

NASH CENTRAL BULLDOGS' FOOTBALL CHRIS-TAL CLEAR



NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL COACHING LEGEND CHRIS LEE Lee announces retirement at Central

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

ROCKY MOUNT - An 11-year tenure and the career of a longtime Nash County football coach came to a close last week, with Nash Central High School head football coach Chris Lee officially stepping down from his post last Friday.



Lee first arrived on Nash Central's campus in February of 2015 as the newly-named head man, inheriting a program that was riding a dismal 24-game losing streak and hadn't landed in the win column since October 2012.

It took Lee just two games to turn the tides and pick up his first victory with the Bulldogs, clipping Smithfield-Selma 36-21 in the school's first win

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NCHS' CHRIS LEE WITH HIS SON, WINSTON



SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL GOLFERS (L TO R) SETH DAVIS, SAM FINN, NOAH CRAFT, JOSH BARNES AND T.J. STONE

Golf Season Winds Down Big East Conference's finale was held Wednesday

From Staff Reports

NASH COUNTY -- Barring an unexpected final-day collapse, Northern Nash's Britt Crumley seems destined to repeat as the Big East Conference Boys Golf Champion.

Crumley held a whopping 29-shot advantage over second-place Charlie Thurston from Wilson Fike heading into Wednesday's regular

season league finale at Northgreen Golf Club in Rocky Mount.

Considering the fact that Crumley has shot in the 70s in all but one match this spring, including a nifty 70 in the latest Big East event in Dudley, Crumley is all but assured of his second consecutive individual crown.

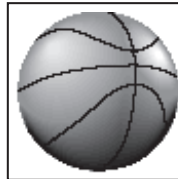
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NASH CENTRAL STANDOUT MARKELL JASPER ON THE WAY UP NC made strides this winter

From Staff Reports

ROCKY MOUNT -- Nash Central High School's boys basketball squad enjoyed a tremendous resurgence this past winter under the direction of veteran head coach Brian Thomas.



The Bulldogs, who had been rebuilding over the past few previous campaigns, delivered a double-digit victory season, going 10-13 overall to go with a 4-6 worksheet in their initial stint in the Quad County Athletic Conference.

Nash Central even defeated long-time rival Rocky Mount and gave state champion Northern Nash all it



CENTRAL COACH BRIAN THOMAS

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NORTHERN NASH SOCCER STAR BAILEY POWELL Northern Nash's Powell inks with Chowan Univ.

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

RED OAK -- One of the top girls soccer players in Northern Nash High School's long history pledged her collegiate commitment recently, with Lady Knight senior Bailey Powell electing to hit the pitch for Chowan University in Murfreesboro next year.



"It checked all the boxes for a college I wanted to attend," said Powell of her decision, citing the school's family and faith-based atmosphere.

Powell has been a star for Northern's soccer program during her time on campus, compiling 79 total goals and 192 career points with a résumé that is highlighted by a whopping 36 goals during her 2024 sophomore campaign.

"Bailey's speed and ability to find the back of the net consistently creates so much danger that opposing teams have to change their game," remarked Northern Nash head coach

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CHRIS LEE HAS ENJOYED A SPECTACULAR TENURE AS THE HEAD GRID COACH FOR THE NASH CENTRAL BULLDOGS
(Photos Submitted by Meryn Johnson)

LEE

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in nearly three full years, taking a serious step towards a dramatic program turnaround.

"You couldn't ask for a better school to work at," reflected Lee of his time at Nash Central, the school where both his daughter Hope graduated from in 2024 after playing several sports, as well as his son Winston, who graduates this year and will proceed to play football at Averett University in Danville, Va.

"Coaching and teaching at Nash Central provided me the opportunity to be around both Hope and Winston their whole time in high school, so that was special," Lee said.

The most notable achievement of Lee's Nash Central career was helping push the Bulldogs to a program-record 11 wins in 2023, finishing the year at 11-3 and racing to the fourth round of the Class 2-A state playoffs, the deepest run in school history.

Lee is an Enfield Academy and East Carolina University graduate, using his Bachelors of Science in Health and Physical Education to jump into the world of teaching and coaching.

Out of college he spent five years at Hobgood Academy before following that up with four seasons at Central Middle School of Gates County -- where he was a head coach for the first time.

From there, Lee made his way to Nash County via an eight-year stint splitting time at Edwards Middle School and Rocky Mount High.

Lee left his post as the offensive coordinator at Rocky Mount in order to take the head coaching job at Louisburg in 2009, compiling a 36-35 mark with the Warriors before taking over the Bulldog program.

"I've enjoyed everywhere I've been," remarked Lee of his 34-year career in education and coaching. "I've been lucky to have coached under and with

some great coaches and people."

As most coaches do, Lee mentioned that he believes he'll most miss the interactions with student-athletes and his coaching counterparts in retirement.

