

# Fighting Knights Saluted By League



NORTHERN'S JAH'MARZEA WILLIAMS ENJOYED A SEASON TO REMEMBER

### Northern stars claim honors on Big East squad

From Staff Reports

RED OAK -- Coach Henry Drake wasn't joking when he stated that some of Northern Nash's toughest games en route to boys basketball state championship came in Big East Conference play.

Even though the Fighting Knights eventually hoisted the state crown, they didn't even win the Big East regular season title -- that honor went to Wilson Fike, which also made the state finals in its

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NCHS HEAD COACH WILLIE LANGLEY

# Bulldogs swept by Wildcats

### Nash Central drops a key league series

By CHANCE PUCKETT  
Correspondent

ROCKY MOUNT -- Perhaps the most important series of the Quad County Conference's season took place on the baseball diamond last week, with league foes Nash Central and Bunn squaring off on back-to-back days.

The Bulldogs and Wildcats met on Nash Central's campus Tuesday night, with those in attendance treated to free baseball as the Bulldogs fell 5-4 in extra innings, followed by Bunn completing a two-game sweep on Wednesday via 8-0 decision.

"Our approaches at the plate right now are not great," stated longtime Nash Central head coach Willie Langley, whose squad entered this week at 7-7 after being clipped by the Wildcats in both games.



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# SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS ANOTHER GREAT CLASS



SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL'S 2026 ATHLETICS HALL OF FAME INDUCTION CLASS

# Southern Nash hosts 2nd Hall of Fame ceremony

From Staff Reports

STANHOPE -- Robbie Kennedy, Southern Nash's legendary long-time Athletic Director, nailed it during last year's inaugural Southern Nash Athletics Hall of Fame Ceremony.

As he gazed across the gymnasium, Kennedy thought not only of the first induction class -- but the long list of greats who were not part of the ceremony.

With that in mind, Kennedy knew that this had to become an annual event -- and that finding potential inductees would not be a challenge at all.

That assessment was fully on display during SN's second induction ceremony,

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SNHS LADYBIRD MULTI-SPORT GREAT RIKKI (COCKRELL) RICH



CENTRAL PITCHER CALEB COX

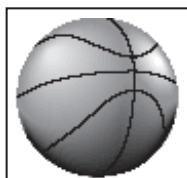
# SOARING SEASON

### Ladybirds excelled in conference

From Staff Reports

STANHOPE -- It was a renaissance season for the Southern Nash Ladybirds as they enjoyed a strong basketball campaign under the direction of Tevin Boykin.

SN's recent rebuilding process took a huge step forward in 2025 with the Ladybirds posting a 13-11 overall mark to go with a 7-5 worksheet in the ultra-competitive Big East Conference -- good enough for third place overall.



MALIYAH JOHNSON

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SOUTHERN NASH SENIOR STANDOUT TERRI RICHARDSON



THE ONE AND ONLY RICKY HOWARD

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which was held March 28.

The list of honorees was indeed a star-studded one filled with both recent and past legends.

Bringing in starts from SN's younger days in the 1970s and 80s was a priority for Kennedy, and the Firebirds accomplished that feat by saluting 70s stars Shirley Hall and Wayne Grady, along with 80s legend Lisa Tyson Brice.

The 90s were represented by greats Rikki Cockrell Rich and Rashawn Deans, while Georgia Davis Brown and Ricky Howard were classmates from 1998-2002.

Rounding out the Amazing Eight is Tracey Coppedge from the Class of 2012.

Here is a look at each inductee:

- Shirley Hall (Class of 1977) -- One of SN's first (and still greatest) female athletes, Hall excelled in softball, basketball and track for the Ladybirds. She went on to enjoy a prolific softball and basketball career at North Carolina A&T, where she is a member of that school's Hall of Fame.

- Wayne Grady (Class of 1980) -- A basketball and football superstar for the Firebirds, Grady was named to the East-West All-Star Football Game and later played at UNC. His number 80 is retired and has been seen in the lobby of SNHS' main building.

- Lisa Tyson-Brice (Class of 1990) -- Her number has also been retired at SNHS for her excellence in basketball, softball and volleyball -- but mainly hoops. After a decorated prep career, Tyson-Brice went on to star at NC Wesleyan on the hardwood and is a member of the Bishops' Hall of Fame.

- Rashawn Deans (Class of 1995) -- One of SN's first elite-level track and field athletes, Deans won the state championship in the 110 Hurdles as a senior -- becoming the first Firebird to achieve that lofty feat. A hurdler who was sharp from sprints all the way to the 300, Deans went on to join the track and field program at East Carolina University, located in Greenville.

