

Handy Heads To The NCHS Hall



HANDY DAWES ACCEPTS HIS INDUCTION INTO THE NCHS HALL OF FAME

Dawes starred as a runner for Nash Central

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

ROCKY MOUNT -- A Nash Central High School legend from nearly two decades back added a new accolade to his already impressive résumé this spring, as former Bulldog track and field star Handy Dawes was inducted into the school's Athletics Hall of Fame on May 19.

Dawes, who graduated from Central in 2007, was the first



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NASH CENTRAL'S A'DIA CASH

2026 BIG EAST CONFERENCE SOFTBALL SEASON THE FITTING ENDING

Central salutes its stars

From Staff Reports

ROCKY MOUNT -- Three Quad County Conference team championships. Seven league Coaches of the Year. Eight Players of the Year.

And even a state champion in track and field in Zach Lynch (boys high jump).

Needless to say, it was a spectacular sports year for Nash Central High Schoolin 2025-26 as the Bulldogs competed -- and excelled -- during their first campaign in the newly formed QCC.

But the best may yet be to come for the Bulldogs as an influx of young stars has everyone at The Dawg Pound excited about the school's athletic potential in the coming seasons.

"We've gotten a good young group coming through," said

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SNHS SUPERSTAR ALIYAH CROLL

Collie exits in style for Ladybirds

From Staff Reports

STANHOPE -- What a way to go out.

Such was the theme of the 2026 softball season at Southern Nash -- a campaign of success that would be Scott Collie's final one as the prolific program's head coach.

After 10 dominant campaigns, Collie announced his retirement after SN won the Big East Conference Championship (again) while reaching the fourth round of the

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SARAH EWERS WAS TABBED AS THE BIG EAST PITCHER OF THE YEAR



NASH CENTRAL'S WINSTON LEE

STATE CHAMPION! Lynch claims 4-A high jump title

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

GREENSBORO -- State championships of any kind, whether they be as a team or as an individual, are extremely difficult to come by.

Perhaps they're even more impressive when there is so much potential still to be uncovered in a young student-athlete.

That's the case for Nash Central High School's Zach Lynch, a sophomore track and field athlete who claimed the Boys 4A High Jump crown at the state championship meet on May 13 in Greensboro.

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CENTRAL'S ZACH LYNCH WON THE BOYS STATE HIGH JUMP CROWN



NASH CENTRAL'S ZACH LYNCH



SOUTHERN NASH SOFTBALL GREAT NOEL DOBBINS

SOFTBALL

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state playoffs. Once again, Collie was the automatic selection as the Big East Conference Champion Coach of the Year. And three of his players -- Noel Dobbins, Aliyah Croll and Sarah Ewers -- earned top honors in the Big East. Dobbins and Croll were the picks as the Big East Co-Players of the Year, while Ewers was tabbed as the Pitcher of the Year. Despite battling a knee injury that eventually sidelined her near the end of the regular season, Dobbins batted an unbelievable .651 with six homers, eight doubles and 29 RBI. Entering her senior year, Dobbins already has a school-record 23 home runs to her credit. Croll, also a junior, developed into a team leader while starring at shortstop and catcher. She batted .522 with team highs in RBI (34), hits (36), triples (4) and runs scored (42). Ewers had the herculean task of replacing graduated superstar Anna Dickinson on the mound and was flawless, going 17-2 while allowing just 11

earned runs while striking out 147 in 88 innings of work. SN's other All-Big East Conference selections were Hayden Baker, Paisley Baker, and Jenna Antill, while Makayla Weeks was an honorable mention pick. Whoever succeeds Collie will inherit a stocked club as the Ladybirds graduate only three seniors, but will need to find a new starting pitcher as Ewers will be exiting. Northern Nash, which finished in third place in the Big East and reached the state playoffs, was represented on the All-Conference Team by Kasey Burden, Hayley Moss, Madison Prezioso and Alaina Fisher. Fighting Knight Ambriel Beale was named to the honorable mention squad. Here's the best part for the Northern Nash softballers -- they didn't have a senior on their entire roster, and only two juniors. Burden, a sophomore, paced Northern Nash by batting an impressive .532 with 17 stolen bases in addition to appearing in 13 games on the mound while sharing duties with Fisher.

DAWES

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Bulldog to compete in track and field collegiately at the Division I level, following up his high school career by competing at UNC-Charlotte. A clear standout, Dawes helped deliver a 2007 conference championship and regional championship during his senior-year curtain call, a season where he ranked as high as seventh in the nation in the 400-meter dash. "It felt good to be back there," said Dawes of his alma mater, recalling the last time he visited -- which was for the induction of his former head coach Brian Winham into the same ring of honor. Dawes presently lives in Durham and works as a quality assurance associate in the pharmaceutical and biotech industry, putting his Mathematics degree from UNC-Charlotte to good use. Outside of work, Dawes has a passion and has found a hobby in both photography and videography. One of the most decorated student-athletes to come out of Nash Central, Dawes was a state qualifier each of his four years on campus, competing in fifteen total events in the top level that North Carolina offers. Dawes racked up three state championships as an individual, tabbing three more second-place finishes in state events while adding one third-



