

Drake Named NC-SC Head Coach



NORTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL BOYS BASKETBALL COACH HENRY DRAKE ENCOURAGES HIS TEAM DURING THE STATE CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

It's been quite a year for the NNHS coach

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

CHAPEL HILL -- The year of high honors doesn't look to be stopping anytime soon for longtime Northern Nash boys basketball coach Henry Drake, who was recently announced as the head coach of Team North Carolina in the 2027 Carolinas' Classic.

Held annually between a team of all-stars from North Carolina and South Carolina, the event is partially put together by the North Carolina Coaches Association (NCCA), who also hosts the annual East-West All-Star Games. "It's a



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NASH CENTRAL'S CHASON JENKINS

Bulldogs excited for slate

From Staff Reports

ROCKY MOUNT -- Terri Cash has carved out an impressive career as the only head coach in the history of the successful Nash Central High School girls basketball program.



But Cash also has a side gig at NCHS as she serves as the long-time girls and boys cross country

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2026 NORTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL CROSS COUNTRY THE DYNASTY KEEPERS



SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE 2026 NORTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL CROSS COUNTRY TEAM Knights seek another conference championship

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

RED OAK -- One of Nash County's great athletic dynasties is set to open yet another high-expectation season this weekend, as the always-impressive Northern Nash Cross Country squads compete at the Pace Yourself Early Bird Challenge in Cary.



Always perceived as one of the top teams in North Carolina, this year's Knights are once again looked at as one of the statewide favorites.

Under the direction of longtime and legendary head coach Jeff Dodrill, Northern's boys will be in search of a mind-blowing 15th-straight conference championship this season, while its girls' squad is looking to jump back into the top spot on the podium after surrendering first-place to Southern Nash in 2025.

"The history of the program itself, there's pride in it," Dodrill said of the impressive consistency that he has helped construct within the program. "If you're coming in, you have expectations of what we want to accomplish."

Those expectations have clearly been outlined for this year's group, one that Dodrill has worked with since they were running at the middle school level.

With 19 boys and seven girls rostered, the Knights will be kicking off their season by competing in a swarm of multi-team events earlier in the year, starting on the 15th.

Following that, the Nash County Championship will take place on Aug. 19, with the South Mecklenburg Invitational in Charlotte quickly in line afterwards

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SOUTHERN NASH'S ISAIAH BATTLE

Barton to host grid jamboree

From Staff Reports

WILSON -- Southern Nash and Nash Central will participate in the First Annual Barton College Bulldog Football Jamboree this Friday at Electric Supply Company Field at Truist Stadium on the BC campus in Wilson.

Southern Nash, coached

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ON PAR AGAIN Big East ready for golf season

From Staff Reports

NASH COUNTY -- Nash County's schools will hope to make an impact this fall in the Big East Conference girls golf standings.

Wilson Fike will stand as the defending champion when league action begins September 2 with a nine-hole matchup at Southern Wayne Country Club in Dudley.



There are nine regular season nine-hole matches slated, followed by the Big East Conference Championships -- an 18-hole event -- on October 12 at Peachtree Country Club in Spring Hope.

The legendary Brian Taylor is

returning as the head coach at Northern Nash, while Kierstin Cooper will be in her inaugural campaign at Southern Nash, taking over for league title collector Scott Collie.

All nine-hole matches will start at 2 p.m., while the October 12 finale will feature a noon tee-off.

The complete Big East Conference girls golf schedule is as follows:

- September 2 -- Nine-Hole Match at Southern Wayne Country Club, Dudley, 2 p.m.
- September 9 -- Nine-Hole Match at Lane Tree Golf Course, Goldsboro, 2 p.m.

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EVERYONE RETURNS THIS SEASON FOR THE NORTHERN NASH GIRLS GOLF TEAM -- INCLUDING ESTEEMED COACH BRIAN TAYLOR



NORTHERN NASH BOYS BASKETBALL COACH HENRY DRAKE

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tremendous honor,” said Drake, who of course guided his Northern Nash Knights to the Class-6A State Championship back in March.

“It’s a testament to what our current players and coaching staff have done at Northern,” he humbly remarked.

Always quick to take the spotlight off of himself and place it on his alma mater, Drake made it clear that what most intrigued him about his selection to lead the North Carolina All-Stars was the impact that the role could have on the Knights’ program.

Not a stranger to NCCA-sanctioned exhibitions, Drake previously served as an assistant during an East-West All-Star Game.

“It gave me a sense of knowing where I want my program to be,” learned Drake from his past role.

