

2025-26 NASH COUNTY GIRLS BASKETBALL
1K & COUNTING!



NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL SUPERSTAR JAKAYLA GAY
Gay makes history for Nash Central

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

ROCKY MOUNT -- A long-standing record on the campus of Nash Central High School finally fell on Jan. 30, taking place as Nash Central's girls basketball team walloped American Leadership Academy-Johnston 68-15.

Star senior and fourth-year varsity letterwinner JaKayla Gay etched her name in Lady Bulldog history that night, breaking the



program's career scoring record in the opening half of the team's first of two matchups against the Patriots.

Gay led the way for Central against ALAJ with 27 points, one shy of her career high of 28, a mark she registered on Jan. 19, 2025 against archival Northern Nash.

A whopping 19 of those 27 points came in the game's first two periods, with Gay needing 18 heading into the night

See GAY, Page 2B



LEGENDARY SOUTHERN NASH ATHLETE GEORGIA DAVIS-BROWN
Another Splendid Class
Southern Nash to induct more Hall of Famers

From Staff Reports

STANHOPE -- As amazing as the First Annual Southern Nash Athletic Hall of Fame Ceremony was last April, there were two aspects of the event that nagged SN Athletic Director Robbie Kennedy -- at least in a small way.

One problem was that, due to the first year of the event and some research points not being

available, some of the older athletes were not nominated -- and a person needs to be nominated in order to gain consideration.

The second issue was that there simply weren't enough spots for the myriad of incredible athletes to have starred in Stanhope since the school opened 58 years ago.

See SN HOF, Page 2B



NORTHERN NASH VETERAN ANDREW TAYLOR
BIG EAST QUEST
New league should be strong

From Staff Reports

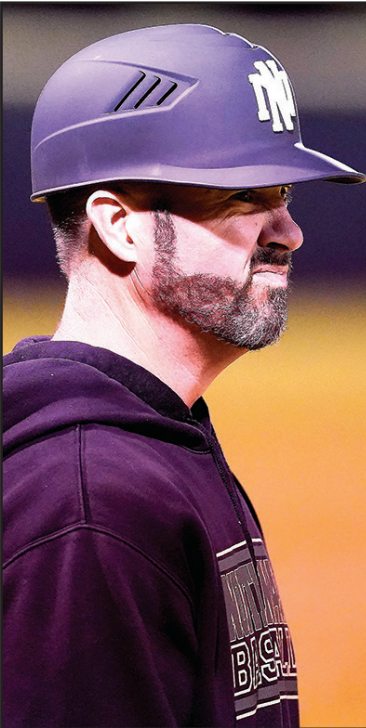
RED OAK -- If anyone knows about what lies ahead for the baseball scene in the new Big East Conference, it's Northern Nash head coach Joey Keefe.

Of course, Keefe is familiar with the hold-overs from the league -- Southern Nash, Rocky Mount and his own Northern Nash Knights, who have won or shared two of the conference's past three championships.

Keefe also knows plenty about Wilson Hunt and Wilson Fike -- who were in the Big East until realignment four years ago.

But Keefe's expertise goes

See BASEBALL, Page 2B



NORTHERN COACH
JOEY KEEFE



NORTHERN NASH WRESTLER CARA BRAKE
Northern enjoying a banner mat season

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

RED OAK -- A Big East Conference championship trophy has been added to the Northern Nash High School trophy case courtesy of the school's wrestling program, with the combination of its boys and girls rosters totaling nine individual champions en route to the league crown.

