

BIG EAST CONFERENCE VOLLEYBALL BACK TO BACK



A VIEW TO A KILL FROM SOUTHERN NASH'S OLIVIA ORDESS
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

SNHS repeats as Big East Champs

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

STANHOPE -- Southern Nash High's volleyball team added to its already-impressive résumé last Wednesday by knocking off rival Hunt in the Big East Conference Tournament Championship, sweeping the Lady Warriors in straight sets.

The Ladybirds' 3-0 victory over Hunt marked the school's second-straight conference tournament championship victory in as many years, as Southern defeated Franklinton by the same score in the 2024 championship game in the Class-2A/3A Big East's final season.

Despite a wild ride of

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SOUTHERN NASH'S BROOKLYN RICE NABS
A TIP AT THE NET VERSUS RIVAL NORTHERN



SOUTHERN NASH'S JADEN HARTSFIELD FOLLOWS HIS BLOCKERS

Birds, Dogs Defeated

Both clubs fall out of league crown consideration

From Staff Reports

NASH COUNTY -- Both Southern Nash's and Nash Central's potential title aspirations in their respective football conferences were on tenuous footing heading into last Friday's contests.

Those hopes are now officially gone after the Firebirds and Bulldogs suffered tough losses that officially eliminated them from crown consideration.

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NORTHERN NASH'S MYLES EATMON PREPARES
TO TAKE THE PLUNGE UP THE MIDDLE
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)



NORTHERN NASH'S PRESTON MCDANIEL
TAKES OFF AGAINST WILSON HUNT

BIG STEP FOR NN Knights pass key league test

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

falling to 6-2 overall and 3-1 in the league.

RED OAK -- The Northern Nash High Football team posted 42 unanswered points en route to its fifth straight win last Friday night, turning an early 14-7 deficit into a 49-14 victory over Hunt.

"It's a daggone huge conference win for us," said eighth-year Northern Nash head coach Andrew Farriss, a man who spent 13 seasons of his coaching career as an assistant at Hunt.

The win bumped Northern to an impressive 7-1 on the season while improving to a spotless 4-0 in Big East Conference play, with the Warriors

The Knights and Warriors have met in all but two seasons since the fall of 2009, facing off as conference mates in 14 of the 16

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CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY'S RANDALL KING

Campbell's King rules in conference action

From Staff Reports

BUIES CREEK -- After a record performance in a double overtime win, Campbell University's Randall King has been named CAA Football Co-Offensive Player of the Week for the Week of September 22.

King tied a school record

with four touchdown catches, including two in the fourth quarter and another in overtime, propelling Campbell to a 50-48 double OT win over CAA foe Bryant. King totaled 142 receiving yards on eight catches, the sophomore's

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SOUTHERN NASH LIBERO ADDISON SPIVEY SWINGS INTO ACTION AGAINST RIVAL NORTHERN NASH

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reclassification and conference realignment, not much has changed for the Ladybirds, who have now won back-to-back regular season and conference tournament championships on the volleyball court, this year's accolades coming in the Class-5A/6A Big East competing alongside C.B. Aycock, Fike, Hunt, Northern Nash, Rocky Mount and Southern Wayne.

Last Wednesday's title game saw Southern Nash topple Hunt 27-25, 25-21, 25-21, but not before the second-seeded Lady Warriors could threaten in all three frames.

Hunt, which was riding a five-match win streak and landed in the league final after back-to-back victories over Rocky Mount and C.B. Aycock, took early leads of 2-0, 6-1 and 3-2 in each set, respectively, but the Ladybirds stormed back each time.

The win over Hunt was Southern Nash's fifth in a row and the team's 14th of the season over a Big East Conference opponent, posting a spotless 12-0 mark in league play during the regular season followed by winning two games in the conference tournament - the first being a five-set thriller over Northern Nash on October 14.

