second round of the Class 3-A State Playoffs.

And Rocky Mount is certainly motivated for a good year after last season's disappointment as the Gryphons dropped each of their three league games against Big East foes, including a stunning upset against Franklin-

ton. Veteran RM head coach Jason Battle expects 2022 to go better for his Gryphons, but once again the high level of Big East opponents makes that job a difficult one.

Franklinton, the other Class 3-A participant, is a bit of a wild-card after legendary coach Jimmy Williams retired in the off-season.

Long-time assistant Elerod 'Mo' Morris will take over as Franklinton's head coach this fall.

Morris was a great player at Bertie and Winston-Salem State, and is a member of the WSSU Athletics Hall of Fame.

On the Class 2-A level, one thing became evident in 2021 -- any Big East foe could beat another on a given day.

When the carousel finally ended, Nash Central, which was supposed to be in a rebuilding phase, claimed the top spot in the conference with a tight victory at Roanoke Rapids.

The Bulldogs' program appears to be headed in an upward direction, but there is once again the theme that competition will be fierce in the Big East.

Roanoke Rapids and Louisville both have a wealth of quality performers returning, and LHS is just two years removed from making it to the semifinals of the Class 1-A State Playoffs.

And Bunn, another school known for its standout gridiron tradition, looks to make a shift up the standings with the arrival of new coach Dennis Burton.

"Louisburg and Roanoke Rapids were both very young last year," Lee said. "Bunn has a first-year coach, and they always have athletes. It will probably be another situation of anybody can beat anybody that last half of the year."

The Big East schedule will start on September 16. Once again, Louisville has elected not to play the three Class 3-A schools from Nash County, but will play Franklinton, a backyard rival in Franklin County.



ROCKY MOUNT HIGH SCHOOL ALUM SHYHEIM BATTLE
NOW AT NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY
(Photo Courtesy NC State University Sports Information)

SKEDS

continued from page 7

Coach: Mike Elko
• September 2 -- TEMPLE
• September 10 -- at Northwestern
• September 17 -- NORTH CAROLINA A&T
• September 24 -- at Kansas
• October 1 -- VIRGINIA*
• October 8 -- at Georgia Tech*
• October 15 -- NORTH CAROLINA*
• October 22 -- at Miami (Fla.)*
• November 4 -- at Boston College*
• November 12 -- VIRGINIA TECH*
• November 19 -- at Pittsburgh*
• November 26 -- WAKE FOREST*
* -- Denotes Atlantic Coast Conference Games

EAST CAROLINA
Coach: Mike Houston
• September 3 -- NORTH CAROLINA STATE
• September 10 -- OLD DOMINION
• September 17 -- CAMPBELL
• September 24 -- NAVY*
• October 1 -- at South Florida*
• October 8 -- at Tulane*
• October 15 -- MEMPHIS*
• October 22 -- CENTRAL FLORIDA*
• October 28 -- at BYU
• November 11 -- at Cincinnati*
• November 19 -- HOUSTON*
• November 26 -- at Temple*
* -- Denotes American Athletic Conference Games

LOUISBURG COLLEGE
Coach: Quinderra Spellman
• September 3 -- vs. Central International College (at neutral site of Field of Dreams, Waverly, Virginia)
• September 18 -- at Christopher Newport University
• September 24 -- ASA (MIAMI)
• October 2 -- vs. Hocking College (at neutral site of Concord University, Athens, West Virginia)
• October 8 -- vs. Georgia Military College (at neutral site of Brookland-Cayce High School, Cayce, South Carolina)
• October 15 -- MYRTLE BEACH PREP
• October 22 -- RAMAH
• October 29 -- at Newport News Apprentice School
• November 5 -- vs. AHOP Christian Academy (at neutral site of Durham County Stadium)
Note: All Home Games Will Be Played At Louisville High School
NORTH CAROLINA
Coach: Mack Brown
• August 27 -- FLORIDA A&M
• September 3 -- at



NORTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL ALUM KAMERON JOHNSON
NOW AT BARTON COLLEGE
(Photo Courtesy Barton College Sports Information/Matt Proseus)