HANDY DAWES HALL OF FAMER

place result. He additionally won three regional events over the course of his career, while winning a stellar seven conference championships as an individual. Dawes' local success not only drew attention from college coaches, but also the eyes of track events from around the United States. His success at Nash Central High School led him to events such as the Nike Outdoor Nationals, where he claimed a top-ten finish in the 400-meter race, and the Junior Olympic U.S. Track and Field Championships, where he competed in multiple events, headlined by a silver medal in the 4x800 relay. All-time, Dawes still ranks among North Carolina's top high school track and field student-athletes, currently sitting at 26th in the state's

indoor 400-meter record book. While Dawes enjoyed the travel and level of competition that came with both collegiate and AAU track, the community element of high school track is something that he still looks back fondly on. "High school is more close-knit, you're able to have more support," said Dawes of the differences between the two -- specifically mentioning his parents and sister who were able to attend every meet while he competed for the Bulldogs. "It's a different type of fun." Despite all his successes, the invitation into the Hall of Fame was still something that caught Dawes by surprise. "I was shocked and honored," he said. "It was definitely unexpected." The Central alumnus thanked his family, who are still largely located in Nash County, as well as his former coaches upon induction, as well as many others who supported him or were a part of his journey. The former track star also offered some advice to current student-athletes or track athletes, advising that they live in the moment and take advantage of every opportunity that comes their way. "Always push through the finish line," Dawes remarked. "In everything that you do in life."



NASH CENTRAL BOYS ATHLETE OF THE YEAR JAYDEN WHITAKER WITH COACH RICARDO JEROME

CENTRAL

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NC Athletic Director Kyle Bain. "They have been seeing some success. They teamed up with some of our seniors for us to do really well in the new conference. And I'm super excited to see what the future holds." Nash Central recently held its annual Athletic Awards Ceremony, and one of those talented freshman made her way to the stage early and often. That student-athlete was freshman A'dia Cash -- the only ninth-grader to ever be tabbed as the Nash Central Girls Athlete of the Year. Cash was well-deserving after starring in basketball, volleyball, cross country and track and field. She was the QCC Player of the Year in girls basketball and finished second in the state in the pole vault during the track and field season.



NASH CENTRAL SENIOR MULTI-SPORT STANDOUT RYLEE BREWER

A senior veteran was tabbed as the NCHS Boys Athlete of the Year as Jayden Whitaker shined for the Bulldogs in outdoor track and field, wrestling, indoor track and field and football. During the football season, Whitaker was selected as the QCC Defensive Player of the Year and competed in the prestigious East-West All-Star Game in December in Greensboro. Whitaker, also known for his shot put excellence at NCHS, will continue his gridiron career at Norfolk State. The Nash County

Schools Triple Crown Award winners were seniors Rylee Brewer and Winston Lee. Brewer overcome a serious knee injury to sparkle in volleyball, golf, softball and swimming for the Bulldogs. She was an all-conference selection in three sports and was the QCC Girls Swimmer of the Year as a senior. Lee was a football, golf, swimming and baseball standout for the Bulldogs. He was a swim star as a senior despite tearing his ACL a few months earlier during the football campaign. Both Brewer and Lee were exceptional students who contributed to the well-being of the community. The Bulldog Award went to senior Christiana Lynch, who did a little bit of everything at NCHS, including competing in wrestling, track and field, basketball and flag football. Lynch also dressed up as the Bulldog mascot at several events and served as a videographer. "She would do anything you asked her," Bain said. "I don't think I ever saw her not wearing a Nash Central T-shirt. Her school spirit was amazing."

LYNCH

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Lynch, a second-year competitor on the track and field circuit, claimed the state crown by clearing the six-foot-four-inches mark in the high jump event, claiming his first-ever state title as an individual. The youngest of any of the event's top-five finishers, Lynch edged out student-athletes from Roanoke Rapids, North Pitt, Central Davidson and Eastern Wayne by two inches, cementing an already-impressive legacy as one of the top student-athletes in Nash Central High School history. "Zach is the complete student-athlete," stated Ricardo Jerome, the school's track and field coach. "He's really just now coming out of his shell. He is dedicated in the classroom, committed to his training and represents our program with tremendous character." According to both Jerome and himself, Lynch made serious improvements in both confidence and maturity from his freshman to his sophomore campaign, something that translated to his results in competition. "I wasn't as interested as I am now," said Lynch of track and field, who remarked that basketball was his first love and the sport he played both in middle school and high school before giving track a shot. Lynch also mentioned that he feels his skills on the basketball court help translate to track and field as well, and that the two sports can be intertwined

in different ways. "It all ties together," Lynch stated. "From footwork to strength and coordination, it all ties together and helps." Now halfway through his high school career, the high-jump specialist made it clear that he's still looking to improve and sharpen his skills, aiming to win two more state championships in the event with future aspirations of competing at the collegiate level. "I believe Zach's best days are still ahead of him," said Jerome -- referencing both his impact on the basketball court as well as within the track and field program. "As he continues to develop physically, gain experience and refine his technique, I expect him to become an even more complete athlete and leader." A regional qualifier in 2025, Lynch made major strides from his freshman to sophomore seasons -- breaking the school record in high jump at the same six-foot-four just three weeks prior to winning the state title. Lynch won all but three events as a whole during this year's sophomore campaign, drawing attention from those around the area and league long before garnering state-wide attention at last month's championships. With two more years remaining in his Nash Central career, Lynch is primed for an even bigger junior season next spring, with another huge jump anticipated ahead of the back half of his prep tenure.