“It improved my coaching.”

Drake’s impressive coaching acumen has in large part turned Northern Nash – a program that boasts a staggering 215-46 record over the last decade – into a household name as it pertains to North Carolina high school basketball.

Not only that, he’s also one of the kindest, most honorable men that’s ever coached in Nash County.

Those traits, in addition to the wins he’s racked up on the court, also earned Drake the prestigious Dudley Whitney Award earlier this year, the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a Nash County high school coach.

An award that’s annually given to a coach who exemplifies strong character, sportsmanship, leadership, and a commitment to serving as a positive role model for students and student-athletes, few coaches fit that description better than Drake.

Still enjoying a summer that has been

filled with celebrations for his state championship team, Drake also had an unexpected encounter that had a big impact on him.

Randomly called to the school one afternoon, Drake was introduced to a man who lives in California that was in town for a family reunion, one who played basketball at Northern in the early 1970’s.

Despite neighboring the Pacific Ocean, he followed Northern’s magical run to the state title from afar, and made it a point to come see his alma mater and shake the hand of the coach who brought the banner home.

“It was surreal,” said Drake of the experience with a smile, who made sure that the gentleman was given a T-shirt commemorating the school’s state championship.

As Drake always points back to, that was a perfect example of the Northern Nash family at work, one that he has come to love with such a strong passion.

“The community support is awesome,” Drake said proudly.

“I’m so happy that we were able to bring a state championship home to the Red Oak community and Northern Nash family.”

Of course, he’ll now have the opportunity to display that atmosphere and community on a large stage, a space he’ll be able to learn from and bring back to continue pushing young student-athletes to the best of their abilities.

The 2027 North Carolina-South Carolina All-Star Game that Drake will be coaching in will be held in Spartanburg, S.C., on the campus of Dorman High School. The showcase will be held on March 20.

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- September 14 -- Nine-Hole Match at The River GC, Bunn, 2 p.m.
 - September 16 -- Nine-Hole Match at Wedgewood Golf Course, Wilson, 2 p.m.
 - September 21 -- Nine-Hole Match at Peachtree Country Club, Spring Hope, 2 p.m.
 - September 28 -- Nine-Hole Match at Southern Wayne Country Club, Dudley, 2 p.m.
 - September 30 -- Nine-Hole Match at Lane Tree Golf Course, Goldsboro, 2 p.m.
- October 5 -- Nine-Hole Match at The River GC, Bunn, 2 p.m.
 - October 7 -- Nine-Hole Match at Wedgewood Golf Course, Wilson, 2 p.m.
 - October 12 -- Big East Conference Championships, 18-Hole Match at Peachtree Country Club, Spring Hope, Noon
- Southern Wayne -- Southern Wayne Country Club, Dudley
 - CB Aycokk -- Lane Tree Golf Course, Goldsboro
 - Northern Nash -- Peachtree Country Club, Spring Hope
 - Southern Nash -- The River Golf Club, Bunn (Lake Royale)
 - Wilson Hunt and Wilson Fike -- Wedgewood Golf Course, Wilson
- Host Courses**

BARTON

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by Brian Batchelor, will open the 10-team event by scrimmaging American Leadership Academy of Johnston County at 4 p.m.

One hour later, Nash Central, under the direction of first-year skipper Carter Varnell, will tangle with North Lenoir High School.

Other schools entered in the event are South Central, Bunn, West Carteret, Kinston, Cleveland and West Craven.

The complete Barton College Football Jamboree schedule is as follows:

- 4 p.m. -- American Leadership Academy of Johnston County vs. Southern Nash
- 5 p.m. -- North Lenoir vs. Nash Central

- 6 p.m. -- South Central vs. Bunn
 - 7 p.m. -- West Carteret vs. Kinston
 - 8 p.m. -- Cleveland vs. West Craven
- Tickets are \$5 and will be available at the gate. Children 10-under and will admitted free of charge.
- No cash will be accepted.
- Tickets can also be purchased in advance at events.hometownticketing.com.
- Regular season high school football action will kick off one week later on August 21 with the following non-conference showdowns:
- Northern Nash at Greenville Rose
 - SW Edgecombe at Nash Central
 - Rocky Mount at Tarboro
 - Southern Nash at Knightdale



SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE 2026 NASH CENTAL HIGH SCHOOL CROSS COUNTRY TEAM

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skipper -- and she hopes to guide the Bulldogs to a strong finish this fall in the Quad County Conference distance standings.