Appalachian State
• September 10 -- at Georgia State
• September 24 -- NOTRE DAME
• October 1 -- VIRGINIA TECH*
• October 8 -- at Miami (Fla.)*
• October 15 -- at Duke*
• October 29 -- PITTSBURGH*
• November 5 -- at Virginia*
• November 12 -- at Wake Forest*
• November 19 -- GEORGIA TECH*
• November 25 -- NORTH CAROLINA STATE*
* -- Denotes Atlantic Coast Conference Games

NORTH CAROLINA A&T
Coach: Sam Washington
• September 3 -- vs. North Carolina Central (at Bank of America Stadium, Charlotte)
• September 10 -- at North Dakota State
• September 17 -- at Duke
• September 24 -- SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
• October 1 -- BRYANT*
• October 15 -- EDWARD WATERS
• October 22 -- at Robert Morris*
• October 29 -- CAMPBELL*
• November 5 -- NORFOLK STATE
• November 12 -- CHARLESTON SOUTHERN*
• November 19 -- at Gardner-Webb*
* -- Denotes Big South

Conference Games
NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL
Coach: Trei Oliver
• September 3 -- vs. North Carolina A&T (at neutral site of Bank of America Stadium, Charlotte)
• September 10 -- WINSTON-SALEM STATE
• September 17 -- at New Hampshire
• September 24 -- VIRGINIA-LYNCHBURG
• October 1 -- at Campbell
• October 13 -- MORGAN STATE*
• October 22 -- at South Carolina State*
• October 29 -- at Delaware State*
• November 5 -- HOWARD*
• November 12 -- at Norfolk State*
• November 19 -- at Tennessee Tech
-- Denotes MEAC Games
NORTH CAROLINA STATE
Coach: Dave Doeren
• September 3 -- at East Carolina
• September 10 -- CHARLESTON SOUTHERN
• September 17 -- TEXAS TECH
• September 24 -- CONNECTICUT
• October 1 -- at Clemson*
• October 8 -- FLORIDA STATE*
• October 15 -- at Syracuse*
• October 27 -- VIRGINIA TECH*
• November 5 -- WAKE FOREST*
• November 12 -- BOSTON COLLEGE*
• November 19 -- at

Louisville*
• November 25 -- at North Carolina*
NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN
Coach: Jeff Filkovski
• September 3 -- at Randolph-Macon
• September 10 -- at Shenandoah
• September 17 -- BRIDGEWATER
• September 24 -- at Southern Virginia*
• October 1 -- LAGRANGE*
• October 8 -- at Belhaven (Miss.)*
• October 15 -- METHUEN*
• October 22 -- at Maryville*
• November 5 -- HUNTINGDON*
• November 12 -- at Greensboro*
* -- Denotes USA South Conference Games
WAKE FOREST
Coach: Dave Clawson
• September 1 -- VIRGINIA MILITARY
• September 10 -- at Vanderbilt
• September 17 -- LIBERTY
• September 24 -- CLEMSON*
• October 1 -- at Florida State*
• October 8 -- ARMY
• October 22 -- BOSTON COLLEGE*
• October 29 -- at Louisville*
• November 5 -- at North Carolina State*
• November 12 -- NORTH CAROLINA*
• November 19 -- SYRACUSE*
• November 26 -- at Duke*
* -- Denotes Atlantic Coast Conference Games

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SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR MITCHELL JONES

WHIG Will Carry Football Games

By GEOFF NEVILLE
Graphic Sportswriter

NASH COUNTY -- Fans of high school football in the area can once again catch their favorite teams in action this fall on WHIG-TV.

WHIG will once again air its 'Game of the Week' featuring the top contests from Nash, Edgecombe and Wilson Counties.

The complete WHIG-TV football schedule is as follows:

- August 19 -- Rocky Mount at Tarboro
- August 26 -- Northern Nash at Wilson Fike
- September 1 -- Wilson Fike at Southern Nash
- September 9 -- SW Edgecombe at Tarboro
- September 16 -- Nash Central at South-

ern Nash

- September 30 -- Nash Central at Rocky Mount
- October 7 -- Northern Nash at Nash Central
- October 14 -- Rocky Mount at Southern Nash
- October 21 -- Southern Nash at Northern Nash
- October 28 -- Wilson Fike at Wilson Hunt



ROCKY MOUNT VETERAN QUARTERBACK STEPHON JONES

NCWC

continued from page 6

this season.

Wesleyan also returns all-conference O-lineman Chris Hatch and Elijah Broach to further enhance the running attack led by new Offensive Coord. Matt Keith.