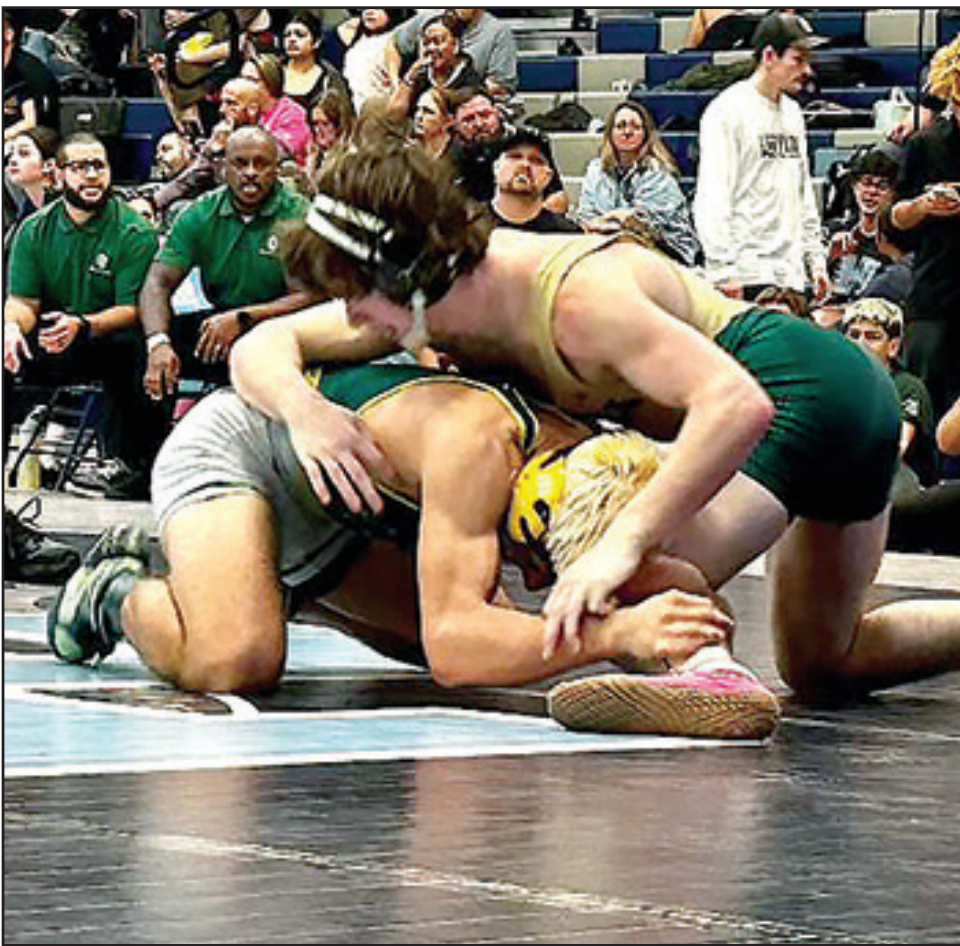
"We were really pleased," said Troy Brake, who oversees the Knights' wrestling program as head coach.

"I knew we could compete but the levels we could compete at were more than what we really expected."

Northern topped the seven-team leaderboard with 300 points, nearly doubling second-place Southern



See NN MAT, Page 2B



NORTHERN NASH VETERAN WRESTLER LUIS BERDIEL

NN MAT

Nash at 175.

The Knights saw five of their boys win individual titles, spanning from the 126-point weight class up to 285, while on the girls side Northern’s four victories stretched from the 120-pound division up to 235 pounds.

The hefty majority of the victories on the boys side came via pin for the Knights, with Elijah Moore at 126, Luis Berdiel at 144 and Jahron Wardrick at 150 each sweeping their two matches apiece by pinning their respective opponents.

Jaquaye Arrington - who also plays football for Northern - didn’t have the luxury of a first-round bye in the quarter-finals, but advanced to the semifinals after a pin of Hunt’s Jaysen Batchelor.

Arrington proceeded to pin Rocky Mount’s Mjubayer Houssain in less than a minute to advance to the 165-pound finals, where he was inevitably awarded the conference title following a medical forfeit from C.B. Aycock’s Ryan Fields-Martinez.

Timothy Narron at 285 pounds rounded out Northern Nash’s victors in the boys division, securing the heavy-weight title with a 6-0 decision over Aycock’s Renai Streett.

Much newer to the

area sports scene, girls wrestling has been a huge hit for the Knights with Brake and his staff building a deeper, stronger roster than most of their Big East Conference counterparts.

