

Southern Wins In A Shootout



SOUTHERN'S JADEN HARTSFIELD SPEEDS TOWARD THE END ZONE
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

Firebirds remain undefeated for conference play
From Staff Reports

STANHOPE -- Trust the offense.
That's been the rallying cry at Southern Nash for years as the Firebirds have had little trouble consistently denting the scoreboard -- an often against high-powered opponents. Such was the case once again last Friday as Southern Nash allowed 54 points against a Wilson Fike club led by touted quarterback Sam Finch -- regarded as one of Eastern North Carolina's finest signal-callers. Finch certainly posted



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NORTHERN NASH'S ALAINA DAVIS

2025 NORTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL NNHS GREAT WITH 58



JAH'MARZEA WILLIAMS IS IN THE CLEAR FOR NORTHERN NASH AGAINST LEAGUE FOE CB AYCOCK
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

Fighting Knights fly past the Falcons in Big East

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

RED OAK -- The Northern Nash High School football team improved to 5-1 on the season last Friday evening, walloping C.B. Aycock 58-7 in Big East Conference action in front of a Homecom-



ing crowd at Death Valley on the NNHS campus.
The victory also pushed the Knights to 2-0 in league play, having secured two wins in one week after a rain-delayed game against Fike was moved to September 29 due to impacts from Tropical Storm Homberto.

"It really didn't change much," said Northern Nash's Ashley Davis, who was the acting head coach on Friday against Aycock. "The main part this week was conditioning, getting in better shape to get through this long haul." That strategy seemed to work for

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Northern competes for crown

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

RED OAK -- Northern Nash High School's two Cross Country programs have been among some of the area's most dominant teams throughout the 21st Century and 2025 looks to be no different. The Knights have just one meet remaining on its regular season schedule before the conference championship and



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NORTHERN NASH'S MIGUEL GUZMAN

CENTRAL'S SKID Dogs drop close one to L'burg

From Staff Reports



NASH CENTRAL'S TRISTIAN WHITLEY

ROCKY MOUNT -- Nash Central made its closest bid yet to an on-field football victory this season last Friday night, but it wasn't meant to be. Instead, the Bulldogs dropped a 16-15 heart-breaker to Louisburg in the Quad County Conference opener for both clubs at The Dawg Pound on the NCHS campus. Coach Chris Lee's club is now 1-5 overall, with the lone triumph coming against South-West Edgecombe via forfeit in the Bulldogs' regular season opener. Still, the Bulldogs can make



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NASH CENTRAL'S (L to R) BRAYLON WHITLEY AND LIAM KOPF TEAM UP FOR A TACKLE LAST FRIDAY NIGHT VERSUS RIVAL LOUISBURG
(Photos Submitted by Meryn Johnson)



SOUTHERN'S JEREMIAH BATTLE CELEBRATES A STOP
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

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for some big numbers, throwing for 412 yards and six touchdowns while also delivering 82 yards on the ground. But as part of a theme that has consistently played out time and time again, Southern Nash's offense was simply too much during the Firebirds' wild 68-54 triumph over Fike last Friday night in a Big East Conference points-happy matchup at historic Firebird Stadium on the SNHS campus. Certainly, the Firebirds couldn't contain Finch, which was somewhat expected coming in. But Southern Nash had a trump card of its own in junior superstar Jalen Hartsfield, who rushed for 174 yards to go with a quartet of touchdowns. The Firebirds even displayed some passing prowess of their own as signal-caller Isaiah Battle delivered four completions to Cam Lyons for 130 yards and a pair of clutch scores. Lyons also contributed 62 rushing yards on 12 carries as Southern Nash finished with 432 yards of total offense, 330 of which came on the ground. Fike closed with 517



SN'S DEFENSE WITH A BIG PLAY

total yards -- 105 rushing and 412 passing. The scoring difference in the game came in the second stanza as Southern Nash came through with a whopping 32 points during an eight-minute stretch of the frame. Three of those tallies came in the closing two minutes, beginning with a 5-yard touchdown burst from Lyons. Hartsfield followed with a 3-yard plunge just 27 ticks later before Lyons closed out the uprisings with a 37-yard passing hooking up from Battle. Those heroics pushed

Southern Nash ahead 46-34 going into the break. The Golden Demons eventually got as close as 52-36 in the fourth quarter, but Southern Nash sealed the deal courtesy of touchdown runs from Marlee Alston and Hartsfield to cap off the prolific evening. Now 6-1 overall and 3-0 in the Big East Conference, Southern Nash will tangle with another long-time local nemesis this Friday night as the Firebirds will head to Wilson for a meeting with the Hunt Warriors, coached by legendary skipper Juan Jackson.

