

THE NASHVILLE GRAPHIC

PIGSKIN

2025

CROSSING THE 50

A mid-season review of
high school football



**NASH CENTRAL
BULLDOGS**



**SOUTHERN NASH
FIREBIRDS**



**ROCKY MOUNT
GRYPHONS**



**NORTHERN NASH
KNIGHTS**



NASH CENTRAL

BULLDOGS



Photo by Meryn Johnson

“Our goal of winning a conference championship is still there for us.”

—NCHS Coach Chris Lee

NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL ROSTER

1 Nate Wiggins	8 Jaice Johnson	15 David Porter	23 Braylon Whitley	55 Jonathan Eason
2 Maurice Parker	9 Kameron Tucker	16 Liam Kopf	30 Jahkee Wilder	56 Cody Messer
3 Amari Cobb	10 ZaQuez Britt	17 Chris Lynch	31 Dominic Wozniak	58 Landon Piatt
4 Elijah Dunn	11 Taliek Morris	18 Robert Pitt	32 Elijah Horton RB	59 Jayden Whitaker
5 Kamarian Spell	12 Aiden Parks	19 Khaliq Sherrod	40 Cole Ambrose	60 Cameron Proctor
6 Tristian Whitley	13 Semaj Fobbs	20 Robert Dupree	52 Avery Flowers	72 Jacob Duston Moore
7 Winston Lee	14 Emory Bynum	22 Tamari Tucker	54 Davion Lewis	76 Caiden Hill

BULLDOGS UNLEASHED

BY CHANCE PUCKETT
Graphic Correspondent

NASHVILLE - The start of the 2025 season was always going to be difficult for the Nash Central Bulldogs.

After opening the year against SouthWest Edgecombe, the Bulldogs played back-to-back-to-back games against county opponents Northern Nash, Rocky Mount and Southern Nash, both an emotional and demanding way to begin the year.

“It was extremely tough,” said 11th-year Nash Central head football coach Chris Lee, whose Bulldogs dropped all three contests against their county foes.

“We knew that with our numbers being low and the injuries we had suffered that it would be an uphill battle.”

Unfortunately, that’s been a major storyline of Central’s season so far. The Bulldogs have dealt with seemingly countless injuries, including to multiple starting offensive lineman and most notably senior quarterback Winston Lee. Lee, who started every game under center for the Bulldogs in 2023 and 2024, was injured just two games in and hasn’t played since, undergoing surgery on Friday, September 19.

The same day that Lee underwent surgery, Nash Central played its fifth option at quarterback in as many weeks, with Kameron Tucker taking the field in last week’s 28-8 loss to Warren County.

“Most of the guys have remained positive with all the injuries to different players,” remarked the Bulldogs’ head coach, with Lee continuing to emphasize to his roster that conference play is really what is most important.

“I just keep reminding the team that our goal of winning a conference championship is still there for us,” he stated.

Lee and his squad’s inaugural season in the Class-2A/3A/4A Quad County Conference will kickoff on Friday, October 3 in what is likely to be an emotional game for Lee as Nash Central

hosts Louisburg - the school that Lee left in 2015 to become the Bulldogs’ skipper.

“Louisburg was a great place to work and coach,” he said. “I still keep in touch with a lot of my coaches from there including the head coach.”

Now a conference rival, Louisburg will be the first leg of Nash Central’s league slate, followed by the Bulldogs traveling to Roanoke Rapids on October 10.

Central’s road trip to Halifax County will be one of two away games in conference play, with an October 24 trip to Wake Prep Academy sandwiched between the Bulldogs hosting Bunn and American Leadership Academy - Johnston on October 17 and 31, respectively.

“We feel good about our



LEE



— 2025 SCHEDULE —	
AUG 22	at SW Edgecombe, W1-OFF
AUG 28	at Northern Nash, L40-7
SEPT 5	Rocky Mount, L-42-6
SEPT 12	Southern Nash, L 35-15
SEPT 19	Warren County, L 28-8
OCT 3	at Rocky Mount
OCT 10	Roanoke Rapids
OCT 17	Bunn
OCT 24	at Wake Prep Academy
OCT 31	ALAJ

chances to be competitive with everyone,” stated Lee of his 2025 squad, a team that has the opportunity to reach the playoffs for the fifth season in a row and the sixth time since 2019.