On that stat sheet, Ladybird junior Peyton Cooke led the way for Southern with ten kills, an offensive effort that was aided by a whopping 28 assists from fellow third-year Abigail Marks. Cooke additionally tabbed ten digs on the defensive end, five shy of the team-best 15 recorded by senior Macy Strickland.

Strickland added five kills to her name as well, while freshman phenom Brooklyn Rice ended the contest with nine of her own.

With the state playoffs looming next, Southern Nash entered the 5A East bracket at 19-1, their lone blemish a September 29 3-2 loss at Bunn - who won the Class 2A/3A/4A Quad County Conference at 18-3 overall and

10-0 in league play.

The Ladybirds split their two-match series against the Lady Wildcats, opening the year with a 3-0 sweep of the Quad County Champions on August 12.

Southern's season started with 14-straight victories before finally dropping a match, responding by winning three contests in a row to close the regular season before kicking off league play.

Outside of their season-opening win over Bunn, the Ladybirds swept all six of their league opponents in two-match series, also earning two wins each over nonconference opponents Nash Central and Louisburg.

Head coach Melanie Mercer, who was the Class-2A/3A Big East's Coach of the Year in 2024, as well as Southern Nash High School's Coach of the Year during the 2024-25 athletic campaign, and her Ladybird squad learned its playoff fate on Thursday, October 16, just one day after securing the league championship.

Mercer's team was one of five schools from the Big East Conference to reach the volleyball playoffs, with Hunt landing the 13th seed, C.B. Aycock serving as the 14th seed and Fike drawing the 17th seed in the 5A bracket while Northern Nash was named the 13th seed in the 6A classification.

Southern Nash was awarded the second seed in the Class-5A Eastern Region, with its regular-season success resulting in a first-round bye. The Ladybirds were paired with and hosted No. 15 Dixon, who advanced to the second round after a forfeit victory over 16th-seeded Durham School of the Arts.

Southern earned its 20th win of the season in the second leg of the playoffs, defeating Dixon to set up a third-round tilt with seventh-seeded Orange, a game that the Ladybirds were once again able to host due to their impressive regular season.



SOUTHERN NASH VOLLEYBALL COACH MELANIE MERCER HAS NEVER BEEN ONE TO HIDE HER EMOTIONS

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meetings over that time frame.

Friday's tilt between the two longtime opponents was one of the biggest in series history, with Hunt entering the matchup riding a five-game win streak, the most recent a decisive victory over Southern Nash.

The Warriors used momentum from their previous outings to jump out to a 14-7 lead in the first quarter, with running back Doryan Jones scoring from eight yards out while quarterback Mez Harris later connected with Jayson Bell for a 44-yard touchdown through the air.

Despite that, it was actually Northern Nash that broke the ice, taking advantage of a blunder by Hunt on the opening kickoff that resulted in the Knights' bellcow back Myles Eatmon punching into the endzone from the three yard line less than two minutes into the first quarter.

While they may have given up 14 early points to the Warriors, it didn't take long for Northern's defense to settle in and find its groove.

The Knights held Hunt scoreless over the final three quarters of action, intercepting three of Harris' passes after the conclusion of the opening period.

Momentum began swinging in Northern's favor in the second frame, leveling the scoreboard at 14-14 after Eatmon secured his second touchdown of the evening with 2:56 left in the first half.

That wouldn't be the last time the Knights reached the end zone before halftime.

Northern's defense forced a Warrior punt, which they capitalized on by marching the length of the field in just two plays.

Quarterback Gehrig Miller engineered a go-ahead touchdown on a 13-yard pass to Logan Williams one play



NORTHERN NASH QB GEHRIG MILLER

after a linking up with Jah'Marzea Williams, a play that resulted in a 42-yard gain.

"He has put the ball on the money," said Farriss of Miller, a senior transfer from Rocky Mount Academy who took over the starting job in the Knights' conference opener at Fike.

"He's done a great job of just throwing to who's open, he's made great decisions."

Miller finished with 145 passing yards in addition to his touchdown in the final minute of the first half, guiding the offense to a strong night all-around.

