

Make Northern Nash's A Triple



NORTHERN NASH BOYS SWIM TEAM
2025-26 BIG EAST CONFERENCE CHAMPS
(Photo Submitted by Meryn Johnson)

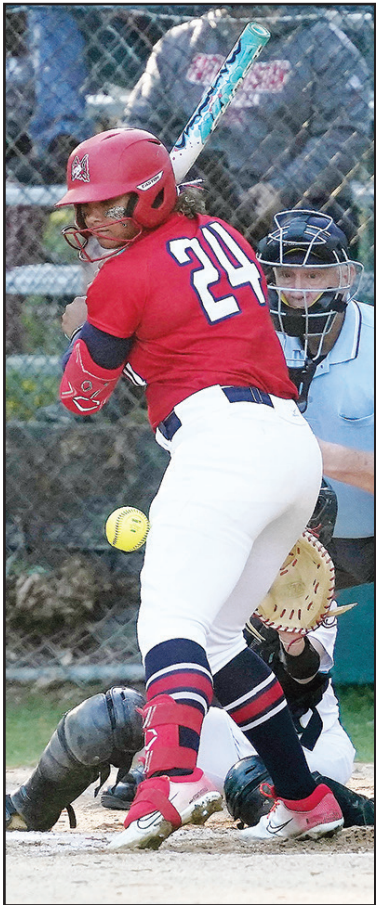
Knights pick up 3rd consecutive Big East crown

From Staff Reports

ROCKY MOUNT -- Even with so many superstar returnees, there was a bit of uncertainty about Northern Nash's chances for a three-peat in the boys standings at the Big East Conference Swim Championships.

Those concerns came mainly because of the Big East's off-season realignment, with four new schools coming in -- and

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SOUTHERN NASH'S NOEL DOBBINS

Softball's season is closing in

From Staff Reports

NASH COUNTY -- A new set of challengers await the Southern Nash Ladybirds this coming spring as they seek their eighth consecutive Big East Conference softball championship in a realigned league.

SN, which reached the Elite Eight of last year's state playoffs, will kick off its campaign under the legendary Scott Collie on February 26 with a road matchup at Rolesville in Wake County.

Northern Nash, which has enjoyed a recent program uptick, will join SN in the Big East, while Nash Central will shift to the new Quad County Conference.

Here are the schedules for

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2025-26 BIG EAST CONFERENCE BOYS BASKETBALL A BIG STEP FOR NNHS



NORTHERN NASH'S CHRIS SILVER AND ROCKY MOUNT'S BRELYN MOSES
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

Knights defeat Gryphons in rivalry showdown

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

RED OAK -- One of North Carolina's premier high school basketball rivalries added the most recent chapter to its book last week, with the Northern Nash boys thumping Rocky Mount 65-46 last Tuesday.

The Fighting Knights controlled the game from start to finish, leading by as



many as 30 minutes in the game's third period in the first of two scheduled meetings between the longtime foes.

"I felt the guys were focused and handled the pressure of the game well," said longtime Northern Nash head coach Henry Drake, who through 12 seasons leading the Knights program is now 19-13 against the Gryphons.

"We talked a lot about how the community waits to see these two games every

year from old to young," Drake remarked. "Everyone is wearing their letterman jackets and alumni shirts."

Last Tuesday was Northern's sixth-straight win in the series, with three full years having soon eclipsed since Rocky Mount's last victory over the Knights.

Better yet for Northern, in the majority of those games the Gryphons have struggled to even be competitive, with

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SOUTHERN NASH'S HAYDEN BAKER

EAST-WEST STARS Nash Co. standouts excel at event



NASH CENTRAL'S JAYDEN WHITAKER

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

GREENSBORO -- Luke Faulkner of Southern Nash, Jayden Whitaker of Nash Central and the Rocky Mount duo of Micahis Jones and Tavoris Parker were this year's Nash County selections to participate in the East-West All-Star Football Game, which took place at Jamieson Stadium on the campus of Grimsley High School last December.

In addition to rostering Faulkner, Whitaker, Jones and Parker, the East squad was led by Nashville native and long-time Rocky Mount head coach Jason Battle, who held the same role in the 78th annual exhibition.