It hasn’t been all bad news for the Bulldogs recently, though. As prior to their week four game against Southern Nash the school was informed that their

game one opponent, South-West Edgecombe, used an ineligible player, turning what was originally a 13-5 loss into a forfeit win.

Now 1-4 after its week one concession victory, the Bulldogs will need to see serious strides in its offense if the team wants to keep its playoff streak alive. After Friday’s loss to Warren County, Nash Central has totaled just 751 yards of total offense thus far, only 150.2 yards per game and have reached double digit points just once, its 35-15 loss to Southern Nash, a game in which they trailed by as many as 28 points.

The Bulldogs will need to cut down on turnovers as well, as after a four-fumble night on Friday Central has now committed 10 turnovers thus far - averaging two per game.

While the team’s offensive start to the season has been slow, the two-back combo of Taliek Morris and Kamarian Spell have been a positive theme this season, each totaling over 100 yards on the ground.

“We are hoping to just keep building on how we

played against Southern,” remarked Lee, whose Bulldogs outscored the Firebirds 8-7 in the second half.

“Now that we are playing

against teams similar to us, every game should be competitive.”

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NORTHERN NASH

KNIGHTS



“We just know every week will be tough and we have to be ready every Friday.”

—NNHS Coach Andrew Farriss

NORTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL ROSTER

- 1 Logan Williams.

2 Preston McDanie

3 Terrance Saunders

4 Khanydre Wardrett

5 Joshua Ricks Sr.

6 Hylan Wheeler

7 Gehrig Miller

8 Jessie Wade

9 Caleb Mayfield
- 10 Myles Eatmon

11 Kamren Freeman

12 Hassan Davis-McKinney

14 Santrevor Silver

15 Derrick Stevenson

16 Necolus Rhodes

18 Malik Hilliard

20 Jah’Marzea Williams

21 DeNije Ruffin
- 22 Zephaniah Queen

23 De’erek Morris

24 Kee’Ziyon Moore

25 Jaquaye Arrington

28 Elijah Wood

30 Jamarcus Robinson

32 Jaylen Langley

33 Logan Lynch

34 Omare Porter
- 40 Chase Morgan

44 Jordan Harrison

51 Holton Westbrook

55 Kris Vaughan-Andrews

56 Brandon Mangum

58 Adam Braswell

60 Ricky Strickland

65 Jackson Jenkins

66 Jake Jones

67 Christopher Battle
- 70 Bryan Craig

71 Joshua Pryor

72 Josh Phillips

73 Tyler Richardson

75 Tollie West

79 Jayden Davis

82 Bailey Powell

84 Chris Beck

88 Caleb Walston

FRIDAY KNIGHT LIGHTS

BY CHANCE PUCKETT
Graphic Correspondent

RED OAK - Dating back to the Fall of 2021, Northern Nash has arguably been on its best five-year run in school history. Now sitting at 3-1 in 2025 after a 44-33 road win over South Central on Friday, Northern has compiled a 52-7 over that timeframe, capturing a trio of conference championships, appearing in a state championship game and losing just three regular season contests.

This year’s new-look Knights came into the year with high expectations and have lived up to them so far, as in addition to South Central, Northern has already checked off a win over one of the state’s top programs and avenged last year’s play-off loss by defeating J.H. Rose in week one, as well as a decisive 40-7 victory over

rival Nash Central. “I like that we have kept playing hard in whatever situation we’ve been in,” stated eighth-year Northern Nash head coach Andrew Farriss, who enters the Knights’ 2025 conference slate at 67-21 in his career as their head coach. This year Farriss and his staff will have to navigate a new league, though. As after the most recent round of North Carolina High School Athletic Association realignment, Northern Nash is now the lone 6A school in the Class-5A/6A Big East Conference. The Knights are paired with county foes Rocky Mount and Southern Nash, as well as previous members of the Class-3A Big East Fike and Hunt. True newcomers to the league include C.B. Aycock and Southern Wayne, with Aycock having won the Class-3A Quad County Conference a season ago. “We know the conference will be very tough,” said Farriss, who spent a significant



