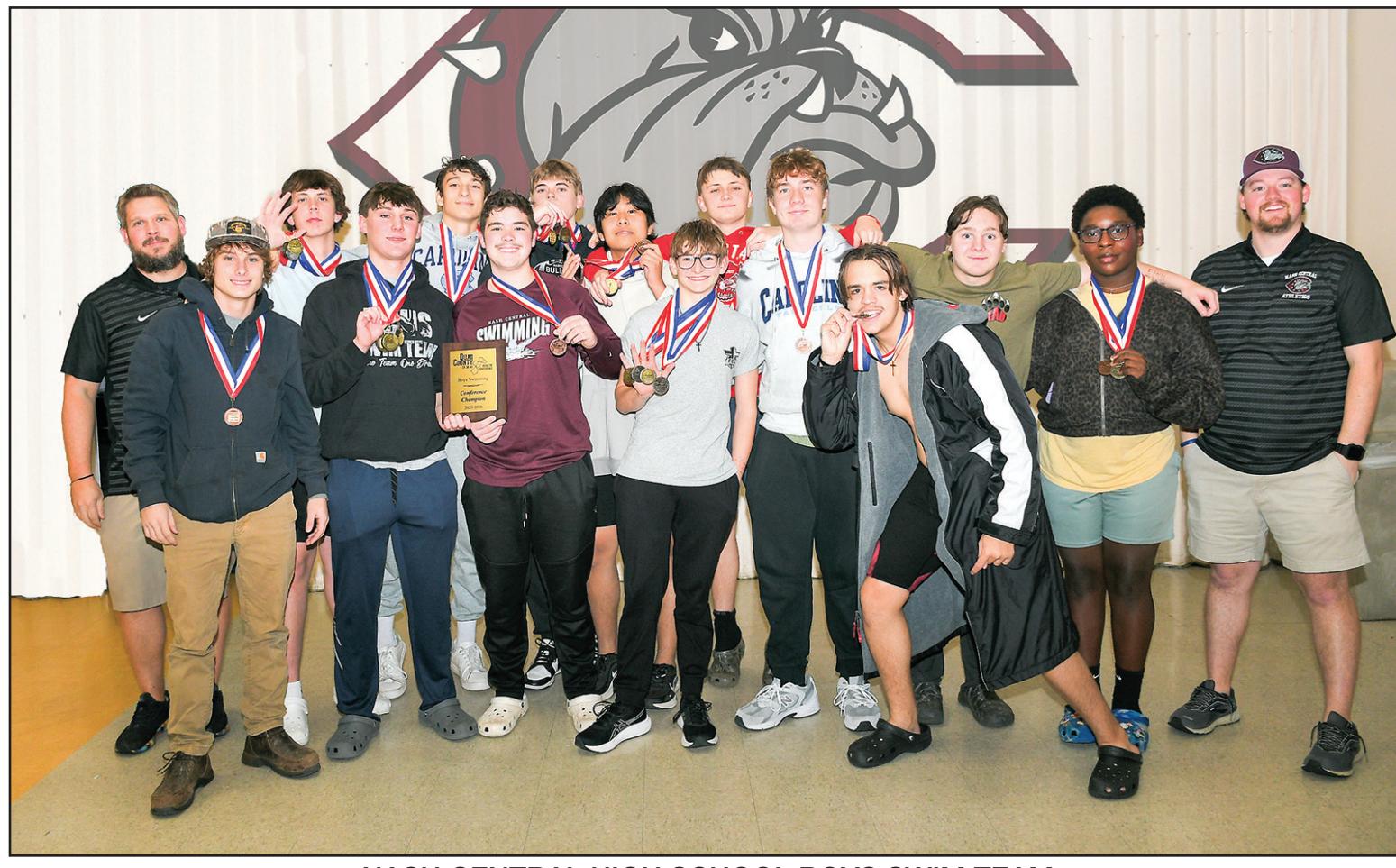


THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2026

# 2025-26 NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIP FORM



NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL BOYS SWIM TEAM  
QUAD COUNTY CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS

(Photos Submitted by Melyn Johnson)

## Bulldogs earn conference swimming crown

From Staff Reports

**ROCKY MOUNT** -- Hard to believe, but Nash Central struggled to field a competitive boys swimming team just a few years ago -- mainly due to a lack of numbers.

