

SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL SOFTBALL KIERSTIN'S TIME



SNHS ALUM KIERSTIN COOPER IN ACTION FOR BARTON COLLEGE
(Photos Courtesy Barton College Sports Information Department)
Cooper tabbed as SN softball coach

From Staff Reports

STANHOPE -- Southern Nash High School has announced the hiring of Kierstin Cooper as the new Head Varsity Softball Coach.

In addition to leading the softball program, Coach Cooper will also serve as the girls golf coach and will join the Southern Nash faculty this fall as an English teacher. She will begin her coaching duties immediately.

A proud graduate of Southern Nash High School, Coach Cooper returns to her alma mater eager to invest in the next generation of Firebirds both in the classroom and through athletics.

Following her graduation from Southern Nash, she continued her softball career at Barton College, where



SOUTHERN NASH'S KIERSTIN COOPER

'BIRDS RETURN SN looks for a strong season



JEREMIAH BATTLE

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

STANHOPE -- The 2026 season looks to be a bounce-back time for the Southern Nash High School Firebirds on the gridiron, with year six of the Brian Batchelor era set to kick off in just under one month.

One of the area's top programs year-after-year, Southern won just seven games in 2025, the fewest for the school in a full season since 2011.

Last year's Firebirds started the year 6-1, racing through

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SOUTHERN NASH VETERAN QUARTERBACK ISAIAH BATTLE



NASHVILLE RESIDENT LACY FAISON RECENTLY RECEIVED THE PRESTIGIOUS DICK KNOX AWARD FROM THE NORTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION FOR HIS LONG-TIME WORK AS AN OFFICIAL IN SEVERAL SPORTS

OFFICIAL HONOR Faison earns Knox Award

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

NASHVILLE -- Positive feedback for referees, officials and umpires alike is often found in few and far between circumstances.

It's more customary that those in the aforementioned roles deal with scrutiny from coaches, players and of course the fans in attendance as well.

But sometimes, it's easy to recognize and reward the actions and years of service of a longtime contributor to the area athletics circuit.

Lacy Faison, a native of Nashville who spent over 30 years both coaching and officiating on the local sports scene, was recently named to the prestigious list of Dick Knox Distinguished Service Award honorees in recognition of his efforts in the softball field, particularly.

A retired educator who closed out his career at Rocky Mount Preparatory School during the coronavirus pandemic, Faison was honored as

a recipient of the award during a recent Down East Umpires Association meeting in Greenville.

The award, whose namesake served as the North Carolina High School Athletics Association Director of Officials for nearly 20 years, is presented across various sports to officials who showcase devoted service and involvement for the betterment of student-athletes within the state of North Carolina.

While Faison was recognized in large part for his softball efforts, that isn't where his career as an official, or even as a coach in different capacities, stopped.

A true sportsman, Faison was involved with a variety of sports, namely baseball, football, basketball and volleyball in addition to softball.

While it may no longer be in the classroom, Faison is still making strong contributions in the local sports scene as an official and is continuing to strengthen area high school sports as well as the young student-athletes involved.





SOUTHERN NASH KEY RETURNEE MARLEE ALSTON

FOOTBALL

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a difficult non-conference schedule that consisted of wins over Knightdale, James Kenan and Nash Central in addition to dropping a decision to the eventual Class-7A State Runner-Up, Clayton.

Southern then won its first three games of Big East play, routing Southern Wayne and C.B. Aycock prior to overpowering Fike 68-54 in a game that resembled a track meet more than a football game.

Despite picking up some serious momentum as they headed into the back half of the season, injuries started to pile up and the overall stardom of Hunt, Rocky Mount and Northern Nash were too much for the Firebirds to overcome.

Southern closed last year's campaign by dropping four of its last five outings, the lone win coming over Southeast Alamance in the second round of the Class 5-A State Playoffs after receiving a first round bye.

After losing to Hunt in the regular season, Southern's season inevitably came to an end against the rival Warriors, falling in the third round by a 42-21 margin.

The schedule won't be getting much lighter for the Firebirds this year, either, with Northern, Rocky Mount and Hunt each expected to field strong rosters again this fall.

Before jumping into its Big East gauntlet, Southern will once again face Knightdale, Clayton and James Kenan, each of which are anticipated to be tough outs, in addition to new-look Nash Central under first-year head coach Carter Varnell.

COOPER

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she competed for four years at the collegiate level.

As she begins her teaching career, she is excited for the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with students while fostering a culture of excellence, accountability, and teamwork.

"I am incredibly honored to return to Southern Nash as the Head Softball Coach," said Coach Cooper. "Southern Nash has always been home to me, and I am grateful to give back to a school and community that have meant so much to my life."

"I look forward to building a program that competes at a high level while developing young women of character, leadership, and integrity."

"I am also excited to lead our girls golf program and begin my teaching career as an English teacher."

"We are excited to welcome Coach Cooper back to Southern Nash," said Ms. Sonya Horton, Principal of Southern Nash High School.