On the ground, Jamarus Robinson added two touchdowns in the second half while Preston McDaniel added another, McDaniel being one of multiple Knights who made impacts on both sides of the ball.

Robinson's second touchdown and Northern's final score of the night was set up by a fourth-quarter interception that McDaniel returned to the ten yard line, while Jah'Marzea

Williams added a second-half touchdown to his résumé by intercepting Harris and returning it for a 35-yard score.

"It was just a good team win," said Farriss, who pointed to quality play from his offense, defense and special teams unit alike.

The Knights will now shift their focus to a crucial conference matchup this Friday against the Southern Nash Firebirds, who are looking to avoid dropping three consecutive games for the first time since 2008.

The Firebirds, who lost a 22-20 thriller at Rocky Mount on Friday, now sit at 6-3 overall and 3-2 in Big East play. With their conference championship hopes likely eliminated, Southern will certainly look play spoiler against Northern, one of two teams Big East teams still unbeaten in its league slate, Rocky Mount being the other.

Kickoff between the Knights and Firebirds is slated for Friday at 7 p.m. at historic Firebird Stadium on the SNHS campus in Stanhope.

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Southern Nash, which had been rolling earlier on in Big East play, dropped its second

league game in a row last Friday as the Firebirds were edged 22-20 against homestanding Rocky Mount.

Nash Central also came out on the short end of a close one, dropping a 27-21 decision at home against the Bunn Wildcats.

Central is now 2-6 overall and 1-2 in the Quad County Conference, while Southern Nash slid to 6-3 and 3-2.

SN's defeat at Rocky Mount was back and forth, with the visitors getting on the board first courtesy of a 4-yard

touchdown run from DJ Parker midway through the initial stanza of action.

But Rocky Mount, fueled by a pair of long touchdown bursts, built its lead to 22-13 before Southern Nash drew closer thanks to a 1-yard TD plunge from Caden Day late in the third quarter.

Southern would move deep into RM territory late in the game, but the Firebirds were eventually turned away on downs.

Central's outing provided a different scenario as the Bulldogs, who have struggled offensively for most of the season, came out on fire.

NCHS scored a trio of

touchdowns, including two via the pass, to move ahead 21-13 at the break.

But the Bulldogs would score no more, and the resurgent Wildcats delivered touchdowns in both the third and fourth frames to claim the showdown.

Central will hope to get back into the victory column this Friday when the Bulldogs travel to Youngsville for their first-ever meeting with new conference opponent Wake Prep Academy.

Southern, meanwhile, will resume its grudge match rivalry with Northern Nash on Friday at Firebird Stadium on the SNHS campus.

KING

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second straight game over the century mark. King's four TDs, the most by a Camel against a Division I opponent in school history, matched Aaron Blockmon's output in a win against Chowan in 2016.

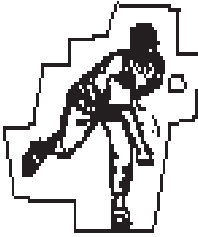
The Northern Nash High School alum hauled in TDs on back-to-back possessions in the fourth quarter, including a 77-yard strike from QB Camden Sixkiller to tie the game, followed by an 11-yard go-ahead catch with 1:15 remaining in regulation.

He also notched a touchdown in the first overtime, a double pass from Mike Chandler II. King added kick return

duties in the win (three returns for 57 yards), bringing his all-purpose total to 199 yards for the night.

The Camels picked up their first overtime win since 2019 (W 49-47 at Gardner-Webb, 3OT), hitting the 50-point mark for the first time since 2023 (W 56-7 at The Citadel).

King was named co-offensive player of the week along with Monmouth's Josh Derry, while Rhode Island's Justin Carcel was tabbed defensive player of the week. Towson's Bryce LaFollette took special teams honors, while Monmouth's Chris Palmer earned rookie weekly accolades.



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YOUR TEAM'S SCORE IN
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