The West dropped the East 50-14, with Cape Fear quarterback Geronimo Sanchez



NASH COUNTY EAST-WEST ALL-STARS (L TO R) TAVORIS PARKER, MICAHIS JONES, LUKE FAULKNER AND JAYDEN WHITAKER
(Photos Submitted by Meryn Johnson)

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NORTHERN NASH FRESHMAN STANDOUT QUANTAY JAMES

NN-RM HOOPS

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the Knights winning by 19 points or more in four of those recent meetings.

This year, it was senior guard Christian Barnes who led the way for Northern against Rocky Mount, matching his career high of 25 points while continuing his streak of double figures in scoring each time he has faced the Gryphons.

Not only that, Barnes snatched 11 rebounds as well, resulting in the fourth-year finishing with his second double-double of the 2025-26 campaign.

“Christian played well and is valuable to our team,” stated Drake of his veteran ballhandler. “We ask him to do a whole lot on the court.”

Barnes’ big night came on an impressive 10-of-14 (71%) from the field, bucketing a game-high three triples from beyond-the-arc as well.

Freshman Quantay James and senior Jah’Marzea Williams each finished the evening in double figures as well, totaling 12 and 11 points, respectively.

As for Rocky Mount, the Gryphons were led by star sophomore Brelyn Moses with 18 points while freshman Kayden Durham accompanied him in double figures with 11.

“Brelyn and Kayden are two good basketball players,” said Drake of his opposition. “They both play hard and are difficult to defend inside the paint.”

Despite facing Rocky Mount’s impressive underclassmen duo, the Knights limited the Gryphons to just 16 first half points, surrendering just eight points in each of the game’s first two periods. Northern outscored Rocky Mount in the first (16-8), second (18-8) and third (19-11) periods, while the Gryphons held a 19-12 advantage in the final frame once the bay was already in the barn for the Knights.

The win improved Northern Nash to 16-1 on the year with a 5-1 mark in league play, with the Knights following up their crucial rivalry win with three games in four days this week.

Tthe Knights are set for a road trip to Pikeville on Friday to face C.B. Aycock.

This will be the second meeting between the two squads this season, the first seeing the Knights clip the Golden Falcons 75-57 on Jan. 6.

Tipoff between Northern Nash and Aycock is slated for 7:30 p.m. in the gymnasium on the campus of C.B. Aycock High School in historic Pikeville.



EAST-WEST FOOTBALL HEAD COACH JASON BATTLE

E-W GAME

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accounting for each of the East’s trips to the end zone.

Sanchez connected with Jack Britt’s Javonte Brooks on a 58-yard pass in the first quarter, while later calling his own number on a one-yard keeper in the third period.

The East roster was unable to overcome a whopping eight turnovers on the offensive end though, three of which resulted in defensive touchdowns. Two came on interceptions returned for scores while another ended with the West recovering a fumble in the endzone.

Despite a loss, the real achievement of a contest like this is being selected to either play or coach in the first place.

For Battle, it was his second time coaching in the scrimmage, having previously served as an assistant in 2017.

As for the players, it was their one and only chance to play in the game, being selected based on performances over the course of their careers leading into their senior campaign.

Faulkner, representing Southern Nash, had a remarkable career with

the Firebirds as a four-year varsity starter.

A Southern Nash legacy and impressive two-way player, Faulkner accrued nearly 1,500 rushing yards over the course of his career, but the real work was done on the defensive side of the ball.

First on the depth chart at middle linebacker, Faulkner totaled 347 tackles over the course of his tenure, 55 of which came behind the line of scrimmage.

His career was headlined by his junior campaign in 2024, where he posted a career-high 121 tackles, 20 of which were for a loss of yardage.

As for Whitaker, the Nash Central Bulldog was a two-way player himself along the line of scrimmage for head coach Chris Lee’s squad.

Whitaker appeared in varsity contests over the course of three years, with 2025 serving as a breakout season for the senior.

Whitaker tabbed 64 tackles, 16 of which went for a loss this season, gaining the attention of coaches statistically in addition to his eyebrow-raising six-foot-three, 260-pound frame.

As for the Gryphon duo who had the honor of playing under their head coach, Parker was a star throughout his entire Rocky Mount career, especially in 2025.

