

# 2025 NASH CENTRAL HS VOLLEYBALL SUPERB SERVICE



NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL HITTER JAYCI SEWARD SENDS ONE DOWN DURING RECENT VOLLEYBALL SCRIMMAGE ACTION  
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

## Bulldogs eager for campaign to begin

By CHANCE PUCKETT  
Correspondent

ROCKY MOUNT -- The fourth annual Eastern North Carolina Volleyball Jamboree served as the first chance to take a look at many of the area's local volleyball programs last Saturday, including Nash Central High School. The Lady Bulldogs participated in seven 20-minute exhibition matches, competing



against the likes of Cary Christian, C.B. Aycock, Clinton, Southern Durham, SouthWest Edgecombe, Wayne Christian and Wilson Christian. While an official score was not kept, the event was a great opportunity for coaches to get a look at their squads in live competition, allowing staffs from across the state to tinker with lineups

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THE BRAKE SISTERS COACHED A TEAM TO A CHAMPIONSHIP DURING THE NASH COUNTY PARKS AND REC VOLLEYBALL SEASON

## A Coaching Tradition

NN's Brake sisters following in father's footsteps

By CHANCE PUCKETT  
Correspondent

RED OAK -- Coaching runs in many families both local and foreign to Nash County. One of the latest families to build out a coaching tree is

Nash County's Brake family, as Northern Nash High School Wrestling Coach Troy Brake's two daughters - Taylar and Cara - kicked off their career as coaches during this summer's Nash County Parks and Recreation volleyball league.

Both Taylar and Cara played volleyball in the Nash County Parks and Recreation's league at a younger age, and Taylar -- an Exercise Science student at Barton College in

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NORTHERN'S JAIME SMITH KEEPS HER EYE ON THE BALL DURING A RECENT SCRIMMAGE

## HAPPY RETURNS NN looks for a solid season

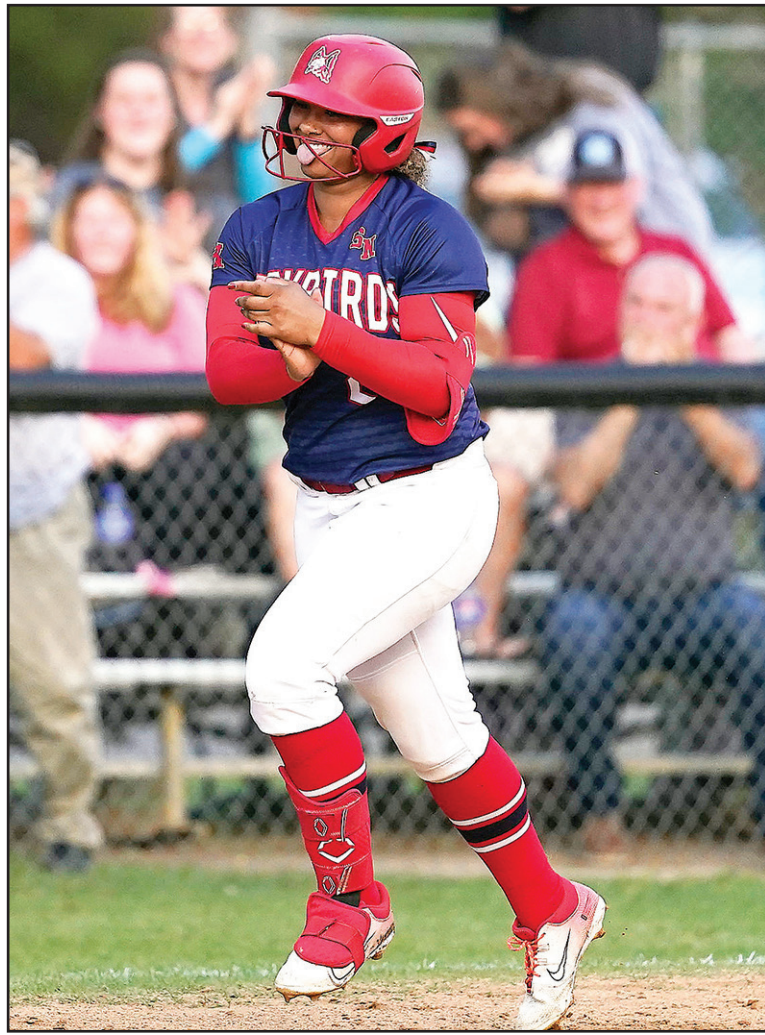
By CHANCE PUCKETT  
Correspondent

ROCKY MOUNT -- Volleyball season is on the horizon in Nash County, and the Northern Nash High School spike squad kicked off its 2025 campaign by competing in the Eastern North Carolina Volleyball Jamboree last Saturday at the Rocky Mount Event Center. Northern was one of four Nash County high schools to participate in the preseason event, alongside across-the-bridge rival Nash Central, private school counterparts Faith Christian and Rocky Mount Academy. The Lady Knights faced both Faith and RMA during their seven-match exhibition series, with the five remaining tilts coming against the likes of Clinton, East Duplin, Farmville