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regionals arrive, with its boys team having won all five of its previous conference meets and the girls having finished in the top-two in four of those five contests. "This year has been a season-long adjustment but our goals have not changed," stated longtime Northern Nash Cross Country head coach Jeff Dodrill, who has built and sustained one of the most consistent programs in the state. "This group has been together for several years starting in middle school and winning championships together" remarked Dodrill. "They know it can be done with the athletes on the roster." Championships are something that Dodrill knows quite a bit about, especially considering that on the boys side his squad has won a staggering 13 straight conference titles, a streak that dates back to 2012. This fall, both of his squads look to have a serious chance to claim the conference crown in the new-look Big East, with Northern now sharing a league with C.B. Aycock, Fike, Hunt, Rocky Mount, Southern Nash and Southern Wayne. "This year has taught dependability, responsibility, loyalty, honesty, teamwork, accountability and unity," said Dodrill of what his team has learned throughout the year - one that hasn't come without its challenges. The Knights' boys squad saw some of its projected top-end runners bolt for private schools just before the beginning of the academic year, whereas its girls team has struggled with numbers, depth and injuries throughout the year, most notably to Shyann Minshew. Perhaps the most impressive thing about this season, though, is that neither the boys or girls team have a single senior on the roster, meaning that Northern could pose a serious threat at both the conference and state level for years to come. "I believe some of these athletes will compete at the next level when that

time arrives," stated Dodrill, who has sent countless runners to the collegiate ranks, of his current roster. However, it's a priority that is currently taking a backseat to the team's 2025 aspirations. One of those potential collegiate prospects is junior Alaina Davis, who recently cracked the school's record books with its ninth-fastest meet time in school history (20 minutes, 24 seconds) and is likely an individual qualifier for the State Championship meet. Davis is joined by fellow top performers Micahla Dawes and Kasen Batts-Wood as potential all-conference selections, alongside sophomores Naomi Ellis and Lauren Renck who has consistently moved up the leaderboard throughout the season. On the boys side, Sage Burrison and Miguel Guzman have each been top performers, trading wins throughout the season with freshman Christian Powell looming close behind. Depth has been a huge strength of Northern's boys squad this season, with Dodrill stating that he believes those three, alongside Landon Walker, Joey Lewis, Dillon Newbold and Daymond Sherrod each a potential all-conference candidate. The Knights will have the luxury of home-course advantage in not only the Big East Championship Meet on October 15, but the Class-6A Eastern Regional on October 24, as well - with both meets set to take place on the campus of Red Oak Middle School. The Class-1A and Class-4A Eastern Regional meets will be taking place on the campus of Red Oak Middle School also, both on October 25. The State Championship meet will then be held on Saturday, November 1 for schools within the 6A Classification, that being the ultimate goal for Dodrill's two teams. The upcoming Big East Championship meet is set for a 4:30 p.m. start time with the girls running first and the boys following immediately afterward.