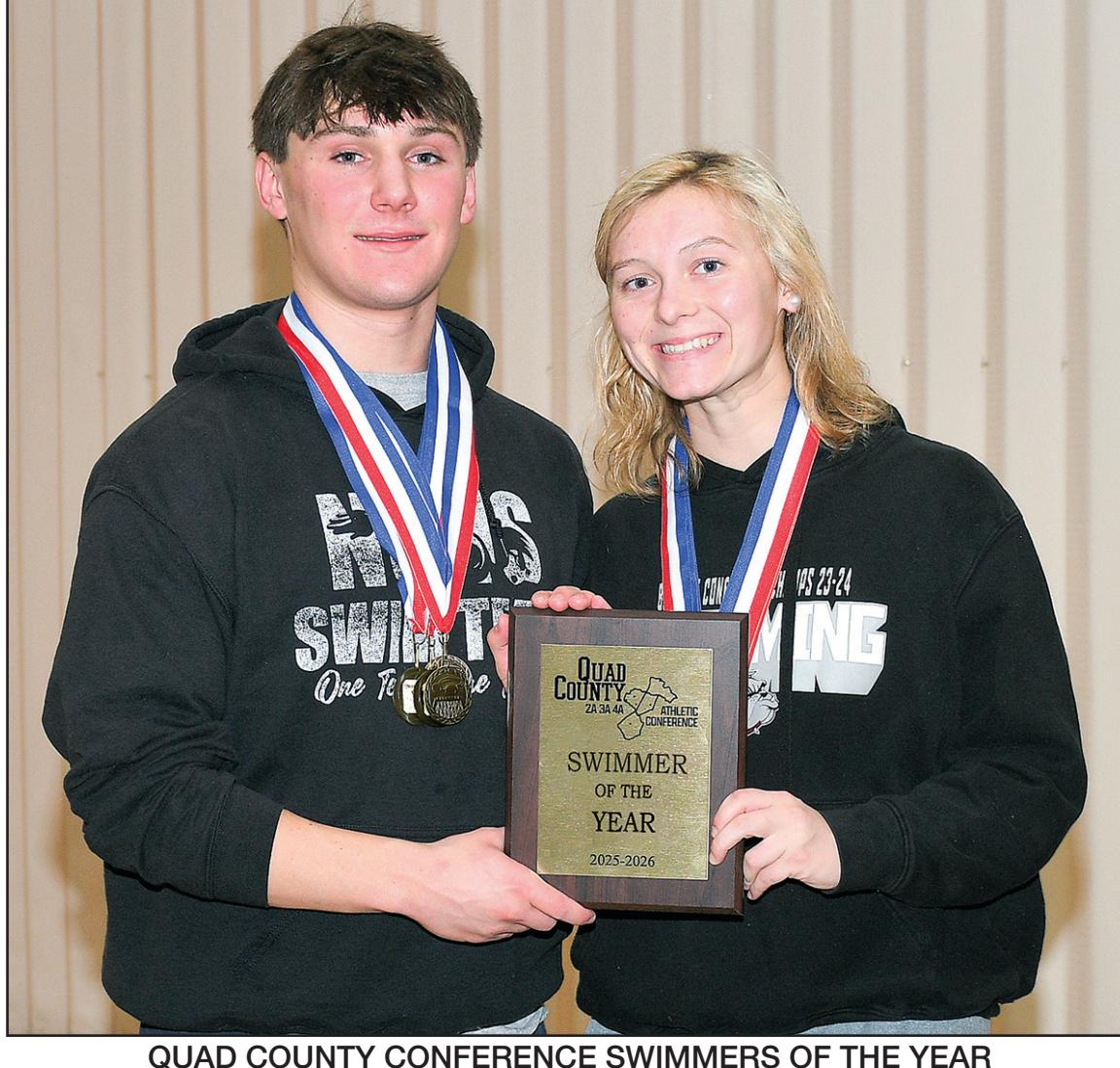
Superstar Lance Norris had graduated, and the Post-COVID Era took its toll on overall high school sports participation.

