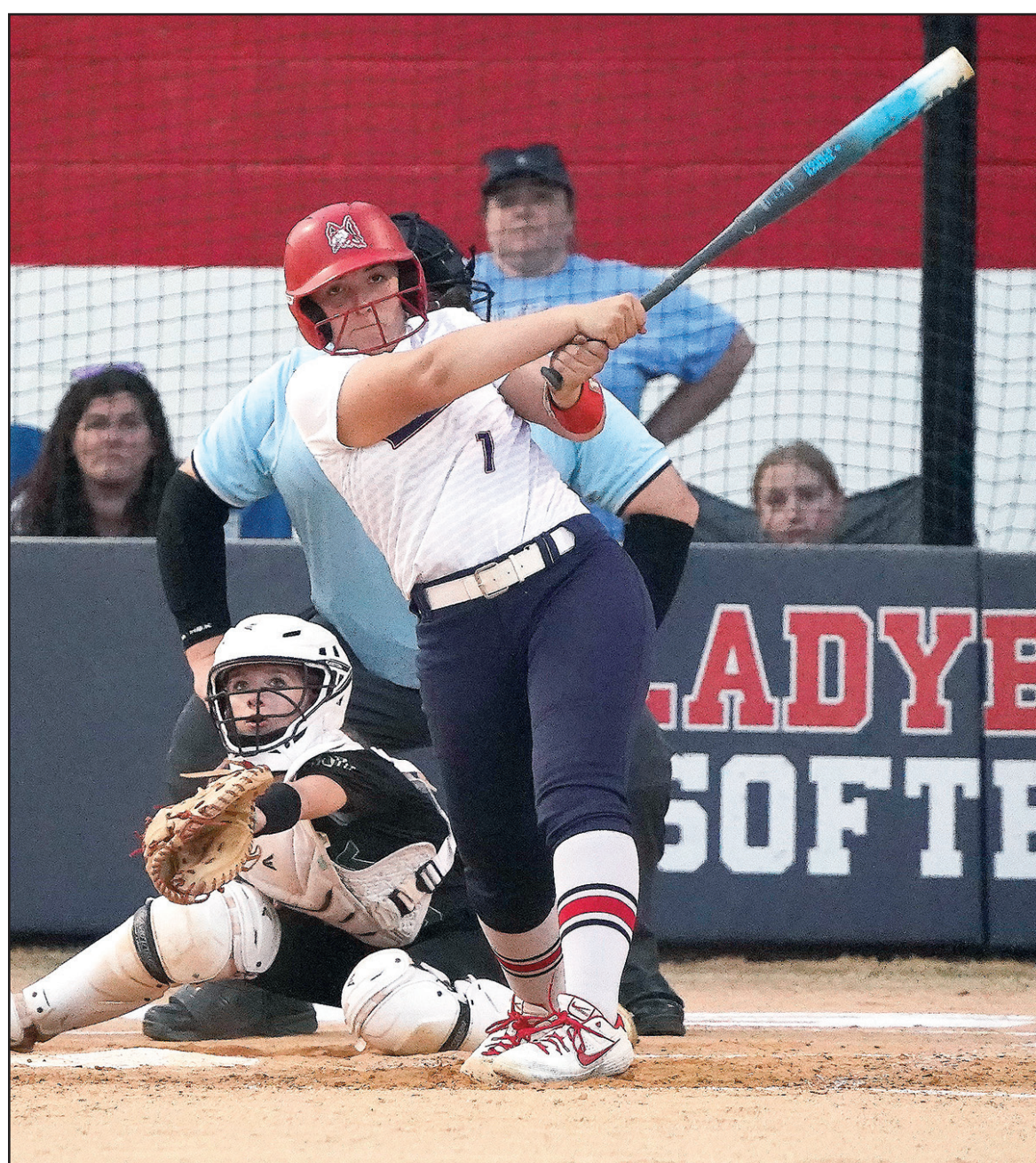


SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL SOFTBALL IN THE CLUTCH



SARAH EWERS HAS BEEN EXCEPTIONAL WITH THE BAT AND ON THE MOUND THIS SEASON FOR THE SOUTHERN NASH SOFTBALL SQUAD
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

Ladybirds overcome adversity in playoffs



SN'S ALIYAH CROLL

From Staff Reports

STANHOPE -- It would have been understandable to discount Southern Nash's chances in the Class 5-A State Softball Tournament after slugger Noel Dobbins was lost for the season due to a meniscus tear.

