

Knights Set To Shine This Season



NN RUNNING BACK MYLES EATMON IS RETURNING FROM INJURY

Northern Nash returning some key standouts

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

RED OAK -- It's sometimes said that there are really only two seasons -- football season and waiting on football season. Fortunately, the latter of those two options is nearly over. With kickoff of the 2026 high school football season now just over one month away, area schools are already working their way through summer workouts



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NASH CENTRAL'S CALEB COX

NORTHERN NASH GRAD EXCELS AT LOUISBURG COLLEGE THE NATIONALS TEAM



LOUISBURG'S EMILY CLAY

Clay played a huge role at Louisburg

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

LOUISBURG -- Despite dealing with a shoulder injury for a large part of her inaugural season on the collegiate circuit, former Northern Nash softball star Emily Clay made quite the statement for the Louisburg College Hurricanes in year one. In 29 games for Louisburg this spring, Clay posted an impressive .310 batting average



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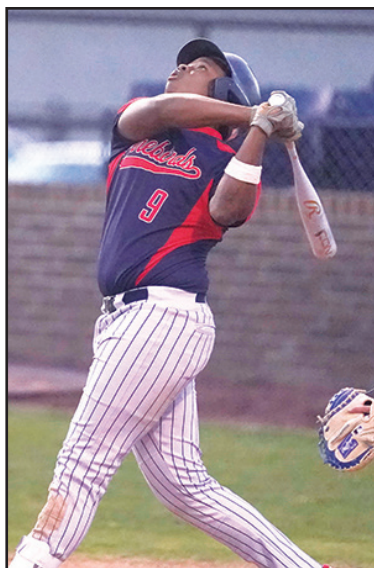
NORTHERN NASH'S EMILY CLAY HELPED THE LOUISBURG COLLEGE LADY HURRICANES REACH THE NJCAA NATIONAL SOFTBALL TOURNEY

Nash Co. stars are honored

From Staff Reports

ROCKY MOUNT -- Three talented performers stole the diamond show this past spring in Nash County -- and they have each been recognized by the North Carolina Baseball Coaches Association. Southern Nash's Isaiah Battle, Nash Central's Caleb Cox and Rocky Mount's Jack McKellar have claimed prestigious spots on the NCB-CA's All-State Teams in their

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SOUTHERN NASH'S ISAIAH BATTLE

Canes will host baseball camps

From Staff Reports

LOUISBURG -- Louisburg College host a pair of Summer Baseball Camps for players looking to continue to develop their skills and experience the LC baseball program firsthand. Both camps will be held

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3-PEAT FOR SN? Ladybirds seek another title

From Staff Reports

STANHOPE -- Just a handful of years ago, the thought of Southern Nash winning a Big East Conference Volleyball Championship was quite far-fetched.



But winning back-to-back crowns? That's an unheard-of proposition from a program that has struggled at times through the years.

However, the upstart Ladybirds, under the direction of skipper Melanie Mercer, achieved that lofty feat by taking the Big East by storm in 2024 and 2025.

Now comes an opportunity

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SN'S ABIGAIL MARKS



SOUTHERN NASH VOLLEYBALL COACH MELANIE MERCER THE GREAT HAS THE LADYBIRDS POISED FOR ANOTHER EXCEPTIONAL CAMPAIGN



NORTHERN NASH HEAD FOOTBALL COACH ANDREW FARRIS IS EXCITED ABOUT HIS CLUB'S CHANCES THIS FALL

FOOTBALL

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and the seven-on-seven circuit as the regular season draws closer.

Perhaps the most attention locally has been pointed in the direction of the Northern Nash Knights, back-to-back winners of the Big East Conference.

"I think we definitely have a chance to be pretty good," Northern head coach Andrew Farriss, who's entering his ninth season leading the Knights' program, stated.

"We have all the pieces and I like what we have."

Looking to build and improve on last season's 11-2 campaign, Northern is expected to be loaded with talent at skill positions offensively – a theme of recent seasons for the Knights.