"As a Southern Nash graduate and former collegiate student-athlete, she understands the dedication and commitment required for success both in the classroom and in competition."

Her passion for students, commitment to athletics, and enthusiasm for education make her an outstanding addition to our faculty and coaching staff.

"We are confident she will positively impact our softball and girls golf programs while making meaningful connections with students in the classroom."

Southern Nash Athletic Director Robbie Kennedy also expressed his excitement about Coach Cooper joining the athletic department.

"Kierstin embodies the

values and traditions of Southern Nash," Kennedy said. "Her experience as a Southern Nash graduate and four-year collegiate softball player at Barton College has prepared her to lead and mentor our student-athletes."

"Her passion for our school, competitive spirit, and commitment to developing young women make her an excellent choice to lead our softball program and girls golf team."

"We are excited to see the positive impact she will have on our athletes and look forward to supporting her as she begins this new chapter."

Southern Nash High School looks forward to Coach Cooper's leadership as she returns home to inspire student-athletes, build successful programs and continue the tradition of excellence that defines Southern Nash High School Athletics.



NASH COUNTY 8-UNDER ALL-STAR TEAM



ROCKY MOUNT 15-UNDER ALL-STAR TEAM



WENDELL 8-UNDER ALL-STAR TEAM

Splendid Summer

Rec Teams excelled at tournaments

From Staff Reports

NASH COUNTY -- It's been a busy summer for the Nash County Parks and Recreation Baseball and Softball All-Star Teams.

Two weeks ago, Parks and Rec hosted the Tar Heel District 4 All-Star Tournaments for the 8-Under and 15-Under Baseball age groups at historic Glover Park in Nashville.

The prestigious event brought in 19 teams from the area, including participants from Wake, Granville, Franklin and Nash Counties.

Utilizing a double-elimination format, Wendell Blue was the 8-Under Champion.

Garner Blue was the runner-up, followed by the Nash County Americans in third place.

Courtesy of that strong finish, Nash County was able to qualify for the Tar Heel State Tournament, which is being staged this week in Williamston.

Nash County's roster members are as follows:

- Coach Keith Thomas
- Marley Scott
- Wyatt Collins
- Jah'Mir Solomon
- Finlee Sink
- Kaleb Bryson
- Yiden Lagunes-Cabrera
- Charles Michalski
- Wade Tabron
- Carter Strickland
- Grant Phelps
- Brantley Dye

Rocky Mount nabbed the championship in the 15-Under category, followed by runner-up Zebulon and third-place Louisburg.

Nash County had a total of six baseball all-star teams, along with several representatives on Tar-River Softball All-Star Teams.

- **The Nash County 8U American All-Stars:** State Tournament qualified with 3rd place Tar Heel D4 finish. Wins vs Louisburg, Rolesville, Wendell White
- **Nash County 8U National All-Stars:** Tar Heel D4 Tournament in Nash County (defeated South Granville 9-6

on July 8 at Glover Park)

- **Nash County 10U American All-Stars:** Participant in Tar Heel D4 Tournament in Garner (defeated South Granville 15-2 on July 9, defeated Rocky Mount 8-0 on July 11)
- **NC 10U American** was led by Evan Strickland (.684 BA, 14 IP's, 23 strikeouts, 2.57 ERA)
- **Nash County 10U National All-Stars:** Participant in Tar Heel D4 Tournament in Garner (defeated Zebulon 9-2 on July 9)
- **NC 10U National** was led by hitting duo of Tolston Phelps (.500 BA) and Jacob Ezzell (.500 BA)
- **Nash County 12U All-Stars:** Participant in Tar Heel D4 Tournament in Garner (defeated Knightdale 10-0 on July 8, defeated Rocky Mount 8-0 with a No Hitter thrown by Nashville's Robert Michalski on July 9, defeated Youngsville 7-1 on July 10)
- **The Nash County 12U team** was led by strong performances from Robert Michalski (.667 BA, 13 IP's, 2.31 ERA, 51 batters faced with 29 strikeouts and 6 walks, 1 complete game no-hitter vs Rocky Mount).
- **Nash County 15U All-Stars:** Participant in Tar Heel D4 Tournament in Nash County
- **Tar River Softball 8U:** THL D4 Participant in Wendell (defeated South Granville 15-13 June 22)
- **Tar River Softball 10U:** THL D4 Champion in Wendell (defeated Wendell 15-0 June 25, Youngsville 5-0 June 26 and Youngsville again 11-1 to win the district on June 27)
- **Qualified for the Tar Heel Leagues NC State Tournament in Laurinburg**
- **Nash County players from the squad were:**
 - Aubri Macklin - Nash County Strikers
 - Jayden Jenkins - Nash County Strikers
 - Paisley Taylor - Cotton Candy Crushers
 - **Tar River Softball 12U:** THL D4 Participant in Wendell
 - **Tar River Softball 16U:** THL D4 Participant in Wendell (defeated Wendell 5-3 June 22)