- Georgia Davis-Brown (Class of 2002) -- Speaking of great SN track and field superstars, there is Davis-Brown, who literally grew up at the school as the daughter of SN legendary coach and AD Ray Davis (who was inducted last year). A multi-sport standout Davis-Brown earned an unbelievable 20 varsity letters and was her class valedictorian. She went on to compete in track and field and cross coun-



SHIRLEY HALL BROUGHT A HUGE CROWD TO THE SNHS HOF EVENT



TRACEY COPPEGE WENT ON TO PLAY FOOTBALL AT ELON UNIVERSITY

try at NC State,
 

- Ricky Howard (Class of 2002) -- Widely considered to be SN's all-time greatest baseball player, Howard was known for being intentionally walked -- with the bases loaded. He also hit two grand slams in one game, and many of his school records are still intact -- and will probably never be broken. One of the nicest people you will ever meet, Howard enjoyed a next-level diamond career at Louisburg College and Campbell University. He now teaches and coaches at SNHS.

- Rikki Cockrell-Rich (Class of 1997) -- When Southern Nash's girls basketball program was building into an area power under Gerald Melton in the mid-1990s, Cockrell-Rich played a huge role, becoming the Ladybirds' all-time leading scorer at the time. Also a volleyball and softball standout, Cockrell-Rich was part of SN's state championship softball team in 1995. She went on to play softball and basketball at the University of North Car-

olina-Pembroke.
 

- Tracey Coppedge (Class of 2012) -- Coppedge played a huge role as a running back when SN first began its resurgence toward greatness in 2009. That year, as a freshman, Coppedge helped the Firebirds reach the state semifinals for the first time in school history. He was a Co-Conference Offensive Player of the Year that season and went on to enjoy a prolific career for the Firebirds under the direction of legendary head coach Brian Foster. Also a track and field standout, Coppedge was part of Southern Nash's State Champion 800 Relay Team during his senior year. Coppedge went on to play football for Elon University in Alamance County.

A large crowd attended the ceremony at the SNHS Gymnasium, and plans are already in the works for the third Hall of Fame Class, which will be saluted in the Spring of 2026.

Nominations for the class are currently being accepted by Southern Nash High School.

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"We didn't execute the things we needed to execute."

Central scored two runs in the third inning, one more in the sixth and another in the seventh in the series opener, but it wasn't enough to overcome league-favorite Bunn.

The Bulldogs popped up two separate bunts with multiple runners aboard and had a runner get back-picked at second base, falling victim to multiple rally killers over the course of the evening.

Central even threatened with the winning run on third base in the bottom of the seventh frame while tied 4-4, but was unable to scratch across the go-ahead run which would have resulted in a monumental win over the class of the conference.

"We had every opportunity to win it," Langley stated afterwards, praising the efforts of his sophomore starting pitcher Caleb Cox despite the loss.

The Bulldogs' second-year hurler, who ranks amongst the state's best statistically, struck out 10 over 5-plus innings of work, allowing just three hits and one earned run in yet another exquisite outing.

"I hate it for Caleb [Cox] because that's two Tuesdays in a row that he had pretty much dominated teams but we couldn't do what we needed to do," said the Central skipper, referencing Cox's March 24 six-inning, 15-strikeout performance against Roanoke Rapids that resulted in a 5-3 loss.

"With our pitching staff, when they start scoring some runs we should be a tough team." Nash Central's lineup



NASH CENTRAL'S GARRET LEWIS

struggles continued in second leg of last week's two-game set, mustering just three hits and striking out ten times against Bunn's Jared Hagwood, the 2025 Class-2A/3A Big East Conference Pitcher of the Year who poses a serious threat to win the same title in the Quad County Conference this season. He is the son of the legendary Dan Hagwood.

The Wildcats struck early by plating three runs in the first, another in the second and adding four more in the fourth frame, enough to blank the Bulldogs decisively one day removed from needing an eighth-inning triple to decide the opener.

"We did hit him harder than we normally do," remarked Langley of Hagwood, the leader of a senior-heavy, well-coached and high-potential Bunn squad. "The balls just didn't fall."

Central used a "Johnny Wholestaff" approach to Wednesday's contest after riding Cox in game one, throwing Hunter Bell, Dylan Moseley, Micheal Carney and Gar-

rett Lewis in the series finale after Peyton Harris, Shea Whitley and Wesley Lynch relieved Cox in the opener.

"We couldn't match them on the mound, we were deep into the bullpen," stated Langley.