Farriss' squad is bringing back high-volume passcatchers in Kamren Freeman and Chase Morgan, both of whom nursed injuries in the offseason but are due for big campaigns this fall.

Outside of that, the running back room is perhaps what is most attractive about Northern heading into August.

Most notably, Myles Eatmon is set to take the field for the final time in green-and-gold this season, having already established himself as one of the most productive backs in the school's history.

Having amassed a grand total of 2,774 rushing yards over his two years on the varsity level, Eatmon has struggled with injuries of his own and has still been the main attraction at Northern. He was the team's leading rusher in 2025 with over 1,600 yards on the ground, tabbing over 1,000 yards in the ground game in both of his two seasons with the Knights.

"His speed has increased," Farriss said of Eatmon, something the senior back was determined to improve heading into his curtain call at Northern.

Joining Eatmon in the backfield will be Preston McDaniel and Jamarcus Robinson, both of whom saw action last year with the Knights, as well as Camron Lyons, who transferred to Northern during the offseason from county rival Southern Nash.

Lyons, who backed up Jaden Hartsfield in the gridiron at nearby Southern last fall, spent the spring and summer with Northern and is likely to play roles outside of running back.

Both offensively and defensively, there are some lineup and rotational decisions to be made, but there seem to be a strong number of options to pick from.

"We want to get the best 11 on the field and we'll figure out where they need to go," Farris stated, even mentioning that offensively, the Knights could trot out packages that included Eatmon, Robinson, McDaniel and Lyons all on the field at the same time.

Whether that actually comes into fruition on the field or not, it's not going to take long for Northern to get a feel for itself amongst some stellar competition.

The Knights will face powers J.H. Rose and Cleveland in nonconference play, as well as South Central before jumping into league play which begins on Sept. 25.

Game one of Northern's season will be against Rose, with the Knights kicking the year off in Greenville on Friday, Aug. 21.

BIRDS

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for the ultimate journey into spike fantasyland as Southern Nash will be looking for a three-peat this fall.

And the Ladybirds have the pieces to make a run at another crown.

Certainly, Southern lost some key pieces from last year's group, which went 20-2 overall to go with an undefeated mark in the Big East.

But the same could be said from the previous campaign as the Ladybirds experienced mass graduation from its 2024 group, which got this ball rolling in a big way.

With that in mind, SN was supposed to experience a rebuilding season of sorts last fall, but some talented newcomers helped Mercer's crew dominate the Big East once again.

The majority of those performers are back in the fold and will be led by senior setter Abigail Marks, who has been a strong force at the position over the past two years.

Southern also boasts a pair of strong hitting returnees in senior Peyton Cooke and sophomore Brooklyn Rice, who burst onto the varsity scene as a freshman in 2025.

"We are a very young team and have a lot of potential to go far the next few years," Mercer said.

"We have only two starting seniors, and they are going to be the main



SNHS KEY RETURNEE PEYTON COOKE

leaders on the court.

"Abigail Marks and Peyton Cooke have a great connection, and it shows when they play together.

"One of this team's greatest strengths is the genuine friendships they share. They enjoy being

around each other, and that chemistry translates onto the court, allowing them to communicate well, trust one another and play as a team

"We're looking forward to not only this season, but to many successful seasons ahead."



NORTHERN NASH ALUM EMILY CLAY BATTED AT A .310 CLIP THIS SPRING FOR THE LOUISBURG COLLEGE LADY CANES

CLAY

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while helping push the Hurricanes to the NJCAA Division II Softball World Series, ending the year at 43-9 overall.

The freshman additionally recorded 19 RBI and slugged .479 while accruing a .433 on-base percentage, stout numbers for a first-year player fresh out of high school.

"I think the season went really well," Clay remarked of the season. "Our team chemistry was really strong, we wanted to play for each other."