NORTHERN NASH'S HARPER WILSON

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SOUTHERN NASH'S NOEL DOBBINS

## County softball players claim more big honors

From Staff Reports

NASH COUNTY -- Fall sports season has started, but the accolades are still coming in for the prolific work of a trio of Nash County softball superstars back in the spring. Southern Nash's Anna Dickinson and Noel Dobbins along

with Northern Nash's Emily Clay have earned prestigious spots on the HighschoolOT All-State Team for the 2024 campaign. With Dickinson and Dobbins helping lead the way, Southern Nash went 24-1 overall

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NASH CENTRAL KEY SENIOR RETURNEE RYLEE BREWER

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ahead of season’s first serve this week.

“When we played each team we started to piece together who played well together,” said Nash Central’s Amber Inman-Perry, who began her third season leading the Lady Bulldogs’ volleyball program on Wednesday as Central kicked off its 2025 campaign at Rocky Mount.

To nobody’s surprise, captains Gracyn King and Bryleigh Posey were two of the stars for the Lady Bulldogs on the court, each of whom are primed for huge years this year, a season which will serve as their final with the Bulldogs as both will graduate in the spring of 2026.

King and Posey were paired frequently with A’dia Cash, a freshman and last year’s Female Athlete of the Year at Nash Central Middle School. A phenomenal student-athlete at the middle school level, Cash is the daughter of longtime Nash Central High School Girls Basketball coach Terr Cash, a sport she’ll be trading her kneepads and volleyball in for this winter.

“A’dia will be a dominant force once she can figure out those around her,” said Inman-Perry

of the lone freshman on Nash Central’s varsity roster, with Cash expected to play a key role for the Lady Bulldogs this year.

Jayden Baggett and Rylee Brewer -- both seniors -- will likely see their roles grow this year as well for Central, with Baggett anticipated to be the team’s premier setter and Brewer seeing some serious success on the service line during Saturday’s jamboree.

“The team as a whole came together and played really well,” said Inman-Perry, specifically shouting out the team’s five-point de facto victory in the 20-minute session over Clinton, who knocked off the Lady Bulldogs during the school’s first-ever trip to the state playoffs in 2021.

While it may have taken nearly two decades for Nash Central to reach the playoffs for the first time, the Lady Bulldogs have proceeded to make themselves a regular customer, having now reached the postseason in four straight years.

To add to that streak and record a fifth straight postseason appearance though, Nash Central will have to navigate through a new conference -- one that consists

of schools in the 2A, 3A and 4A classifications.

Nash Central, now reclassified as a 4A school, will be in the Quad County 2A/3A/4A lead alongside American Leadership Academy-Johnston -- who the Lady Bulldogs will open their league slate with on September 9 -- Bunn, Louisburg, Roanoke Rapids and Wake Prep.

Despite no longer being paired with any of its Nash County rivals, Nash Central will still face Northern Nash, Southern Nash and Rocky Mount in a trio of home-and-home tilts before conference play begins.

The Lady Bulldogs will also face former conference foe Hunt out of Wilson in a two-match set before their conference opener as well, in addition to a home matchup against SouthWest Edgecombe High School serving as a midseason nonconference tune-up slam in the middle of league play.

After kicking off the season on Wednesday at Rocky Mount, the Lady Bulldogs will host last year’s Big East Conference Champion Southern Nash today before traveling to Northern Nash next Monday.

BRAKES

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Wilson -- now works for the county as well.

“I overheard that there was a need for coaches in the 7-9 and 10-12 age groups,” said the eldest sister, “From there I thought why not, I loved the idea of coaching so why not.”

It didn’t take much for her to recruit her younger sister, a current senior at Northern Nash, to join her on the sidelines.

Not only did the two sisters coach a team, they coached multiple, and had success doing it.

The Brake sisters oversaw teams at the 7-9 and 10-12 age groups, including leading their 7-9 year old squad to the league’s championship.

“As a coach the most important thing for me is to make sure everyone has fun and that they take everything I’ve said and learn something new from it,” said Taylar, the oldest of the two sisters who hopes to become a physical therapist upon her graduation from Barton.

The eldest of the Brake siblings played both volleyball and basketball during spurts throughout her athletic career in Nash County, whereas the younger sister, Cara, has wrestled and participated in track and field, specializing in the shot put during her time at Northern Nash.