**BULLDOGS** But now, those days see to be long, long ago as the Bulldogs, in just a short period of time, have rebuilt their program under the direction of veteran head coach Kyle Bain.

The result is that the Bulldogs are now the Quad County Conference Champions -- a feat Bain's crew achieved at the QCC Finals, which were held January 22 at the Harrison Family YMCA.

Central roared to the crown with 111 total points -- almost double that of runner-up Wake Prep at 58.

"We just hadn't had a lot of kids (on the roster) over



QUAD COUNTY CONFERENCE SWIMMERS OF THE YEAR  
NASH CENTRAL'S DOMINIC WOZNIAK AND RYLEE BREWER

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QUANTAY JAMES SCORES INSIDE FOR NORTHERN NASH AGAINST WILSON FIKE  
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

## Nasty Weather Affects Schedule

Nash County high school basketball events are postponed

By CHANCE PUCKETT  
Correspondent

**NASH COUNTY** -- Snow and ice have unfortunately had its way with the area high school basketball season, causing a slew of reschedules throughout Nash County over the last two weeks.

Despite that, local teams have been able to hit the hardwood in

the back half of last week and are scheduled to do the same this week.

Perhaps the most significant of these matchups was last Thursday's tilt between Northern Nash and Fike's boys, two squads that entered vying for a run at the top spot in the

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SOUTHERN NASH'S LUKE FAULKNER

## Faulkner commits to NGU

By CHANCE PUCKETT  
Correspondent

**STANHOPE** -- Either 347 total tackles or 1,498 career rushing yards at the high school football level would be quite impressive for any one-way offensive or defensive player.



However at Southern Nash High, the Firebirds had a team captain, all-area star and four-year varsity player register those numbers on both sides of the ball himself.

Senior Luke Faulkner is

See LUKE, Page 2B



EAST-WEST FOOTBALL GAME ALL-STAR LUKE FAULKNER

## HS SOCCER SCHEDULES

From Staff Reports

**NASH COUNTY** -- Here are the schedules for Nash Central, Northern Nash and Southern Nash for the upcoming girls soccer season:

### NASH CENTRAL

- February 26 -- at Rocky Mount
- March 2 -- at Northern Nash
- March 3 -- SOUTHERN NASH
- March 9 -- NORTHERN NASH
- March 12 -- ROCKY MOUNT
- March 14 -- vs. West Carteret (The Brittany Showcase)
- March 16 -- at Southern Nash
- March 24 -- LOUISBURG\*
- March 26 -- at Roanoke Rapids\*
- March 31 -- BUNN\*
- April 2 -- at Wake Prep\*
- April 14 -- ALAJ\*
- April 16 -- at Louisburg\*
- April 21 -- ROANOKE RAPIDS\*
- April 23 -- at Bunn\*
- April 28 -- WAKE PREP\*
- April 30 -- at ALAJ\*

\* -- Denotes Quad County

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NORTHERN NASH VETERAN STANDOUT MALIYAH JOHNSON

## NN HOOPS

Class 5A/6A Big East Conference.

The hometown Knights squeaked by the visiting Golden Demons 91-84 in overtime, completing a two-game season sweep over Fike after opening league play against them on December 19.

Freshman phenom Quantay James led the way for Northern with a career-best 27 points, collecting a team-high nine rebounds while passing out five assists and snatching three steals as well.

James finished with double figures in scoring for the 17th time this season one night after the team's victory against Fike, but the result for the Knights was a different one.

C.B. Aycock upset Northern on Friday thanks in part to a poor shooting effort from the Knights paired with 19 turnovers, throwing a serious wrench in the team's conference title hopes.

Just the second loss of the season for 17-2 Northern, the Knights will need to top first-place Hunt in Wilson this Friday for any realistic shot at the league crown.