That same team chemistry and atmosphere is part of what drew Clay to Louisville in the first place, opting to transfer closer to home after originally committing to and signing with Valdosta State University in Georgia out of high school.

"You could tell the coaches and staff cared," stated Clay, who recalled she heard from north of 15 schools when making the decision to transfer.

The attention she received was not only well-deserved based on her Northern Nash

career, where she was one of the top softballers in the school's history, but later validated by her play pre-injury.

Clay spent the majority of her time on the field at third base, making 22 starts coinciding with the aforementioned 29 total appearances. Defensively, she contributed 18 putouts and 16 assists, holding her own at the hot corner.

Impressively enough, Clay has already earned an Associates Degree in General Science from Louisville, handling her business in the classroom as well as on the softball field.

Her professional and academic dreams, which include aspirations of becoming an oncologist, have now led her to the decision to continue her softball career at Pitt Community College in Greenville, the opportunity to work towards a degree in Nursing — a program that Louisville doesn't offer — too much to turn down.

"Your decision should

come with what you think is best for you," remarked Clay of her move to leave Louisville, emphasizing the elements of her future that factored into the situation as well.

A large draw to Pitt for Clay was the emphasis put on faith and Christianity by the softball program, pointing to the community outreach and weekly devotionals that are prioritized by the squad.

"I'm in love with anything that has to do with Jesus," Clay stated with a smile and a laugh. "It's important to be more than just a softball player."

Having demonstrated prior excellence at both Northern Nash and Louisville College, though, it likely won't take long for Clay to find her stride and make a positive impression on the staff and team in Pitt County as well — soon making her mark on a school that resides in one of the state's premier softball hotbeds.

BASEBALL

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respective classifications.

Battle and McKellar are featured on the Class 5-A squad, while Cox is on the Class 4-A list.

Battle, a rising senior and also a standout quarterback for the Firebirds, enjoyed a spectacular season this spring, batting .485 to go with six home runs and 27 RBI.

Battle, the son of legendary SN head coach and former star athlete Kwamaine Battle, also made eight appearances on the mound, fashioning a solid 3.50 earned-run average.

McKellar, who will continue his diamond career at Virginia Military Institute, was a four-year starter for RM and capped off his prep career in 2026 by batting a whopping .510 with two homers and 14 RBI. He is projected as a catcher at the next level.

Both Battle and McKellar were All-Big East Conference picks, with Battle earning Player of the Year honors.

Rounding out the quality All-State group is Cox, a talented lefty who has developed into one of the state's top high school arms.

During his just-com-



SOUTHERN NASH'S FATHER-SON BASEBALL COMBINATION -- (L TO R) KWAMAINE AND ISAIAH BATTLE

pleted sophomore campaign, the talented Cox was a dominant force, going 7-3 overall with an effective 1.61 earned-run average.

He allowed just 34 hits in over 56 innings of work while striking out 123 batters to lead the entire state of North Carolina.

At the conclusion of the campaign, Cox was tabbed as the Quad County Conference Pitcher of the Year.

In order for a player to earn NCBFA All-Stat consideration, he coach must be a member of the organization.

Wilson Hunt's Stoney Massey was the 5-A Pitcher of the Year, while East Rowan's Harrison Ailshie was the Player of the Year.

In the 4-A classification, Burns' Drew Dixon was the Player of the Year and West Stanly's Cooper Crisco was the Pitcher of the Year.

CANES

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at Frazier Field on the LC campus.

Campers will receive instruction, be able to work in a competitive environment and learn more about Louisville College.

A Catcher's Camp is scheduled for July 22 from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Cost

is \$150, which includes a T-shirt and campus tour.

The focus of the event will be catching instruction, skill development and position-specific work.

There will also be an Uncommitted Underclassman Camp on July 29 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Cost is \$125 for pitcher's only or \$175 for multiple positions.

The pro-style workout will feature pitchers throwing to hitters. All campers will receive a T-shirt and campus tour.

For more information on the camps, visit www.lchurricanes.com.