FARRISS



— 2025 SCHEDULE —

Aug. 22	.....J.H. Rose, W26-20
Aug. 28	.....Nash Central, W40-7
Sept. 5	.....Cleveland, L52-28
Sept. 19	.....at S. Central, W44-33
Sept. 25	.....at Fike
Oct. 3	.....C.B. Aycock
Oct. 10	.....at Southern Wayne
Oct. 17	.....Hunt
Oct. 24	.....at Southern Nash
Oct. 31	.....Rocky Mount

portion of his life coaching as an assistant on Hunt’s staff and later served as an assistant at Fike as well. “We just know every week will be tough and we have to be ready every Friday.” Northern Nash kicks off its league schedule on Friday, September 25 at Fike, returning home on October 3 for a homecoming matchup against C.B.

Aycock. From that point forward, the Knights will host Hunt and Rocky Mount on October 17 and 31, with those home games broken up by road trips to Southern Wayne and Southern Nash on October 10 and 24. Outside of a new conference, Northern Nash also opened its new fieldhouse prior to the start of its 2025 campaign, leveling the playing field in terms of facilities with its Nash County counterparts. “The new fieldhouse has made a lot of things much better,” said Farriss, who helped oversee the project in conjunction with the school’s Athletic Director Joey Keefe, county Athletic Director Angie Miller and the Nash County school board. “The convenience of the building has really helped a lot, it has been so positive and we are very thankful for it.” In addition to its new conference and new digs, there has been a lot of new for the Knights on the field as well.

Northern’s quarterback battle lasted until the day of the team’s first game - August 22 - when senior Hylan Wheeler was named the starter over Rocky Mount Academy transfer Gehrig Miller. Both Wheeler and Miller have seen action at quarterback thus far, with Wheeler receiving the majority of the reps. In addition to that, the Knights have relied heavily on Myles Eatmon in the running game, with the junior now having totaled over 500 yards on the ground just four games into the season. Eatmon - who was a serious contributor in 2024 as well - replaced Barian Strickland as Northern’s feature back this season, while through the air Kamren Freeman, Jah’Marzea Williams and Logan Williams have each been the team’s focal points as passcatchers. Defensively, the Knights’ top-four tacklers are all juniors, including team leader Caleb Mayfield who is followed closely by Jessie Wade - the junior linebacker

who led the team in that category a season ago. The defense and Wade specifically have already played a huge role for Northern so far, as Wade’s last-second goal line interception against Rose secured a season-opening 26-20 win for the Knights, one that kept Farriss’ streak of having never lost a season opener as a head coach alive - all while getting some revenge on the team who issued Northern’s early exit in the playoffs last year. Despite a strong start, Farriss and his staff are still eager to see improvement in certain aspects of the team, specifically pointing to consistency in the run game, pass defense and special teams. “I want to see us develop an identity on offense and find good balance. I want to see us become complete on defense and in the kicking game,” the Knights’ head coach remarked. “It’s going to take all of that as we get into the conference part of the season.”

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ROCKY MOUNT

GRYPHONS



“We must play aggressively and compete each week.”