The Bishop defense then brings back senior DE/LB Charles Sias and senior nose tackle Noah Roberson up front while senior safety RJ Carter and sophomore safety Korey Hunter will both patrol the deep part of the field.

Senior LBs Luke Moorhead and Deante Lucenti also return

to add stability in the middle while junior CB Benyon Williams will also look again to lock down opposing WRs this season again.

The Bishops will be led by their strong running game and balanced defense this season as they open September 3 on the road at 6 p.m. at Randolph-Macon.

Wesleyan will then head to Shenandoah for a night game on September 10 before the Bishops will christen their brand new field on September 17 at noon when they host Bridgewater Col-

lege.

Homecoming will be October 1 at Noon vs. LaGrange while the Bishops' first game under the lights at home will be October 15 vs. rival Methodist University out of Fayetteville.

North Carolina Wesleyan will then complete its home schedule with a senior day game November 5 at Noon vs. Huntingdon.

Follow ncwcsports.com for the latest news, results and recaps of North Carolina Wesleyan University sports.



NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL'S CARSON TADLOCK

NCHS

continued from page 2

linebackers will be Elijah Harrison, Isaiah Finkley, Isaiah Draughn and Nykeem Johnson.

The secondary will be fast and experienced and will feature Daryl Watson, Javaris Jones and Dominique Whitehead.

"We should be pretty good on defense again," Lee said. "We don't have the biggest group, but we are fast, and we get to the ball quickly."

Nash Central will once again line up in its preferred wing-T formation on offense, but the Bulldogs will have to replace workhorse Justus Staten -- now at Chowan University.

Despite Staten's loss, the Bulldogs have plenty of options, including the speedy Jones. Other backs will be Watson, Draughn and Whitehead.

Jayden Ellis returns at quarterback, and Lee will be looking to throw the ball more this season in order to keep opposing defenses honest.

Top receiving options for Nash Central include veterans Greyson Richardson and Juanya Horne.

The Bulldogs' offensive line will have to be completely rebuilt. Top candidates for duty up front are Blake Hedgepeth, Josh Vinson, Whitfield, Jaden Whitaker and Jah Strayhorne.

Tight ends will be De'Angelo Johnson and Jon-Ayden Horne.

"Right now, the offensive line is a question mark for us," Lee said. "We need them to develop if we want to run the football. It's a work in progress. But if those guys come around, we should have a pretty good season."

Once again, Nash Central's schedule will be top heavy as the Bulldogs will tangle with the Class 3-A Big East programs to begin the league schedule.

But Central's playoff fate will be determined by its work down the stretch against Bunn, Louisburg and Roanoke Rapids. One of those squads will receive an automatic berth out of the Big East for the Class 2-A State Playoffs -- something the Bulldogs achieved during the 2021 campaign.



NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL'S JORDAN WILLIAMS

Hornets set for EWFL action

By GEOFF NEVILLE
Graphic Sportswriter

NASHVILLE -- The Nash County Hornets will once again compete in the East Wake Football League this fall.

The Hornets, under the direction of the Nash County Parks and Recreation Department, will kick off their campaign August 27 on the road against Riley Hill in Wake County.

Nash County's initial home game will be September 17 against Zebulon.

Nash County will play its home contests at The Hornets Next at historic Glover Park in Nashville.

Action will begin at 4 p.m. with the Fifth Quarter matchup.

Nash County's complete sched-

ule is as follows, with home events listed in CAPS:

- Regular Season
- August 27 -- at Riley Hill
 - September 10 -- at Knightdale
 - September 17 -- ZEBULON
 - October 1 -- LOUISBURG
 - October 8 -- TRI-CITY
 - October 15 -- at Bunn
 - October 22 -- at Franklinton
 - October 29 -- WENDELL
- Playoffs
- November 5 -- Quarterfinal hosts will be Bunn, Wendell, East Chatham and Nash County
 - November 12 -- Semifinal hosts will be Durham and Clayton
 - November 19 -- Championship games will be played at Fuquay-Varina
- Also, the annual Cheer Explosion will be held November 6 at Bunn.



NORTHERN NASH'S BARIAN STRICKLAND

NNHS

continued from page 3

are headed in the direction we want to be -- now we just have to keep going."