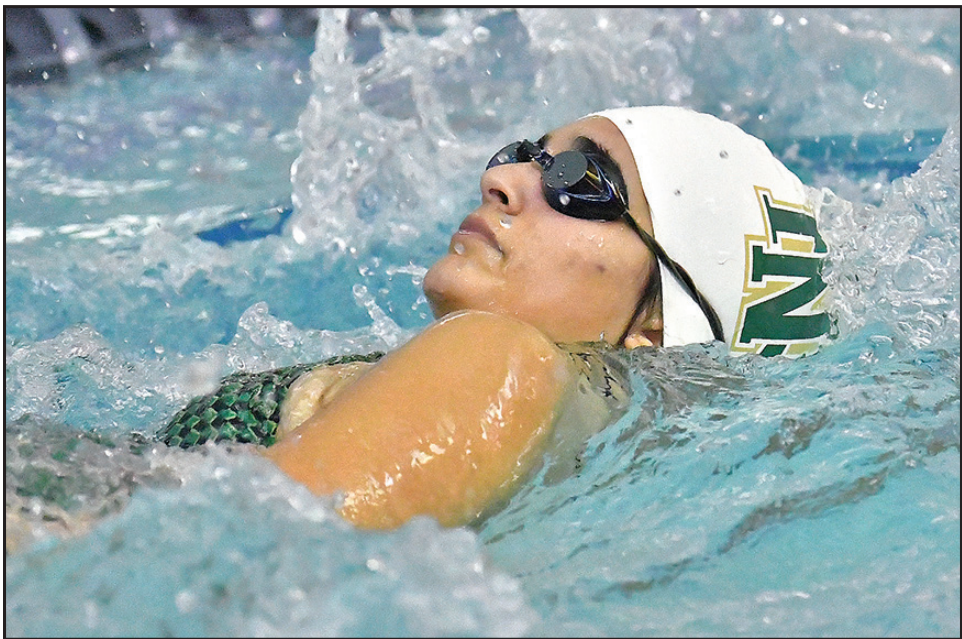
Parker spent serious time on both offense and defense, carrying the ball 203 times over the course of his career and totaling more than 1,500 rushing yards alone.

The running back and linebacker ended his Gryphon career with an impressive 26 touchdowns, 25 of which came on the ground while one came via punt return.

Jones, his teammate, spent four years playing on Rocky Mount’s varsity roster, turning into an absolute wrecking ball on the defensive line.

Jones ended his career with 23 sacks, 10 of which came during a budding 2025 season. Those 23 sacks factored into a stout 152 careef tackles, with more than one-third of those coming behind the line of scrimmage.

A date has yet to be announced for next year’s East-West All-Star Football Game, but the basketball and soccer editions of the same exhibition will be taking place in July.



NORTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL SWIMMER ASHLEY JAWAIDE

SWIM

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there was no real way of knowing how many of those clubs, if any, could possibly challenging the recent Fighting Knights’ dynasty.

Those challenges, however, never came as Northern Nash was once again the class of the Big East -- and the Knights finished the job in emphatic fashion at the league’s annual championships on January 15 at the Harrison Family YMCA.

Northern, under the direction of veteran skipper Tracy Dodrill, racked up 120 points en route to the crown -- more than double the number of runner-up CB Aycock at 49.

Southern Nash was third overall at 46, followed by Wilson Hunt (39), Rocky Mount (29) and Wilson Fike (6).

In girls action, Fike (74) edged Aycock (64) for the crown, with a much-improved Northern Nash squad earning the third position at 56.

Rounding out the standings were Wilson Hunt (55) and Southern Nash (15).

Event results and team scores from the finals were as follows:

Big East Swim Championships January 15 at Harrison YMCA Rocky Mount Team Scores

Girls

1) Wilson Fike 74
2) CB Aycock 64
3) Northern Nash 56
4) Wilson Hunt 55
5) Southern Nash 15

Boys

1) Northern Nash 120
2) CB Aycock 49
3) Southern Nash 46
4) Wilson Hunt 39
5) Rocky Mount 29
6) Wilson Fike 6