See BIRDS, Page 2B



SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL
INFIELDER PAISLEY BAKER



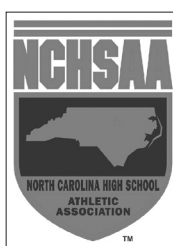
NORTHERN NASH'S BRITT CRUMLEY
TEES OFF AT THE STATE GOLF TOURNEY

BACK TO STATES Crumley shines for Knights

From Staff Reports

Championships at Sapona Golf Club in Lexington.

LEXINGTON -- Britt Crumley established himself as one of Northern Nash's all-time best boys golfers as part of his prolific 2026 spring campaign.



Crumley finished tied for 24th overall at the prestigious tournament as he delivered a 36-hole total of 158.

Crumley, now a junior, capped off his season this week by participating in the two-day event at the North Carolina High School Athletic Association Class 6-A State Boys Golf

Northern Guilford's Jack Weston, only a freshman, was the individual title winner with a 138 -- one stroke ahead of Fayetteville Terry Sanford's Charlie Horne.

See GOLF, Page 2B



NASH CENTRAL'S CHRISTIANA LYNCH NCHSAA approves new sports

From Staff Reports

ing a historic step in expanding athletic opportunities for female student-athletes across the state.

CHAPEL HILL -- The Board of Directors of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association voted last Wednesday to officially sanction Women's Flag Football as an NCHSAA championship sport, mark-

The decision comes after several years of growing interest and participation in the

See NCHSAA, Page 2B

SUPERB SEASON

Bulldogs enjoyed winning mark

From Staff Reports



NC'S GARRET LEWIS

ROCKY MOUNT -- Heading into the postseason, veteran Nash Central baseball coach Willie Langley thought his squad had the pitching talent and depth to make a substantial run in the Class 4-A State Playoffs.

Langley's assessment held true as the Bulldogs flashed their mound skills during their two-game journey.

But Central's bats were unable to get anything going in the second round, which resulted in the Bulldogs being eliminated by a 1-0 margin on the road against Southwestern Randolph.

It was a disappointing well to end the campaign for the Bulldogs, but they still managed to go over .500 for the season with a 13-12 worksheet under Langley's astute direction.

Last Tuesday, Central

See BASEBALL, Page 2B



NCHS LEGENDARY HEAD BASEBALL COACH WILLIE LANGLEY



NEW NCHS HEAD FOOTBALL COACH CARTER VARNELL

Varnell Headed To NC

New coach takes over solid program

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

ROCKY MOUNT -- A new head football coach will be roaming the sidelines at Nash Central High School this fall, and that man is Nash County native Carter Varnell.

Varnell comes to Nash Central after holding the same role at SouthWest Edgecombe for six years, his tenure in Pinetops highlighted by being recognized as a two-time Conference Coach of the Year and a two-time Conference Champion.

More recently, Varnell helped guide the Cougars to the fourth round of the Class-4-A State Playoffs in 2025, knocking off Southwest Onslow, Bunn and East Duplin during their run.

"I'm excited to see his enthusiasm, athlete development and love of the game transition into a disciplined team that contends for a conference championship and makes playoff runs," said Nash Central athletic director Kyle Bain, who cited Varnell's success and experience as a sitting head coach as

part of what he found the most attractive about him throughout the interview and application processes.

"One of the main things we were looking for is someone that had head coaching experience in an established, successful program," stated Bain, a box that the eventual hire certainly checked off.

Varnell will look to build off of an impressive foundation that was laid over the last 11 seasons by Chris Lee, who had a similar background when he was selected for the Bulldogs' job in 2015.

Both coaches spent a large portion of their careers as assistants in Nash County, both specifically had ties to Rocky Mount High School and both left the area for a head coaching job in a neighboring county prior to taking the job at Nash Central.

Varnell will be just the fourth coach in the school's history, and will be teaching physical education at Central starting this fall. The Bulldogs are set to begin the Carter Varnell era and their 2026 slate on August 21.