—RMHS Coach Jason Battle

ROCKY MOUNT HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL ROSTER

1 Tavoris Parker	8 Tylik Harrell	21 Jaden Farmer	35 JaMariyon Batts	55 Ayden Harris
2 Jaden Haney	9 Denari Harrison	22 Amarion Dance	40 Jack McKellar	56 Tyler Clemmons
3 Cquarhion Mitchell	11 Micahis Lee Jones	23 Kileak Pittman	44 Jeremiah White	64 Jacquavis Avent
4 Ryan Jones	15 Anthony Fields	24 Kamari Boulware	50 Keshawn Dupree	77 Austin Parten
5 Zion Harris	17 Ur'hynus Pierce	25 Isaiah Chavis	51 Tyler Alford	85 Zamir Oliver
6 Alex Beasley	18 Kenan Barnes	26 Jakoby Parker	52 Micah Majette	99 Jackson Harris
7 Jason Battle	20 Braylen Fox	33 Antonio Santos	54 Ju'vel Clark	

ROCKY MOUNT RELOADS

BY CHANCE PUCK-ETT
Graphic Correspondent

ROCKY MOUNT - Rocky Mount High has long been a major player in this area's football scene, having won a State Championship in 2015, playing for another in 2016 and most recently falling one point short of the Big East Conference crown last year - a season that ended in the second round of the playoffs at the hands of eventual Class-3A Eastern Regional Champion Seventy-First.



BATTLE

After a 4-1 start, the lone loss a heartbreaker that came down the final minute against defending 1A State Champion Tarboro, head coach Jason Battle's Gryphons look to be primed for another strong season in 2025.

“The players are holding each other accountable for doing their jobs on and off the field,” said Battle, a 1998 Rocky Mount High School graduate and Nashville native, commending his team's fast start to the season.

Battle, who is in his 14th season leading the Gryphon program, had a busy offseason on the football field as he was selected as the head coach of the East in North Carolina's annual East-West All-Star Game.

Now squarely focused on the regular season, he's led Rocky Mount to early wins over East Wake, Nash Central, Vance County and most recently Fike, the first conference game of the season and the first game for the Gryphons in their new league, the Class-5A/6A Big East Conference.

Rocky Mount dropped Fike 42-14 on Friday, September 19, starting league play on the right foot highlighted by a whopping 311 rushing yards.



2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 22.....	Tarboro, L20-16
Aug. 28.....	East Wake, W 20-14
Sept. 5.....	At Nash Central, W42-6
Sept. 12.....	At Vance County, W41-14
Sept. 19.....	Fike, W42-14
Oct. 3.....	Southern Wayne
Oct. 10.....	At C.b. Aycock
Oct. 17.....	Southern Nash
Oct. 24.....	At Hunt
Oct.31	At Northern Nash

“We are approaching this conference no different,” remarked Battle, who has won two conference titles at Rocky Mount and has never had a losing record in league play as the Gryphons' head coach.

“We must play aggressively and compete each week.”

As always, Rocky Mount's ground game has been a force against its early opponents. The Gryphons entered Friday night's outing against Fike averaged nearly 225 rushing yards per game, headlined by senior back Tavoris Parker that posted a team-best 305 yards on the ground through Rocky Mount's first four games.

The Gryphons have had a three-headed monster of fourth-years in the backfield thus far, as Tylik Harrell and Cquarhion Mitchell entered this week with 283 and 252 rushing yards apiece, respectively, meaning that the three seniors have totaled 840 yards on the ground alone.

While running the ball has been where Rocky Mount's bread has been buttered, Alex Beasley has made an impact of his own under center. A second-year starter and a third-year varsity player, Beasley entered Friday night having tossed a pair of touchdown passes, both to senior wideout Kenan Barnes.

Defensively, the Gry-

phons have shown a lot to like so far, holding all five of their opponents to 20 points or fewer. The Gryphons 20-16 week one loss to Tarboro was the most points they've allowed so far, following that performance up with a 20-14 win over East Wake. Back-to-back road wins then succeeded the East Wake win, as Rocky Mount thumped Nash Central 42-6 then avenged last season's loss to Vance County by routing the Vipers 41-14.

The Gryphons' havoc-

wrecking defense entered Friday's tilt against Fike having forced six turnovers while curating 31 tackles for loss and 10 sacks so far, with Ryan Jones leading the way with two interceptions and a fumble recovery as well as a team-best 26 tackles courtesy of Amarion Dance.