As for the other Big East boys squads, the conference championship is likely out of the picture.

Rocky Mount has four games left on its slate while sitting at 7-9 overall and 4-4 in league

play, while 2-19 Southern Nash is still searching for its first win in conference play under the direction of first-year head coach Sterling Leonard.

On the girls side, Rocky Mount leads the way at 15-2 overall with a spotless 8-0 mark in Big East play. An eyebrow-raising addition to the top of this year's leaderboard has been 12-8 Southern Nash, whose 6-3 conference record has the Ladybirds primed for the playoffs.

This has been one of the most successful seasons in recent history for Southern, with the trajectory of the program seriously looking upward since third-year coach Tevin Boykin took over.

As for Northern Nash, the Lady Knights sit at 5-13 overall and 2-6 in Big East action after having picked up a second victory over Fike last week. Similar to the trajectory of Boykin's squad, Northern looks to be on the uptick in the coming years, though.

The Lady Knights have a whopping eight freshmen rostered currently, with this season and the coming years providing lots of room for growth.

Outside of the Big East, Nash Central's girls are running the show in the Class 2A/3A/4A Quad County Conference having won four of the team's last five headlined by a 4-0 mark in league play.

Led by freshman A'dia

Cash and senior JaKayla Gay, the latter of which just broke the school's all-time scoring record, the Lady Bulldogs are a heavy favorite to win the league crown and have a serious chance of making a deep run in the playoffs.

As for the Central boys, Brian Thomas' squad secured its first league win last week over American Leadership Academy-Johnston by a 61-38 decision. The victory was the Bulldogs' second in a row, the front leg of their back-to-back wins a 73-62 final over rival Rocky Mount.

An immensely important win for the Nash Central program, the 6-9 Bulldogs were mere seconds away from taking the season series over the Gryphons after coughing up a late lead between the two foes on January 7.

Despite that, an outside shot at the playoffs still appears to be a possibility for Central, with six league outings, all of which are winnable, still remaining on the schedule.

The Bulldogs are currently slated to wrap up their regular season campaign on February 17, while each of the Big East schools are scheduled for a February 13 end to the year.

Playoff brackets for both boys and girls basketball will be released on February 21.

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## LUKE

leaving Southern Nash in the spring of 2026 as one of the most decorated student-athletes in the school's recent history, with his sights now set on football at the collegiate level.

Faulkner pledged his commitment to North Greenville University in Tigerville, South Carolina last week, announcing his decision via social media.

The Firebird linebacker and running back chose the Division II Trailblazers over Virginia's Hampden-Sydney and Randolph-Macon Colleges, as well as a preferred walk-on offer from Elon University.

"They liked my physicality and football IQ," said Faulkner of the coaches at North Greenville, a group that includes four former NFL players on staff.

Under the direction of first-year head coach Nate Garner, the Trailblazers experienced quite the inaugural campaign in 2025. North Greenville won its first conference championship in 51 years, claiming the Conference Carolinas crown and reaching the NCAA Division II playoffs after a spotless 6-0 mark in league play followed by a 34-20 victory over UNC Pembroke in the Conference Carolinas Bowl on November 15.

In addition to the program's recent success, Faulkner emphasized that the school's campus, location, academic prestige and its Christian background all factored into his decision.

"I went to a gameday visit and really enjoyed it," he remarked.

That visit was part of a busy end to 2025 for Faulkner, who not only wrapped up his career competing for the Firebirds, but also was selected to compete in the annual East-West All Star football game in Greensboro in December.

One of the state's top events high-

lighting some of its best football players, Faulkner was coached in the exhibition by Rocky Mount High head coach Jason Battle who served in the same role for the East squad. Additionally, he got to play alongside three other Nash County student-athletes, Jayden Whittaker of Nash Central and Tavoris Parker and Micahis Jones of Rocky Mount.

"It was a great experience," said Faulkner of the East-West Game. "Everyone there is so good."