NCHSAA

continued from page 1B

sport at the high school level, as well as successful programs across the state and increased national momentum for women's flag football.

High School Flag Football in North Carolina will now be governed by the NCHSAA and will compete under NFHS rules. The season will take place in the fall, and the first NCHSAA Flag Football Championship will be held in late 2026.

Flag football has rapidly emerged as one of the fastest-growing high school sports in the country, providing new opportunities for female athletes to compete in football while emphasizing speed, strategy, and teamwork.

"Today's decision represents a meaningful investment in the future of our student-athletes, in this case females, and the continued evolution of school-based athletics in North Carolina," said Que Tucker, Commissioner of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association. "Girls Flag football offers an inclusive, fast-paced, and highly engaging opportunity for students to compete, connect, and grow through sport, and we're proud to bring it into our championship program."

VOLLEYBALL: Also last Wednesday, the North Carolina High School Athletic Association Board of Directors voted to sanction Men's Volleyball as an official NCHSAA championship sport, signaling a significant milestone in the continued growth of the sport across the state.

Men's volleyball has seen increasing participation at the school levels throughout North Carolina in recent years. The Board's decision formally brings the sport under the NCHSAA umbrella and begins the process of establishing regular-season and championship opportunities for member schools.

The Men's Volleyball season will take place in the spring, and the first NCHSAA Men's Volleyball Championships will be held in May 2027.

Coaches and advocates across the state have played a critical role in

Sapona GC. "I'm very proud of Britt," said Northern Nash High School legendary veteran head coach Brian Taylor. "He struggled a bit on the front nine of the second day.

"But he toughed it out and finished his round strong. He finished in the top half (of the 48-player field)."

GOLF

continued from page 1B

Terry Sanford was the winner of the team championship in convincing fashion.

This season marked Crumley's second consecutive visit to the states after joining the Knights' boys golf program last spring.

An instant hit, Crumley won the Big East Conference Championship in 2025 and repeated that

lofty feat this year. Also a two-time regional performer, Crumley opened his 2026 state journey Monday by carding a strong 4-over-par 76.

Scores were generally higher on the second day of competition, but Crumley managed to stay the course while finishing with an 82 on the 6,620-yard layout at

Sapona GC. "I'm very proud of Britt," said Northern Nash High School legendary veteran head coach Brian Taylor. "He struggled a bit on the front nine of the second day. "But he toughed it out and finished his round strong. He finished in the top half (of the 48-player field)."



NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL MOUND ACE CALEB COX

BASEBALL

continued from page 1B

had began its postseason with an 8-3 victory over Carrboro in opening-round action.

The Bulldogs spotted the Jaguars two runs in the top of the first, but responded with three tallies of their own in the bottom of the stanza -- and never trailed after that.

Sophomore standout Caleb Cox worked 5.2 innings to earn the decision, allowed four hits and one earned run while striking out 11 and walking three.

Peyton Harris notched the save, while the Bulldogs' bats racked up six hits, including an RBI

double from Michael Carney.

The triumph allowed Nash Central to advance into a second-round showdown on the road in Asheboro versus Southwestern Randolph.