With the first rung on the ladder crossed off in conference play, Rocky Mount will observe its bye week on September 26 before jumping back into action on October 3 against South-

ern Wayne. From that point forward, the Gryphons will play three of their final four contests away from home, with an October 17 rivalry matchup against Southern Nash serving as Rocky Mount's final regular season game at Gryphon Stadium this year.

Rocky Mount's late-season road trips include an October 10 date with C.B. Aycock, followed by back-to-back away games against Hunt and archrival Northern Nash on October 24 and 31. As always, the

Gryphons will likely be in the race for the league's crown, this year an opportunity to win their first conference championship since 2020 and the inaugural title in their new league.

“We must be the best version of Rocky Mount each Friday,” remarked Battle of his squad. “Our goal is to be the best we can be each night.”

Each of the Gryphons' five remaining games is slated for a 7 p.m. kickoff.

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Rocky Mount High School Gryphons

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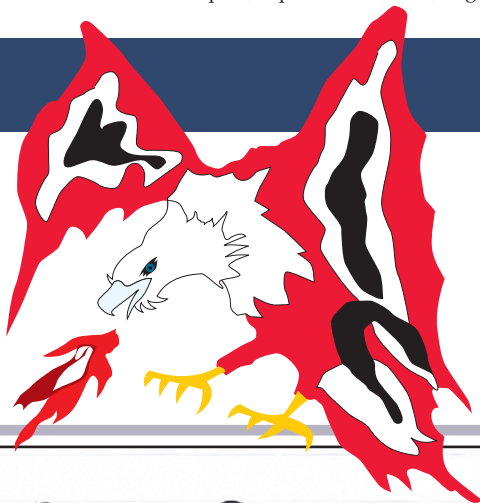
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SOUTHERN NASH

FIREBIRDS



“If you’re not concerned about who’s in front of you, that’s how you get beat.”

—SNHS Coach Brian Batchelor

SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL ROSTER

- | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Zaire Curtis | 9 Ethan Mullen | 23 Dj Baker | 50 Taj Martin | 71 Davis Manning |
| 2 Camron Lyons | 10 Isaiah Battle | 24 Brian Pulley | 52 Caden Day | 72 Wesley Immediato |
| 3 Antavious Riggins | 11 Ashton Holland | 26 Jaden Hartsfield | 54 Hemir Medina | 74 Adrian Otero |
| 4 Jeremiah Battle | 12 Marlee Alston | 28 Luke Faulkner. | 55 Demetrius Shepard | 75 Cleveland Perry Jr |
| 5 Josiah VanDunk | 14 D’Koda Rooks | 30 Ayden Myers | 60 Evan Bailey | 86 Zavion Cooke |
| 6 Zion Odom | 15 Dayshon Sanders | 31 Weston Crocker | 63 Brennen Mapp | 87 Cooper Wheaton |
| 7 Jordan Jones | 20 Joaquin Rincon | 33 Davion Hendricks | 65 Zahmir Ashford | 88 Sam Finn |
| 8 Anderson Bell | 22 LJ White | 44 Brayden Wells | 66 Tyson Boswell | |

FAST START FIREBIRDS

BY CHANCE PUCKETT
Graphic Correspondent

STANHOPE - Southern Nash has built quite the reputation for itself in recent years as one of eastern North Carolina’s top programs, and with that comes both a lot of pressure and opportunity.

It didn’t take long for major opportunities to arrive for the Firebirds in 2025, with Southern’s 4-1 start to the season coming against a fair share of strong opponents, including the likes of Knightdale, Clayton and James Kenan.

Head coach Brian Batchelor’s squad split its first two games of the year, opening the season with a 42-26 win over Knightdale followed by dropping a 49-14 decision at Clayton, and since then have ripped of three victories in a row, sneaking by James Kenan 44-42, topping Nash Central 35-15 and thumping Southern Wayne 56-6.

“Guys have stepped up and played more both ways than we traditionally do,” said Batchelor of his squad’s impressive start to the season. “I think in the long run that can help us.”