A Firebird legacy, his father Todd having played under the direction of longtime Southern Nash head coach Brian Foster, spoke glowingly of his high school experience in red and blue.

"They will develop you as a man," said Faulkner of the coaching staff at Southern, one that is led by Brian Batchelor.

Batchelor was a key piece of Faulkner's recruitment process, having both taught and coached him.

"I talked with him every day," stated the senior of his head coach. "He was always on my side."

While his Firebird football career may be in the rearview mirror, Faulkner isn't done as a student-athlete at Southern Nash.

He'll also be participating in his fourth year at the varsity level on the baseball diamond this spring, coming off a stout season in 2025.

Faulkner posted a .373 batting average last season, slugging .520 while getting on base at a .505 clip.

"I want to thank my family, they have made a lot of sacrifices throughout my career," said Faulkner of his recent athletic success - also shouting out his coaches and the teammates he has played with over the years.

True to his Christian roots, Faulkner closed by saying that "I give Jesus Christ all the glory."



NASH CENTRAL FRESHMAN STAR JOSH HOLLOWMAN

## SWIM

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NASH CENTRAL'S AURELIEN FRAND

1:55.95

- Girls 200 Freestyle -- Ava Pelletier (Wake Prep), 2:07.74
- Boys 200 Freestyle -- Avi Patel (Wake Prep), 2:14.83
- Girls 200 IM -- Lexi Alexander (Wake Prep), 2:20.54
- Boys 200 I -- Jackson Garrett (Wake Prep), 2:11.83
- Girls 50 Freestyle -- Payton Wood (Bunn), 30.32
- Boys 50 Freestyle -- Sean Currin (Louisburg), 27.54
- Girls 100 Butterfly -- Rylee Brewer (Nash Central), 1:09.67
- Boys 100 Butterfly -- Dominic Wozniak (Nash Central), 56.65
- Girls 100 Freestyle -- Elaine Simpson (Bunn), 1:13.85
- Boys 100 Freestyle -- Carson Dillane (Nash Central), 4:30.48

## SKEDS

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## Conference Matches

## NORTHERN NASH

- February 25 -- at Erwin Triton
- March 2 -- NASH CENTRAL

- March 3 -- NORTH JOHNSTON
- March 6 -- at Vance County

- March 9 -- at Nash Central
- March 14 -- vs. Currituck (The Brittany Showcase)

- March 17 -- at CB Aycock\*
- March 19 -- SOUTH-ERN WAYNE\*

- March 24 -- at Wilson Hunt\*
- March 26 -- SOUTHERN NASH\*

- April 1 -- GREENVILLE ROSE
- April 14 -- WILSON

## FIKE\*

- April 16 -- CB AYCOCK\*
- April 21 -- at South-ern Wayne\*

- April 23 -- WILSON HUNT\*
- April 28 -- at South-ern Nash\*

- April 30 -- ROCKY MOUNT\*
- May 6 -- at Wilson Fike\*

- \* -- Denotes Big East Conference Matches

## SOUTHERN NASH

- February 26 -- at East Wake
- March 3 -- at Nash Central

- March 6 -- NEW BERN\*
- March 7 -- at Croatan

- March 9 -- BUNN
- March 14 -- vs. Camden County (The Brittany Showcase)

- March 16 -- NASH

## CENTRAL

- March 17 -- WILSON FIKE\*
- March 24 -- at Rocky Mount\*

- March 26 -- at North-ern Nash\*
- March 30 -- at South Lenoir

- April 2 -- at Southern Wayne\*
- April 14 -- CB AYCOCK\*

- April 16 -- at Wilson Fike\*
- April 21 -- WILSON HUNT\*

- April 23 -- ROCKY MOUNT\*
- April 28 -- NORTH-ERN NASH\*

- May 4 -- at West John-ston
- May 5 -- SOUTHERN WAYNE\*

- May 6 -- at CB Aycock\*
- \* -- Denotes Big East Conference Matches



HERE'S OUR PITCH...CATCH YOUR TEAM'S SCORE IN Nashville GRAPHIC SPORTS