“You have to treat them the same because they want to be treated the same,” remarked Brake of his experience coaching the girls side. “But it’s really not that different as far as coaching.”

A special twist for Brake while leading the girls wrestling division has been coaching his daughter, Cara, who won her second Big East championship in January’s conference title meet at Southern Nash High.

Brake claimed the 235-pound crown via pin over Southern’s Lyrical Doughty, one of four championship match victories and pins on the girls side of the bracket.

Ironically, three of the four victories came over Southern Nash opponents as well, with Ke’Asia Joyner and Aaliyah Lynch each topping Ladybird wrestlers in the 152 and 126-pound divisions, respectively.

Zuany Romero took the title for the Lady Knights at 120, pinning Fike’s Gabriela Ewald in under two minutes of mat time.

After winning the conference title, Northern

picked up a playoff victory over Franklinton before its season came to a close in the second round of the Class-6A playoffs against perennial power Union Pines.

With wrestling growing exponentially at the collegiate level in North Carolina, its popularity within the high school ranks is following suit, something that Brake and his staff are thrilled to see.

“We’re not football, we’re not basketball, we’re not baseball. Those are the sports that people really flock to,” stated Brake, saying that the growth of youth and club programs around the area could potentially turn wrestling into a more mainstream activity.

Considering that, Brake hopes to see the program at Northern Nash specifically grow as well.

A staff consisting of five Northern graduates, four of which wrestled for the Knights, Brake and his group take immense pride in the school and the program.

“It’s about Northern Nash High School as a whole, not just the wrestling program.”

Both the women’s and the men’s individual state championships will be held this weekend, at First Horizon Coliseum in Greensboro.

continued from page 1B

BASEBALL

beyond there -- he was a student-athlete at Southern Wayne, which is new to the league. And CB Aycock -- another newcomer -- is one of Southern Wayne’s biggest in-county rivals.

What some Nash Countians might not realize is that Aycock and Southern Wayne both have rich traditions -- and all of those factors mean the Big East could very well be one of Eastern North Carolina’s top diamond leagues over the next four campaigns.

“Overall, the Big East is going to be very competitive game in and game out,” Keefe said. “Every game is going to be a true test of attrition. It’s going to be a matter of what you can bring to the table each day.”

Faced with a tough schedule, the Fighting Knights went 8-12 last year but still managed to qualify for the Class 3-A State Playoffs.

But five key seniors graduated from that club, so Keefe’s crew will be less experienced this time around -- but still loaded with potential.

“We lost some major role players (to graduation),” Keefe said. “They will be hard to replace, but I feel like if we pitch well and play defnse, we have a shot to win any game we play.”

“The biggest challenge for us will be if we can adjust with the bat. We have to be able to hit the ball.”

That hasn’t been a problem in recent campaigns as the Knights have been loaded with booming bats, including several performers who went on to compete on the collegiate level (The Jenkins Brothers, Danny O’Brien, Ashton Rhodes and Peyton Clay, to name a few).

Landon Keefe, Hylan Wheeler and Andrew Taylor are among North-

ern Nash’s important returnees, but the Fighting Knights will need some younger players to step up in order to stay above water in what should be an extremely challenging conference.

Northern Nash will open its season on February 25 with a home meeting against non-league opponent Princeton High School out of Johnston County.

The Fighting Knights’ initial Big East Conference matchup will be March 12 on the road versus Wilson Fike.

Here’s one interesting factoid from the Big East this spring -- the league won’t play two-game series against the same foe during the same week, which had become standard recently.

Instead, the Big East will utilize a staggered schedule, which certainly means that ace pitchers can be managed for the biggest games.



(L TO R) GREATS ALTON TYRE, JULIUS PEPPERS AND RAY DAVIS WERE PART OF THE INAUGURAL SN HALL OF FAME CLASS DURING A CEREMONY LAST APRIL IN STANHOPE

SN HOF

continued from page 1B

Both of those aspects have been rectified ahead of the Second Annual HOF Ceremony, which will be held March 28 at the historic SNHS Gymnasium.

