NN Finishes Unbeaten In Big East



NORTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL RUNNING BACK CAMRON LYONS
(Photo Submitted by Carl Copeland)

Knights defend their conference football crown

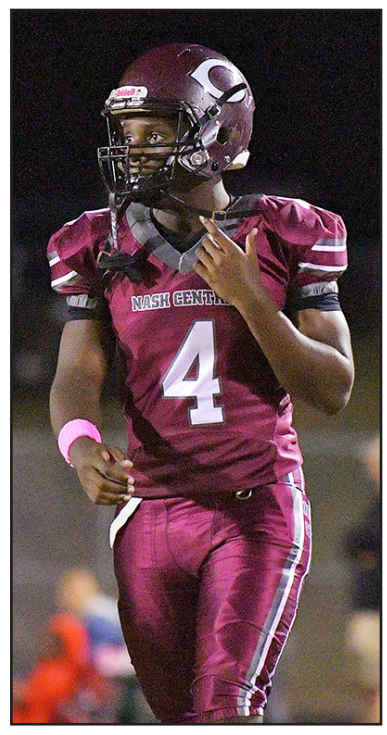
By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

ROCKY MOUNT -- For the third time in as many seasons, the football program at Northern Nash not only won a conference championship – but did so with an undefeated record in league play.

The Fighting Knights clinched a 19th straight Big East Conference victory in a dominant way last Friday night, jumping all over archrival Rocky Mount early in a 48-0 drudging of the Gryphons.

Headlining last Friday's rivalry affair was yet another lights-out performance by the

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NASH CENTRAL'S
ELIJAH DUNN

FOOTBALL PLAYOFF BRACKETS

From Staff Reports

NASH COUNTY -- Here are the North Carolina High School Athletic Association's brackets for the Class 4-A (Nash Central), 5-A (Rocky Mount and Southern Nash) and 6-A State Football Playoffs:

Class 4-A
First Round
This Friday
East Regional

- East Duplin (1) Bye
- Eastern Wayne (17) at Washington (16)
- SW Randolph (8) Bye
- Carver (24) at Fairmont (9)
- Reidsville (5) Bye
- Burlington Cummings (21) at Randleman (12)

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2026 NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

MIRACULOUS RECOVERY



NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL BULLDOGS FOOTBALL TEAM
2026 QUAD COUNTY CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS
(Photos Submitted by Meryn Johnson)

Slow start doesn't keep NC from winning QCC title

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

CLAYTON -- Year One of the Carter Varnell Era is one that won't soon be forgotten on the campus of Nash Central High School.

After a dismal 0-6 start to the season – one that included a loss to Louisburg in the Bulldogs' league opener – Central rallied to finish the year at 4-6 overall and 4-1 in Quad County Conference play, clinching just the second outright conference championship on the gridiron in the school's history.

The Bulldogs – who scored

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CENTRAL'S DEFENSE CAME UP BIG LAST FRIDAY NIGHT AT ALAJ



SOUTHERN NASH'S
LOVELLE WHITE

White named hoops skipper

From Staff Reports

STANHOPE -- Southern Nash High School has announced the appointment of Lovelle White as the new head coach of the Varsity Girls Basketball program.

Coach White will assume his coaching responsibilities

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PLAYOFF PICTURE

SN qualifies for postseason



SNHS QUARTERBACK
LOVELLE WHITE JR.

From Staff Reports

STANHOPE -- Making the playoffs has always been an expectation -- and not a hope -- for the Southern Nash High School football program.

But in what is considered to be a rebuilding campaign, qualifying for the postseason is a rewarding outcome for the Firebirds.

And getting a home game? That's even more satisfying.