NORTHERN'S KAMREN FREEMAN MAKES A RECEPTION
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

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the Knights, whose offense concocted nearly 500 total yards, including a season-high 222 in the passing game while its defense forced two turnovers and matched its season low in points surrendered. "It was about effort," remarked Davis, who has been on Northern Nash's coaching staff since 2017. "We wanted to be aggressive, enjoy the game and appreciate the opportunity that we have." The Knights played a complete game in all three phases, scoring touchdowns on offense, defense and special teams. Northern jumped out to an early 17-0 lead in the first period, marching down the field effortlessly in back-to-back possessions to open the game, both of which were capped by Myles Eatmon touchdown runs. Eatmon wrapped the evening with three touchdowns runs, the first from the one-yard line and the later two each from 11 yards out. Eatmon - a junior and the Knights' feature back, received some much needed rest on Friday, still combining three scores and 73 yards on the ground on seven carries, which was enough to push him over 1,000 all-purpose yards just six games into the season. Despite the step down from his recent workload though, combining for 58 carries and 548 rushing yards in his two outings prior to Friday's win over the Golden Falcons. "He's been our workhorse so far," stated Davis. "The load has been a lot heavier for him this year with the absence of BJ Strickland in the backfield." After Eatmon's back-to-back scores broke the ice, Northern's defense helped the offense's case with a safety on a Holton Westbrook tackle in the backfield, one of three non-offensive scores over the course of the evening. Northern's defense found itself adding points on the scoreboard once again in the second quarter, this time in the form of a 100-yard interception return from Kamren Freeman, a play that happened mere minutes after the Knights' special teams unit blocked a punt that Caleb Mayfield and returned

17 yards for a touchdown. The offense additionally found its groove through the air, tossing three touchdowns in Gehrig Miller's second start of the year at quarterback. Miller, a senior transfer from Rocky Mount Academy, battled with Hylan Wheeler throughout the offseason for the starting job under center, a title that was inevitably awarded to Wheeler mere hours prior to Northern's August 22 season opener against J.H. Rose. After four games, the Knights' coaching staff made the change to Miller, who has combined for 368 passing yards and three passing touchdowns - as well as one rushing touchdown - since taking over the reins as the team's starter. "He showed some real great glimpses in the scrimmages and in the first couple of games," said Davis of his new starter, who saw limited action in Northern's August 28 win over Nash Central and its September 5 trip to Cleveland. "We're trying to ignite something and see what we've got." And ignite something the Knights did, with Miller completing 13 of his 14 attempts, adding a pair of touchdown passes to Freeman and Hassan Davis-McKinney and totaling 214 yards through the air - 116 of which were passed out to Jah'Marzea Williams. Wheeler got some snaps at quarterback as well, tossing an eight-yard touchdown pass to Logan Williams while Preston McDaniel led the team in rushing with 113 yards on the ground. The Fighting Knights will now shift their focus to the second of back-to-back Wayne County opponents, now set to travel to Southern Wayne this Friday. The Saints enter Friday's matchup at 2-5, having lost four games in a row including three-straight conference games Southern Nash, Hunt and Rocky Mount by margins of 50, 63 and 41 points, respectively. "I know their numbers are kind of low, but they're playing football the best they can," said Davis of his team's next opponent, one that Northern Nash hasn't played since a 35-22 win in 2012 but is now paired with in the Class-5A/6A Big East.

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a push for the postseason if they can finish strongly -- a sequence that will begin this Friday night against a familiar foe in the Roanoke Rapids Yellow Jackets. NC and RR have engaged in some thrillers through the years, but this almost feels like a playoff elimination game as both teams enter the showdown with identical 1-5 worksheets. Central, which has been plagued by injuries, made some defense inroads last Friday night against an undefeated Louisburg squad. Sophomore Avery Flowers came up with a pair of interceptions, while freshman Braylon Whitley delivered eight tackles. Central also compiled a pair of sacks, though Louisburg was still able to register 341 total yards of offense. But NC's main issue, as has been the case all season, was once again its offensive struggles as the Bulldogs, without starting quarterback Winston Lee, notched just 132 yards of total offense. Taliek Morris rushed for 50 yards to go with a touchdown, while backup signal-caller David Porter connected with Whitley on a seven-



CHRIS LYNCH MAKES A SOLO TACKLE FOR THE NASH CENTRAL BULLDOGS

yard TD pass. But it wasn't enough to keep the Bulldogs from dropping their fifth contest in a row. Also last Friday, the struggling Jackets opened up their QCC ledger with a 27-14 setback against Wake Prep Academy. It's hard to remember when both RR and Central entered their annual gridiron showdown with just one win apiece -- but there is still plenty at stake as Central will look

for a strong finish to the campaign with a young squad that boasts plenty of potential for the future. After Friday's road matchup at RR's historic Hoyle Field, the Bulldogs will return home next Friday for a meeting with another long-time rival -- the Bunn Wildcats -- in QCC action. Like Nash Central, Bunn is a former Big East Conference school that has made the switch to the new QCC starting this fall.