Some of the recent SN greats who deserved first-year honors are now going in, including Ricky Howard, Tracey Coppedge and Georgia Davis-Brown.

The 1990s are also represented with the likes of Lisa Tyson Brice, Rashawn Deans and Rikki Cockrell-Rich, while legends Shirley Hall (Class of 1974) and Wayne Grady (Class of 1980) round out the impressive group.

“We have so many people who deserve to be in the Hall of Fame,” Kennedy said. “This year, we really hoped to get some of the athletes who were here early on at the school. We feel like we were really able to accomplish that. I feel like we have a much greater range of years with this class, and that was important to us.

“A lof of people now don’t know about some of the athletes from the past, so this is a good way for that to

happen. We really have some great athletes in this group.”

And it doesn’t take rocket science to figure out that more greats are destined to be inducted, as the list of SNHS athletic legends is almost limitless.

But for now, this Great Eight is set to be decorated on March 28. Tickets are \$50 per person and are available online at gofan.

The cost of the ticket includes dinner and the program, which will feature a speech from each inductee after they have been introduced by a speaker of their choice.

“We’re looking forward to another great night,” Kennedy said.

One of the most pertinent stories from this class is that Davis-Brown will be inducted one year after her father, Ray, was part of the inaugural class.

After a standout multi-sport career at Southern Nash, Davis-Brown went on to run track at North Carolina State University.

She also introduced her father at the 2025 event.

continued from page 1B

GAY

to break the record.

“It has been fun to watch her mature both as a player and person,” said longtime Nash Central girls basketball coach Terri Cash, who has coached Gay to the playoffs in each of the past two seasons and is primed for a third-straight postseason run this year.

Prior to breaking the scoring record, Gay became one of just three Lady Bulldog hoopers to register 1,000 points in her career, the first being Ni’Ya Styles who graduated in 2014 and Michaela Nelms, a 2017 alumnus, the second.

“Everyone was so excited for me, everyone showed their support,” fondly remembered Gay of that night, a playoff game against Louisburg during her junior season where her final bucket of a 25-point outing was her 1,000th.

The senior knew that she was within striking distance of the record once her junior campaign came to a close and this season tipped off, but

didn’t want to know how far she was from it.

“I was in a state of shock,” Gay remarked, mentioning that she felt her race to 1,000 points was nerve racking so she wanted a fresh, stress-free approach as she drew closer to the scoring title.”

Gay’s record-breaking night was her 56th high school outing that resulted in scoring double figures, and has since added three more double-figure nights to that list.

Additionally, it was the 14th game in her Bulldog career scoring at least 20 points.

While she also played volleyball at Nash Central, Gay is set to continue her career on the basketball court at Averett University, a member of the Division III Old Dominion Athletic Conference located in Danville, Virginia.

“I loved the campus when I went there, they have my major and the coaches are very supportive,” expressed Gay of her soon-to-be college

home, where she will be enrolling in the school’s nursing program as a student-athlete.

The quartet of Gay, fellow senior Jayden Baggett and the freshmen duo A’dia Cash and Harmony Dupree have helped engineer one of the best seasons in Nash Central history this year, with the Lady Bulldogs showing no sign of stopping anytime soon.

Central’s senior night took place on Friday as the Lady Bulldogs topped Wake Prep Academy 64-49, followed by completing the two-game series sweep of ALAJ on Tuesday evening.

Now 17-5, Nash Central has one contest left on its regular season schedule, making the return trip to Wake Prep Academy today in hopes of completing a spotless, 10-0 season in Quad County Conference play.

Having already locked up the league title, the Lady Bulldogs will learn their playoff fate this weekend, with brackets set to be announced on Saturday.

GREAT JOB BY THE LADYBIRDS



STATE STANDOUTS. The Southern Nash High School Varsity Cheer Team took part in the UCA Triangle Regionals, which were held last November at historic Dorton Arena in Raleigh. Over 100 squads from across North Carolina came together for an opportunity to earn a bid to the Nationals. The Ladybirds did not receive a bid, but the team’s amazing performance earned SN a first-place win and title of Division Champions. (Photo Submitted)



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