Despite going 4-6 on the campaign, the Firebirds, with a lineup loaded with underclassmen, have earned a home matchup in the opening round of the North Carolina High

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LEGENDARY SOUTHERN NASH HS FOOTBALL COACH BRIAN BATCHELOR
(Photo Submitted by Carl Copeland)

PLAYOFFS

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• West Craven (4) Bye
• Jordan-Matthews (20) at Ledford (12)
• Clinton (3) Bye
• SW Onslow (19) at North Pltt (14)
• SW Edgecombe (6) Bye
• Central Davidson (22) at Nash Central (11)
• Morehead (7) Bye
• Lexington (23) at Roanoke Rapids (10)
• Anson (18) at Bunn (15)
• High Point Andrews (2) Bye

West Regional

• Hibriten (1) Bye
• North Surry (17) at East Burke (16)
• Lake Norman (8) Bye
• Lincoln Charter (24) at R-S Central (9)
• Mount Pleasant (5) Bye
• Bandys (21) at Wilkes Central (12)
• Burns (4) Bye
• East Gaston (20) at Bunker Hill (13)
• West Iredell (3) Bye
• Salisbury (19) at West Stanly (14)
• West Stokes (6) Bye
• Forbush (22) at South Rowan (11)
• Stuart Cramer (7) Bye
• Fred Foard (23) at Pisgah (10)
• Newton-Conover (18) at Maiden (15)
• Tuscola (2) Bye

Class 5-A
First Round
This Friday
East Regional

• Southeast Alamance (1) Bye
• Currituck County (17) at West Carteret (16)
• Havelock (8) Bye
• CB Aycock (24) at Rocky Mount (9)
• Seaforth (5) Bye
• South Brunswick (21) at South Granville (12)
• Croatan (4) Bye
• Southern Wayne (20) at Western Alamance (13)
• Wilson Hunt (3) Bye
• Oxford Webb (10) at Montgomery Central (14)
• Wilson Fike (6) Bye
• Roxboro Person (22) at St. Paul's (11)
• Eastern Alamance (7) Bye
• Richlands (23) at Hillsborough Orange (10)
• Rockingham County (18) at Southern Nash (15)
• Northside-Jacksonville (2) Bye

West Regional

• Shelby Crest (1) Bye
• Erwin (17) at Parkwood (16)
• Oak Grove (8) Bye
• Gastonia Hunter Huss (24) at Hickory (9)
• Monroe (5) Bye
• North Lincoln (21) at Northwest Cabarrus (12)
• South Point (4) Bye
• North Buncombe (20) at Smoky Mountain (13)
• Jay M. Robinson (3) Bye
• East Rowan (19) at North Davidson (14)
• West Rowan (6) Bye
• North Henderson (22) at Enka (11)
• East Lincoln (7) Bye
• Forestview (23) at Forest Hills (10)
• Carson (18) at West Henderson (15)
• Franklin (2) Bye

Class 6-A
First Round
This Friday
East Regional

• Greenville Rose (1) Bye
• Felton Grove (17) at South Johnston (16)
• Middle Creek (8) Bye
• Lee County (24) at Fayetteville 71st (9)
• Union Pines (5) Bye
• Fayetteville Terry Sanford (21) at Franklinton (12)
• Scotland County (4) Bye
• Jacksonville White Oak (20) at Swansboro (13)
• Northern Nash (3) Bye
• West Johnston (19) at Fayetteville Westover (14)
• Southern Alamance (6) Bye
• Western Harnett (22) at Harnett Central (11)
• Burlington Williams (7) Bye
• Hope Mills South View (23) at Erwin Triton (10)
• Northern Durham (18) at Gray's Creek (15)
• Jacksonville (2) Bye

West Regional

• Asheville (1) Bye
• Statesville (17) at AC Reynolds (16)
• Greensboro Dudley (8) Bye
• St. Stephens (24) at Sun Valley (9)
• Winston-Salem Mt. Tabor (5) Bye
• Central Cabarrus (21) at Gastonia Ashbrook (12)
• Kings Mountain (4) Bye
• Olympic (20) at Watauga (13)
• Asheboro (3) Bye
• Eastern Guilford (19) at Kernersville Glenn (14)
• Alexander Central (6) Bye
• South Caldwell (22) at Northern Guilford (11)
• Morganton Freedom (7) Bye
• Piedmont (23) at Charlotte Catholic (10)
• Phillip O. Berry (18) at Jamestown Ragsdale (15)
• TC Roberson (2) Bye



NASH CENTRAL COACH CARTER VARNELL GETS A BATH AFTER THE BULLDOGS WRAPPED UP THE QCC CROWN
(Photo Submitted by Meryn Johnson)

DOGS

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a season-high 49 points while its defense pitched the team's first shutout of the year – secured a share of the conference crown by thumping American Leadership Academy - Johnston (ALAJ) 49-0 last Friday night.