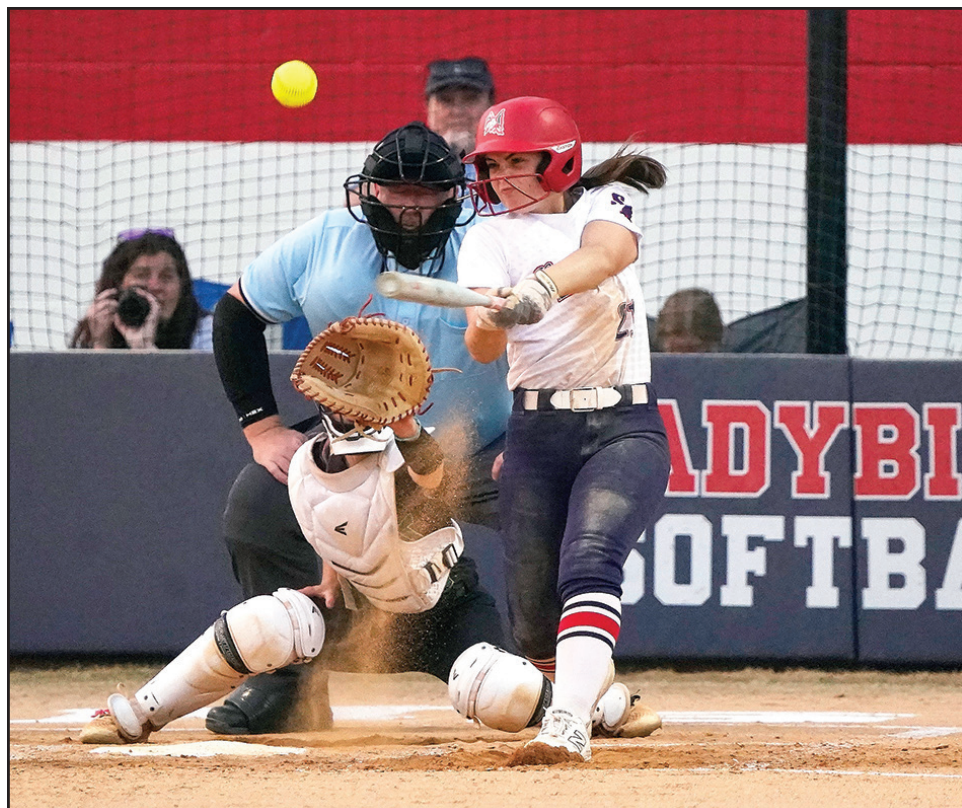
Neither club could muster a run in the pitcher's duel until SWR scored in walk-off fashion in the bottom of the seventh to advance.

"I felt like we had a team capable of a run, but we didn't get the greatest draw," Langley said. "The top eight teams got a bye (which NCHS didn't), and that put us behind out of the gate.

"(Harris) pitched a masterpiece (versus SWR), but we couldn't get the big hit when we needed it.

"We have to do a better job offensively -- our pitching kept us close enough in almost every game we played. We just didn't get the offense we needed most of the season and that showed up in the second round."

In addition to its overall record, the Bulldogs finished 5-5 in the Quad County Conference, which was good for a tie for the second position in the competitive league behind the Bunn Wildcats.



SOUTHERN NASH VETERAN STANDOUT MAKAYLA WEEKS

BIRDS

continued from page 1B

Dobbins sustained the injury just before the start of the regular season, but played through the pain before it became too much -- and she was shut down with three weeks to go before the playoffs started.

It was definitely a tough loss for the Ladybirds as Dobbins, a junior, had long-since established herself as one of the school's all-time greatest players.

And despite being hindered by her injury, Dobbins batted an amazing .651 for the year with six home runs, eight doubles and 29 RBI.

With Dobbins unavailable, SN coach Scott Collie encouraged his other standouts to step up, and they have done exactly that.

Southern Nash won the Big East Conference championship and closed the regular season with a 20-1 mark, the Ladybirds received a first-round bye before tangling with Dixon last Friday in second-round action at historic Ladybird Field.

SNHS senior Sarah Ewers pitched a no-hitter, striking out 13, as the Ladybirds rolled to a 3-0 decision.

SN took the lead for good with a two-spot in the bottom of the first.

Junior veteran Aliyah Croll was sharp at the plate, going 3-for-3 with

one homer, one double, one RBI and two runs scored to spark the Ladybirds' six-hit attack.

Croll and Ewers have been veteran leaders for SN since Dobbins was lost for the year, and Collie described Ewers' no-hitter last Friday as possibly the best mound work of her career.

SN's playoff quest didn't get any easier Tuesday against a South Brunswick club that won the state championship two years ago.

Playing at Ladybird Field, the Ladybirds rode yet another incredible effort by Ewers to secure a clutch 2-1 victory.

After falling behind 1-0, the Ladybirds evened the score in the bottom of the fourth as Ewers tripled and came home off a grounder from Paisley Baker. One frame later, SN took the lead for good off an unearned run, and Ewers did the rest, striking out seven.

"We have been solid defensively and pitching-wise, and we have been opportunistic offensively," Collie said. "Those are three things we emphasize before each game, and so far in the playoffs we have been able to execute in those areas."

SN will remain at home this Friday for a fourth-round showdown against West Carteret.

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