“I dabbled in just about every sport growing up,” said Cara, who began her senior year of high school last week. “But I am a wrestler through-and-through,” -- a sentence that would make her father smile.

Both Taylar and Cara said they spoke consistently with their father throughout the course of the summer, taking his advice seriously and learning from his own experiences as a coach.

“I spoke with him a lot this summer about coaching and that some people just learn things differently,” said Taylar. “You have to see everyone as their individual self.”

“I told them to be patient and encouraging to the players,” said their father Troy, who will be entering his tenth season leading the Northern Nash wrestling program this winter. “I look forward to seeing their growth as coaches.”

Something that both Taylar and Cara had in common was that they hoped volleyball - and youth sports as a whole -- would continue to grow in Nash County.

“I am looking forward to encouraging other people to play the sport and volleyball growing in our area,” remarked Cara. “I think there is lots of potential here.”



NORTHERN NASH VETERAN STANDOUT LILLY TEETS

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Central, Louisburg and Rolesville.

No official score was kept in the tournament and each exhibition match was timed on a 20-minute minute running clock, but it was a great chance for teams to see early action against real opponents and learn a little about themselves.

“I’m looking forward to having this entire week to work on both offense and defense,” said Northern’s fourth-year volleyball head coach, Emily Engelking. “We have to be more aggressive offensively and simply more communicative all around.”

The Lady Knights enter 2025 in search of their third straight trip to the state playoffs, having won a postseason game in each of their last two campaigns. Northern posted a 12-10 record a season ago -- a year that was highlighted by sweeping county foes Nash Central and Southern Nash.

The 2025 campaign won’t come without its share of changes for the Lady Knights though, as Northern Nash, alongside conference foes Rocky Mount and Southern Nash -- the defending conference champion - are now part of a new league split between six Class 5-A schools and one Class 6-A institution, with Northern the lone team a classification above its league counterparts.

Outside of Rocky Mount and Southern, the Lady Knights will be paired with C.B. Aycock, Fike, Hunt and Southern Wayne, with Northern’s conference slate scheduled to open on August 28 at Fike.

As for the regular season, the Lady Knights will kick off their 2025 schedule next Monday in rivalry fashion with a matchup against Nash Central.

Northern will have to replace some serious production from last year’s squad if it wants to continue its playoff streak, including the likes of Emily Clay, Kailey Burden and Nevaeh Ingram, all of whom graduated in the spring of 2025 and are playing collegiate sports at the next level, the latter of which is playing NCAA Division I volleyball at Saint Francis University in Pennsylvania.

“Having Piper Jones as one of the setters has made for a quicker offense,” remarked Engelking of Jones, a junior who tallied a team-high 83 sets played last season en route to accumulating 423 digs and 56 assists.

Jones has forged a strong connection thus far with Harper Wilson, a sophomore underclassmen who made a significant splash as a hitter of the Lady Knights in 2024.

Primed for a breakout season this year, Wilson will play a prominent role for Northern on the outside alongside Ava Lloyd, a senior who tabbed 165 kills last season -- the most of any returner for the Lady Knights.

“The girls and I had a conversation about our goals for this season and what we want to see ourselves accomplish,” said Engelking when looking ahead to what 2025 will bring. “I’m looking forward to seeing them meet those goals and maybe even exceed them.”

Northern Nash’s August 18 opener against rival Nash Central is slated for a 5 p.m. first serve and will be held in the NNHS Gymnasium.

SOFTBALL

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while winning the Big East Conference regular season and tournament crowns (again) under the direction of legendary head coach Scott Collie.

Dickinson, SN’s pitching ace, was tabbed to the All-State Second Team after posting an earned-run average of 0.79 to go with 189 strikeouts in 106 innings of work.

Also lethal with her stick, Dickinson batted .472 with 39 runs scored and 22 RBI.

It was the fourth consecutive all-state selection for Dickinson, who as a Day-One superstar when she arrived at SNHS four years ago. She will be continuing her career at the University of South Carolina-Upstate.

Dobbins, SN’s most prolific slugger, was an offensive force as a sophomore, batting .542 with 12 homers to go with a whopping 33 RBI and 42 runs scored.

Dobbins, who will serve as one of the program’s cornerstones over the next two years, was a third-team pick.

Making the Honorable

Mention list was Clay, who has signed to join the softball program at Valdosta State University in Georgia.

A multi-sport star at Northern Nash, Clay hit .642 as a senior with 47 RBI, three homers, 13 doubles and 30 runs scored.

NNHS went 10-10 overall this past season and reached the NCHSAA Class 3-A State Softball Playoffs.

Clay won the NNHS Female Athlete of the Year Award as both a junior and senior.



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