Look for Nash Central to be effective on the boys side, thanks to the return of several key returnees, led by all-conference standout Cooper Parks.

“The team can be competitive if everyone stays the course, comes to practice and puts their best foot forward,” Cash said. “Last year, we had a solid four (runners), but were missing a fifth

“We now have seven

strong male runners. All seven can finish in the Top 18-20 (of the conference). They seemed to be locked in better than the past two years.”

On the girls side, Nash Central will be rebuilding, thanks in part to zero veteran returnees from its 2025 group.

Sophomores A’dia Cash and Harmony Dupree, known for their hardwood excellence, are focusing on their off-season basketball work -- a move Coach Cash heartily endorses.

One Lady Bulldog

who could be an impact performer in the QCC is ninth-grader Hadley Hester.

“(Hester) has the potential to be pretty good,” Coach Cash said of her freshman.

In the QCC, Nash Central will square off with some perennial distance powerhouses.

In addition to NCHS, other QCC schools are Wake Prep, Roanoke Rapids, Louisburg, American Leadership Academy of Johnston County and Bunn High School.

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on Aug. 21-22.

Northern will then compete alongside eastern North Carolina counterparts J.H. Rose, Jacksonville and South Central on Aug. 26 in Greenville, with the annual Knights Invitational the team hosts set for three days later on Saturday, Aug. 29.

Traditionally the weekend after Labor Day, Dodrill made the executive decision to move this year’s race two weeks ahead in the schedule, citing a recent drop in attendance during previous seasons.

This year, the event has 23 registered teams currently, inching closer to the all-time event-high of 28.

The Knights Invitational won’t be the only high-profile event hosted by Northern Nash this year, as Dodrill and his team will be holding both the Big East Conference Championship and the Class 5-A and Class 6-A Eastern Regionals in Red Oak as well.

This year’s conference title race will be held on Oct. 21, with Regionals following less than two weeks later Oct. 30-31.

The State Championships, held in Kernesville, will be Nov. 6-7.

Both groups of Northern Nash runners pose a real threat of reaching said state championship, with a three-headed monster of juniors Sage Burrisson, Miguel Guzman and sophomore Christian Powell expected to lead the way for the boys squad.

The arrival of freshman phenom Ayden Wright is another reason that Dodrill is optimistic heading into the season, with the longtime skipper expecting his premier first-year runner likely to be competing for a top-three spot as the season progresses.

Sophomore Humberto Escobar is coming off a fantastic track season and will more-than-likely maintain a top-five spot on the roster as well, running alongside Day-mond Sherrod, Joey Lewis and Landon Walker who will each be vying for a top-seven slot as well.

There’s expected to be anywhere from eight to 10 Knight runners competing for the coveted top seven spots, something that Dodrill believes will make the entire team better.

On the girls side, fourth-year star Alaina Davis is primed for her highly-anticipated senior campaign and is expected to be the straw that stirs the drink for Northern.

Juniors Shyann Minchew, Naomi Ellis and Lauren Renck have each had productive summers as well, with times for all three runners expected to drop in their penultimate season as Lady Knights.

In terms of underclassmen, Dodrill will be rolling with sophomore Kasen Batts-Wood and freshman newcomer Abigail Broom to round out the lineup, one that’s looking to reclaim the Big East crown this fall.

NCWU to open grid sked Sept. 5

From Staff Reports

ROCKY MOUNT -- North Carolina Wesleyan University will kick off its 2026 football campaign on September 5 with a road matchup in Danville, Virginia against the Averett University Cougars.

One week later, the Bishops will host Newport News Apprentice School for their home opener at Vernon T. Bradley Jr. Stadium on the NCWU campus.

The Bishops, guided

by veteran head coach Jeff Filkovski, went 4-6 in overall 2025 to go with a 2-5 mark in conference action.

NCWU’s complete ledger is as follows, with home events listed in CAPS:

- September 5 -- at Averett University, 6 p.m.
- September 12 -- NEWPORT NEWS APPRENTICE SCHOOL, Noon
- September 19 -- at Sewanee, 1 p.m. (Central Time)
- October 3 --

LAGRANGE COLLEGE, Noon

- October 10 -- at Belhaven University, Noon (Central Time)
- October 17 -- HUNTINGDON COLLEGE, Noon
- October 24 -- METHUEN COLLEGE, 6 p.m.
- October 31 -- at Southern Virginia University, 1 p.m.
- November 7 -- at Greensboro College, 1 p.m.
- November 14 -- BREWARD COLLEGE, Noon