Results

• Girls 200 Medley Relay -- Wilson Fike, 2:19.97

• Boys 200 Medley



SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL SWIMMER EMMA BATCHELOR

Relay -- Northern Nash, 1:45.85

• Girls 200 Freestyle -- Erin Wilson (Northern Nash), 2:12.11

• Boys 200 Freestyle -- Waylan Gardner (CB Aycock High School), 2:47.21

• Girls 200 IM -- Kate Kopka (Wilson Fike), 2:38.16

• Boys 200 IM -- Conner Ezzell (Northern Nash), 2:04.08

• Girls 50 Freestyle -- Zoe Brandt (CB Aycock), 28.19

• Boys 50 Freestyle -- Gavin Woollet (CB Aycock), 22.54

• Girls 100 Butterfly -- Kaci Collins (Wilson Fike High School), 1:14.30

• Boys 100 Butterfly -- Nicolas Groesser (Northern Nash), 57.35

• Girls 100 Freestyle -- Paysen Brown (Northern Nash High School), 1:23.21

• Boys 100 Freestyle -- Ryan Clemmer (Wilson Hunt), 1:08.46

• Girls 500 Freestyle -- Erin Wilson (Northern Nash), 5:56.91

• Boys 500 Freestyle -- Blake Denton (Northern Nash), 5:17.22

• Girls 200 Freestyle Relay -- Wilson Fike, 2:01.12

• Boys 200 Freestyle Relay -- Northern Nash, 1:33.64

• Girls 100 Backstroke -- Charlize Bunn (Northern Nash High School), 1:26.09

• Boys 100 Backstroke -- Nicolas Garzone (Northern Nash High School), 1:02.68

• Girls 100 Breaststroke -- Kate Kopka (Wilson Fike), 1:20.80

• Boys 100 Breaststroke -- Gavin Woollet (CB Aycock), 1:05.96

• Girls 400 Freestyle Relay -- Northern Nash, 5:08.52

• Boys 400 Freestyle Relay -- Northern Nash, 4:15.50

SOFTBALL

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all three clubs, with home games listed in CAPS:

NASH CENTRAL

• February 25 -- at Rocky Mount

• February 26 -- at North Pitt

• February 27 -- SOUTHERN NASH

• March 3 -- at Northern Nash

• March 4 -- ROCKY MOUNT

• March 6 -- at Southern Nash

• March 10 -- at Martin County

• March 11 -- NORTHERN NASH

• March 2 -- at SW Edgecombe

• March 17 -- LOUISBURG

• March 19 -- at Roanoke Rapids

• March 20 -- at Wilson Fike

• March 24 -- BUNN

• March 26 -- at Wake Prep

• March 31 -- ALAJ

• April 1 -- at Louisburg

• April 14 -- ROANOKE RAPIDS

HIGH SCHOOL

• April 16 -- at Bunn

• April 17 -- WILSON FIKE

• April 21 -- at Wake Prep

• April 22 -- at Princeton

• April 23 -- at ALAJ

• April 27 -- MARTIN COUNTY

• April 29 -- PRINCETON

NORTHERN NASH

• February 25 -- PRINCETON

• February 26 -- BUNN

• March 2 -- ROLESVILLE

• March 3 -- NASH CENTRAL

• March 5 -- at Bunn

• March 9 -- ROANOKE RAPIDS

• March 11 -- at Nash Central

• March 12 -- at Wilson Fike

• March 16 -- at Roanoke Rapids

• March 17 -- CB AYCOCK

• March 19 -- at Southern Wayne

• March 24 -- WILSON HUNT

• March 26 -- at Southern Nash

• March 31 -- ROCKY MOUNT

• April 14 -- WILSON FIKE

• April 16 -- at CB Aycock

• April 21 -- SOUTHERN WAYNE

• April 22 -- at Rolesville

• April 23 -- at Wilson Hunt

• April 28 -- SOUTHERN NASH

• April 30 -- at Rocky Mount

SOUTHERN NASH

• February 27 -- at Nash Central

• March 3 -- at Bunn

• March 4 -- FRANKLINTON

• March 6 -- NASH CENTRAL

• March 9 -- ERWIN TRITON

• March 10 -- SOUTHERN WAYNE

• March 12 -- at CB Aycock

• March 17 -- WILSON FIKE

• March 18 -- BUNN

• March 19 -- at Wilson Hunt

• March 24 -- at Rocky Mount

• March 26 -- NORTHRN NASH

• March 30 -- ROANOKE RAPIDS

• April 2 -- at Southern Wayne

• April 3 -- at Topsail

• April 14 -- CB AYCOCK

• April 16 -- at Wilson Fike

• April 21 -- WILSON HUNT

• April 22 -- WEST JOHNSTON

• April 23 -- ROCKY MOUNT

• April 28 -- at Northern Nash