Additionally, he expressed how much he enjoyed gameplanning and the intricacies that come with coaching and leading a program as well.

"I think I will miss the game-planning part as well," he stated. "Just trying to figure out how to score or stop someone is something I liked."

He specifically shouted out two people when speaking with *The Graphic*, first his wife Lindsay, who has been a part of his coaching journey since 2001.

"She has been there through the good times and the rough times. It's not easy being a coach's wife."

Aside from her, Lee made special mention of his longtime assistant and good friend Kent Cox, someone he has coached alongside for an impressive 19 seasons.

Cox has traditionally handled the defensive side of the ball while Lee has called the offense - dating back to their days as junior varsity-level coaches at Rocky Mount High.

"We complement each other so well," said Lee of his coaching buddy. "I will definitely miss being on the sideline with him."

Lee is also a winner of Nash County's highest honor for coaches, the Dudley Whitley Award, which he was selected for in 2016. The criteria is based on a coach's character, sportsmanship and their ability to serve as a positive role model for students - and it doesn't take long to understand why Lee was an award winner.

Nash Central is set to name Lee's successor in the coming weeks, a pick that will be only the fourth head football coach in school history.

GOLF

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While Crumley's title is all but assured, the race for second place is interesting, with three performers currently within five shots of Thurston.

Southern Nash's Joshua Barnes is part of that mix with 397 strokes -- just five behind Thurston.

Rocky Mount High School's Kaleb Wells, at 11th, RM's Benjamin Parks, at 13th and Southern Nash's Noah Craft, at 14th, all have realistic chances of breaking into the Top 10 with a strong final-day effort.

But the top spot is Crumley's to lose with 363 strokes, compared to 392 for Thurston.

The race for the team

championship is much more undecided as long-time rivals Wilson Fike and Wilson Hunt entered the closing 18-hole conference event tied at 33 points apiece in the Big East's scoring system.

Fike has won two of the meets to date this season, while Hunt drew into a tie with a win at the Dudley showdown.

Southern Nash was also in contention at one point, but the Firebirds fell off with middle-finish performances over the last two matches.

Still, the Firebirds entered the finale tied for third place with CB Aycock at 29 points.

Southern Nash would love to squeeze out a

third in the newfangled Big East, which is certainly deeper overall than the past four campaigns in the conference before the latest realignment by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association.

Nash, coached by the legendary Brian Taylor, is in the fifth spot overall with 26 total points.

But while Fighting Knights might not possess the overall depth of some of their colleagues in the Big East, they certainly possess the best golfer -- and that would be the talented Crumley, who has been dominant in his career from Day One.

NCHS

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wanted before dropping a three-point contest.

The Bulldogs' overall success resulted in a berth in the state playoffs, where Nash Central won an opening-round event versus Fairmont before seeing its slate come to a close with a loss to QCAC powerhouse Roanoke Rapids.

Nash Central's Markell Jasper earned a spot on the All-QCAC Boys Basketball Team, while teammate Maurice Parker was an honorable mention selection on the prestigious list.

Jasper, a junior, paced the Bulldogs in scoring with a 12.4-point per contest average.

Parker delivered 6.4 points and 6.2 rebounds per outing for Thomas' crew.

Parker was a senior for NCHS, while Jasper, a junior, will return for one more season.

In addition to Jasper, the Bulldogs have several key returnees slated to come back, so Nash Central should continue to be on the upswing as they look to be a major factor in the Quad County Athletic Conference standings.

Bunn's Isaac Bailey was tabbed as the QCAC Player of the Year, and Roanoke Rapids' Quentez Richardson was the pick as the QCAC Defensive Player of the Year.

Roanoke Rapids' George Collins was named the QCAC Coach of the Year after guiding the Yellow Jackets to the third round of the state playoffs.