One of those crucial two-way players is Luke Faulkner, a four-year starter and now a team captain who leads the Firebirds in tackles and has also contributed nearly 200 rushing yards offensively. The son of a former Firebird football player, Todd, Faulkner is garnering attention from Division I programs around the state, earning a reputation as a high-upside, high-motor player.

“He’s the leader of that unit,” said Batchelor of Faulkner’s role on the team’s defense.

“If he’s having a good night, we’re probably doing alright.”

On the offensive side of the ball, Faulkner has

the fourth-most yards on the ground, with juniors Jaden Hartsfield and Cameron Lyons having already totaled 591 and 465 rushing yards, respectively. Additionally, D.J. Baker surpassed the 200-yard mark in Friday night’s rout of Southern Wayne, leading the team with 82 yards on the ground, a 13-yarder that resulted in a second-quarter touchdown.

Southern Nash’s matchup against Southern Wayne - the first between the two schools since 2006 - marked the start of a new era for the Firebirds, as like their county foes Northern Nash and Rocky Mount, Southern is now a part of the Class-5A/6A Big East Conference. Southern Wayne, C.B. Aycock, Fike and Hunt make up the remainder of the league, with Southern Nash perceived to be one of the favorites in the race for the conference crown.

“This time of year, you’re five weeks in and you know what you can and can’t do,” remarked Batchelor, who is in his fifth year as the head coach of the Southern Nash program.

“Regardless of who you’re playing from this point on, you’re just trying to worry about you as much as you worry about the other team.”

In a peculiar circumstance, due to the traditional rivalry week matchups between Northern Nash and Rocky Mount, Hunt and Fike, and lastly Southern Wayne and C.B. Aycock, Southern Nash will be observing its bye week at the end of the season, with its season finale coming at home against Northern Nash on October 24. Meanwhile, their Nash County counterparts have either already taken their bye week or will be doing so on September 26.

“Believe me, it is not an envious situation to have to play ten-straight weeks,” the Firebirds’ head man said. “But if you can stay healthy, it could be a positive thing. Your guys get into a groove and get some momentum



— 2025 SCHEDULE —

Aug. 22.....Knightdale, W42-46
Aug. 29.....At Clayton, L49-14
Sept. 5.....James Kenan, W44-42
Sept. 12.....At Nash Central, W,35-15
Sept. 19.....Southern Wayne, W56-6
Sept. 26.....At C.B. Aycock
Oct. 3.....Fike
Oct. 10.....At Hunt
Oct. 17.....At Rocky Mount
Oct. 24.....Northern Nash

going.”

Leading the way at 1-0 in conference play, the Firebirds are set for the first of three remaining road trips this weekend, traveling to Pikeville on September 26 for a matchup against C.B. Aycock, a team they hadn’t faced since their 43-8 victory in 2021, a game that happened to serve as Batchelor’s first home game as Southern Nash’s head coach.

Beyond that, the Firebirds’ remaining road trips will come in back-to-back weeks, renewing its long-standing rivalry with Hunt on October 10 followed by a game with major conference title and playoff implications on October 17 when the Gryphons travel to Rocky Mount.

As for its home slate, Southern will host Fike at Firebird Stadium on October 3 before wrapping up the regular season against Northern Nash, a game that recently has determined the conference champion more times than it hadn’t.

While finishing the year with consecutive games against Rocky Mount and Northern Nash looms large, Batchelor and his squad remain focused on what they consider the most important game - the next one.

“That sounds crazy to people, but we say that to our kids every single week,” said Batchelor.

“If you’re not concerned about who’s in front of you, that’s how you get beat. That’s how you play bad. That’s how you don’t play up to your standard.”

It’s not just coachspeak

though, it’s a life lesson.

“You never know how many games you’re guaranteed from an injury standpoint or stuff like that,” Batchelor remarked. “That means that who you’re play-

ing on Friday night is the most important game that you’ve ever played in.”

Each of Southern Nash’s five remaining games is scheduled for a 7 p.m. kickoff.

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