For the first time in quite awhile, Northern Nash finds itself in a unique position. The Knights will now be the favorite in most of their games, and foes like Southern Nash and Rocky Mount will be circling 'NN' on their respective schedules -- as opposed to the other way around.

But to Farriss, the view from the top sure looks nice. There was just one fowl feeling from last season -- the Knights' heartbreaking final-minute loss to Scotland in the playoffs.

"We felt like we should have won that game," Farriss said. "That would have been a huge step for us to take. But now we know we have the ability to compete with a program like Scotland's, which is one of the best around. It was a step in the process -- now we want to take the next step. Our guys are ready."

It always helps to have a high-level quarterback, and Northern Nash certainly has one in returnee Keno Jones.

Jones is a natural to run NN's spread offense, and the Knights might even throw the ball more this season to give Jones and his backfield mates more room to operate.

RJ Loring, who burst onto the scene last fall, has graduated, but his younger brother, Azariah, will share time in the Knights' backfield with Dywhaun Mitchell.

NN is deep at the receiver position, with options including Randall King, Trey Battle and Yasin Davis-McKinney.

Ashton Rhodes will line up at tight end, and also has the ability to

wreak havoc as the defensive end.

Along the offensive line, Northern Nash lost all five of its starters, so Farriss will rely on a revamped unit that features Briston Manning, Sam Huddleston, Jordan Jones, Chason Boseman and Trey Glover.

NN should be sturdy on the defensive side of the ball, with Chris Manning, Rhodes and Decarlos Richardson forming a quality up-front trio.

Northern's linebackers will be fast and experienced, led by All-Big East returnee Carson Jenkins.

Other linebacking options are Andrew Zipko, Barian Strickland, Conner Baker and speedster Allen Barnes.

Doug Pender and Kaleb Staton will line up at cornerback, and Elijay Pitt will be at safety.

All-Big East standout Bryson Jenkins will once again handle the kicking duties while also serving as the Fighting Knights' backup quarterback.

Northern Nash went 11-2 overall last season, with the lone losses coming to acclaimed programs Scotland and DH Conley -- by a combined five points.

The Fighting Knights will get another shot at Conley this fall, and that event will be held September 9 at historic Death Valley on the NNHS campus in Red Oak.

Northern Nash will kick off its Big East Conference crown defense on September 23 with a road game against the Bunn Wildcats.

NN will face county rivals Southern Nash (October 21 at home) and Rocky Mount (October 28 on the road) to close out regular season action in the always-strong Big East Conference.



NORTHERN NASH VETERAN KICKER BRYSON JENKINS



SOUTHERN NASH STARTING QUARTERBACK BROCK ALFORD

SNHS

continued from page 4

way to overcome the loss of standout running back Jackson Vick, who is now a freshman defensive back at North Carolina State University.

Tralon Mitchell eclipsed the 1,000-yard mark last season at wingback, and should have an increased role this fall in the Firebirds' potent offense.

Mitchell Jones will also receive his share of carries, as will starting fullback Nathaniel Palacios.

Brock Alford returns at quarterback and will have a pair of receiving weapons at tight end -- Tolleson and Landen Baker.

Batchelor expects his offensive line to be stout, with Keegan Wallace, Saveon Vandunk, Noah Cauble, Logan Wiggins and Bryce Auton leading the way.

"We're built a little differently this year," Batchelor said. "Last

year, we didn't have a lot of depth along our offensive and defensive lines, but we do now.

"But last year, we had a lot of skill guys who were adaptable and could do different things. We have potential to have depth at the skill positions, but a lot of that depends on how some of our younger guys develop."

Though he has been around the Southern Nash football program going back to his playing days in the mid-1990s, last season was Batchelor's first as the Firebirds' head coach following the retirement of the legendary Brian Foster.

Foster built SN from the ground up into one of the state's elite programs, and Batchelor has vowed to keep that work intact.

But while the transition was mainly seamless in 2021 due to the return of so many

long-time staff members, it also proved to be a period of adjustment for Batchelor.

"I learned a lot of things last year," Batchelor said. "Any time you go from being an assistant to a head coach, it's a big change. It's crazy to look back on it and thing about how much I learned."

Still, Southern Nash was theoretically only one point away from winning the Big East as the Firebirds dropped a one-point decision in overtime to Northern Nash.