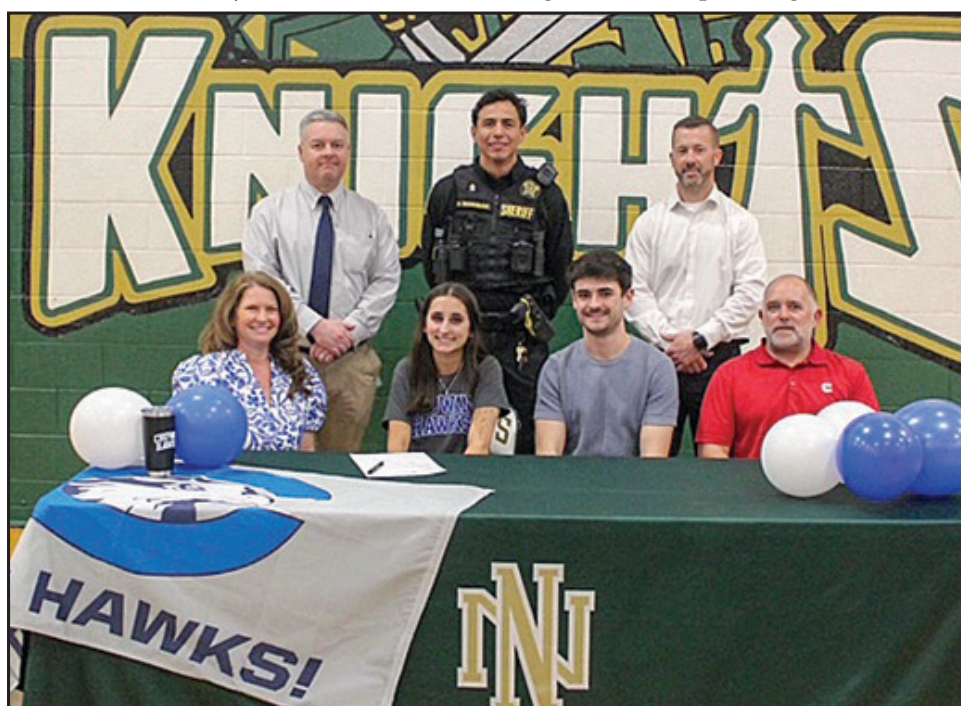
The complete 2025-26 All-QCAC Boys Basketball Team is as follows:

- 2025-26 All-QCAC Boys Basketball Team**
- Bobby Hawkins, Jr. -- Roanoke Rapids
 - Christian Price, Ro-



NASH CENTRAL BOYS HOOPS SENIOR MAURICE PARKER

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>Roanoke Rapids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Khamorae Wood, Roanoke Rapids • Quentez Richardson, Roanoke Rapids • Josiah Rice, Bunn High School • DJ Smith, Bunn High School • Isaac Bailey, Bunn High School • Brayden Estael, Wake Prep • Josh Bracy, Wake Prep • Michael McLean, Louisburg • Luke Sheldon, Louisburg • Markell Jasper, Nash Central • Ben Allen, American Leadership Academy of Johnston County <p>Honorable Mention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shawn Morgan -- | <p>Roanoke Rapids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CJ Kearney, Bunn High School • Jeremiah Hargrove, Wake Prep • Justin Harrison, Louisburg • Maurice Parker, Nash Central • Isiah Rollins, American Leadership Academy of Johnston County <p>Top Honors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quad County Conference Player of the Year -- Isaac Bailey, Bunn High School • Quad County Conference Defensive Player of the Year -- Quentez Richardson, Roanoke Rapids High School • Quad County Conference Coach of the Year -- George Collins, Roanoke Rapids High School |
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NN'S BAILEY POWELL SIGNS WITH CHOWAN UNIVERSITY

POWELL

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Baltazar Rodriguez -- who coached Powell each year she played with the Lady Knights.

Bailey's personal success translated to the team as a whole as well, with Northern firing off an impressive 44-20 record over the course of her career paired with a stellar 32-7 mark in Big East Conference play.

The Lady Knights concluded Powell's sophomore campaign with a first-place finish in what was then the Class-2A/3A Big East Conference, later advancing to the second round of the state playoffs after a thrilling 4-2 double-overtime win over Swansboro.

Powell helped Northern qualify for the postseason in each year she suited up for the Lady Knights, a consistent key piece of the roster alongside fellow stars such as Griffin Webb, Annaliese Freeman, Sarah Cook and Ava Lloyd.

"Northern Nash has given me great memories and friendships that will last forever," fondly remembered Powell of her time in green and gold, additionally referencing that her time with the Wilson Youth Soccer Association (WYSA) played a role in her development as a player.

"I joined the team my sophomore year and I loved the staff, coaches and most importantly my teammates," said Powell of WYSA. "They were absolutely amazing and they all helped me grow through the years as a player and

also as a person."

Interestingly enough, Powell's Northern Nash career had a new wrinkle added to it in the Fall of 2025, as she was convinced by the school's head football coach Andrew Farriss to try out for the kicker position on the gridiron squad.

"He was impressed with my playing ability and how hard I kicked," said Powell of Farriss -- where a relationship started to grow between the two as Farriss was driving the bus for the girls soccer team to a handful of their away games.

This past season, Powell made the team and contributed as a kicker, becoming the first female to ever be rostered on Northern Nash's football team.

"I loved the experience but have to admit I was a little nervous before the first game," Powell said of her time in a helmet and shoulderpads.

Powell will now be shifting her focus to Chowan's Fall 2026 slate on the pitch, with the Hawks looking to improve upon a 7-9-1 mark in the 2025 season.

Powell, of course in addition to shouting out all of her teammates and coaches, was quick to thank her parents as well for the roles they have played in her athletic career and personal life.

"They have stood behind me through the years and are my biggest fans," remarked Powell. "They always knew I had more to give."

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