The Bulldogs headed to the coast earlier this week for a three-game set as part of Dare County Easter Tournament, visiting First Flight on Saturday and Manteo on Tuesday in a pair of road matchups while facing Hickory (VA) on Monday sandwiched between the two.

With Nash County Public School's annual Spring Break soon to be wrapped up, Central will be back in action next week with a pair of league outings against Wake Prep Academy.

The Bulldogs will visit Wake Forest on Tuesday evening before returning home on Thursday in what is the team's penultimate regular season game at home.

First pitch of Thursday night's contest on the campus of Nash Central High School is slated for 7 p.m.

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classification.

In fact, all of NN's losses during its historic 25-3 campaign came against league foes.

But even though those setbacks were difficult to take for Drake and Company, they effectively prepared the Fighting Knights for the rigors of the state playoffs.

And NN passed that challenge with flying colors, capping off the year with an overtime decision over Kings Mountain in the state title matchup in Winston-Salem.

Two Knights -- Jah'Marzea Williams and Quantay James -- earned spots on the All-Big East Conference Boys Basketball Team for the 2025-26 campaign.

Teammate Chris Silver was tabbed for the Honorable Mention squad.

Southern Nash, which underook a rebuilding process this past winter under the legendary

Sterling Leonard, placed Dayshon Sanders on the All-Big East list, while LJ White was an Honorable Mention pick.

Wilson Fike swept the top honors with Player of the Year (Da'Qavis Greene) and Conference Champion Coach of the Year (Roland Loftin).

The complete 2025-26 All-Big East Conference Boys Basketball Team is as follows:

- 2025-26 All-Big East Conference Boys Basketball Team**
- Da'Qavis Greene, Wilson Fike
  - Jamir Loftin, Wilson Fike
  - Jayonta Blanchard, Wilson Fike
  - Nasir Hines, Wilson Hunt
  - Austin Joyner, Wilson Hunt
  - Jah'Marzea Williams, Northern Nash
  - Quantay James, Northern Nash

- Brelyn Moses, Rocky Mount
- Kayden Durham, Rocky Mount
- Dom Jones, CB Aycock
- Douglas Wynn, Southern Wayne
- Dayshon Sanders, Southern Nash
- Honorable Mention**
- Tylik Taylor, Wilson Fike
- Tyler Pridgen, Wilson Hunt
- Chris Silver, Northern Nash
- Ur'Hynus Pierce, Rocky Mount
- Cash San Agustin, CB Aycock
- Jaylen Carr, Southern Wayne
- LJ White, Southern Nash

- Top Honors**
- Big East Conference Player of the Year -- Da'Qavis Greene, Wilson Fike
- Big East Conference Champion Coach of the Year -- Roland Loftin, Wilson Fike

BE GIRLS

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SN even qualified for the state playoffs before seeing its effective stretch come to a close with a first-round loss to Durham School of Arts.

Two Ladybirds -- Terri Richardson and Aliyah Croll -- earned spots on the prestigious All-Big East Conference Team.

Northern Nash, which tied for fourth place in the conference, was represented on the squad by veterans Maliyah Johnson and Ramsey Harris.

SN's Leila Gonzalez was selected for the Honorable Mention list.

Rocky Mount, which won the Big East in convincing fashion, saw Kira Jones tabbed as the Big East Player of the Year, while long-time skipper Pam Gainey was the automatic pick as the Big East Conference Champion Coach of the Year.

The complete 2025-26 All-Big East Conference Girls Basketball Team is as follows:

- All-Big East Conference Girls Basketball**

- Team**
- Kira Jones, Rocky Mount
- Keysha Mizzell, Rocky Mount
- Shania Wilson, Rocky Mount
- Lauren Burton, CB Aycock
- Alonna Frederick, CB Aycock
- Terri Richardson, Southern Nash
- Aliyah Croll, Southern Nash
- Deoni Artis, Wilson Hunt
- Julianna Jones, Wilson Hunt
- Maliyah Johnson, Northern Nash
- Ramsey Harris, Northern Nash
- Destiny Bullock, Southern Wayne
- Emory Skinner, Wilson Fike
- Honorable Mention**
- Courtney Perkins, Rocky Mount
- Taleia Claude, CB Aycock
- Breanna Gonzalez, Southern Nash
- Brooklyn Thomas, Wilson Hunt
- Kymora Stokes, Southern Wayne
- Kylar Horvath, Wilson Fike
- Top Honors**
- Big East Conference Player of the Year -- Kira Jones, Rocky Mount
- Big East Conference Champion Coach of the Year -- Pam Gainey, Rocky Mount