Once again, those clubs are expected to be competing for the top spot in the Big East, and long-time powerhouse Rocky Mount cannot be discounted, either.

SN will undertake a challenging non-league schedule before kicking off its Big East slate on September 16 at home versus Nash Central.



BIG-TIME BACK FOR RMHS. Rocky Mount High School's Elijah Battle (right) takes a handoff from quarterback Stephon Jones during a recent football practice on the RMHS campus. (Graphic photo by Geoff Neville)

RMHS

continued from page 5

club's starting signal-caller.

Jones has a strong arm and will have some capable targets, led by returning standout Seallio Alphonse, along with Da'marhjae Mitchell and Shamarhjae Mitchell.

Alphonse is regarded as one of the top wide receivers in Eastern North Carolina, and he has been a mainstay for RM the past two campaigns.

Backfield options in Rocky Mount's wing-T set include Elijah Battle and Isaiah Silver and DeAndre Lynch and Damarus Cross will see time at tight end.

Manning the offensive line for the Gryphons will be Eric Gupton, Earl Williams, Johnny Horton, Hakeem Harrison and Demetrius Artis, who is the 'lightest' of the size-heavy crew at 250 pounds.

Rocky Mount should also be sturdy along its defensive front, led by the veteran Lynch -- one of the area's most feared stars on that side of the ball.

Joining Lynch up front will be Marcus Towah, Joshua Perkins and Jah'Kelvis Daniels, while the linebacker group will feature Jaedon Norwood and Tavoris Parker.

The defensive backs group will be an experienced one with seniors Shamarhjae Mitchell, Da'marhjae Mitchell, Naszier Hasan and Bryson Phillips set to see extensive playing time.

Sophomore Christian Buck, who was nearly perfect on extra points as a ninth-grader, will handle the kicking duties.

Once again, the Gryphons will undertake a challenging non-league schedule before beginning Big East Conference play September 16 on the road against the Bunn Wildcats.

RM's league fate will be determined in large part due to its finish in key county games against Southern Nash (October 14 on the road) and Northern Nash (October 28 at home).

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~ *Callie G. • Tarboro, NC*

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NASH CENTRAL 2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

AUGUST 26 SEPTEMBER 9 SEPTEMBER 16 SEPTEMBER 23 SEPTEMBER 30	at Smithfield Selma NORTH JOHNSTON at Southern Nash FRANKLINTON at Rocky Mount	OCTOBER 7 OCTOBER 14 OCTOBER 21 OCTOBER 28	NORTHERN NASH at Bunn at Louisburg RONAOKE RAPIDS
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NORTH CAROLINA
TARHEELS

2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent
Saturday • August 27	Florida A&M
Saturday • September 3	at Appalachian State
Saturday • September 10	at Georgia State
Saturday • September 24	Notre Dame
Saturday • October 1	Virginia Tech
Saturday • October 8	at Miami
Saturday • October 15	at Duke
Saturday • October 29	Pittsburgh
Saturday • November 5	at Virginia
Saturday • November 12	at Wake Forest
Saturday • November 19	Georgia Tech
Friday • November 25	NC State



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NORTHERN NASH
HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL
2022 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19	SouthWest Edgecombe	Away
Aug. 26	Wilson Fike	Away
Sept. 1	Corinth Holders	Home
Sept. 9	DH Conley	Home
Sept. 23	Bunn	Away
Sept. 30	Roanoke Rapids	Home
Oct. 7	Nash Central	Away
Oct. 14	Franklinton	Home
Oct. 21	Southern Nash	Home
Oct. 28	Rocky Mount	Away

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Rocky Mount Academy
EAGLES

2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT
September 1	Halifax Academy
September 9	OPEN
September 16	John Paull II Catholic
September 23	at Cary Christian School
September 30*	Wayne Christian School
October 14	Faith Christian School
October 21	Arendell Parrott Academy
*HOMECOMING	

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Rocky Mount Gryphon Football Schedule

Date	Opponent
August 19	at Tarboro
August 26	ELIZ. CITY NORTHEASTERN
September 1	at Edenton Holmes
September 9	GOLDSBORO
September 16	at Bunn
September 30	NASH CENTRAL
October 7	at Roanoke Rapids
October 14	at Southern Nash
October 21	FRANKLINTON
October 28	NORTHERN NASH



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