The victory was the team's fourth straight, all of which were over league foes, and was by far Central's most dominant performance of the year.

Fighting from early deficits was nothing new to the Bulldogs, though.

Last season, Central experienced similar results early in the season paired with a myriad of injuries that could've derailed the season, and caused the roster to quit.

However, the Bulldogs – at that time coached by longtime roamer of the Nash County sidelines Chris Lee – kept getting up off the mat and reached the playoffs, a similar result to this season.

Central knocked off Roanoke Rapids, Bunn, Wake Prep Academy and ALAJ en route to the conference title – receiving a bit of help from some of its league foes as well.

The Bulldogs – who couldn't claim the outright crown without a few Louisburg losses – saw both Bunn and Wake Prep issue the Warriors one-possession losses in the final two weeks of the regular season, including a 22-21 thriller between Wake Prep and Louisburg on Oct. 30.

That result ultimately handed the title to Nash Central, whose 4-1 final mark against Quad County Conference opponents means that for the first time since the school's 11-win season in 2023, the Bulldogs finished above .500 in conference play.

It's quite the step forward for Varnell and his roster – a first-year head coach tasked with rebuilding a team that suffered what felt like countless injuries a season ago.

Where the team has really improved as the year progressed was of course its defense – who allowed just 18 points during its four-game win streak to close the season.

It's a unit that's led by junior two-way phenom Avery Flowers, who has amassed over 100 tackles over the course of the season and is responsible for multiple takeaways generated by the Bulldog defense.

Flowers also serves as a ballcarrier in the Central backfield, where he's paired with classmate Tristian Whitley and sophomore Braylon Whitley in addition to Elijah Dunn.

The Bulldog offense is quarterbacked by Emory Bynum – whose reps last season translated to more experience and expertise this year.

With the regular season now in the rearview mirror, Varnell and his Central squad will now shift its focus to a first-round playoff matchup against Central Davidson.

The Spartans ride into the Dawg Pound out of Lexington, awarded the No. 22 seed after a 3-7 campaign in the regular season, entering the 4A playoffs having lost back-to-back conference games to T.W. Andrews and Montgomery Central.

Nash Central, which is seeded 11th in the 4A East will be the host of the contest, with kickoff slated for 7 p.m.

WHITE

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immediately.

Coach White brings a wealth of experience in athletics and a strong commitment to student-athlete development. He has served at Southern Nash High School for the past four years and previously coached at Southern Nash Middle School (SNMS) for two years. His coaching experience spans multiple sports, including football, boys basketball, and men's and women's track and field.

Throughout his time in the Southern Nash school community, Coach White has demonstrated a commitment to teamwork, discipline, leadership, and the overall development of student-athletes. His experience across multiple athletic programs provides a strong foundation for leading the Ladybirds basketball program and building a culture that emphasizes excellence both on and off the court.

"I am excited about the opportunity to lead the Southern Nash girls basketball program," said Coach White. "I look forward to building strong relationships with our student-athletes, helping them develop their skills, and creating an environment that promotes teamwork, accountability, and success.

"Southern Nash has a strong athletic tradition, and I am committed to continuing to build on that foundation while preparing our student-athletes for success beyond the basketball court."

Southern Nash High School Athletic Director Robbie Kennedy expressed enthusiasm for the appointment, highlighting the importance of continued growth and development within the athletic program.

"Coach White brings valuable coaching experience across several sports, along with a commitment to developing student-athletes both athletically and personally," Kennedy said. "We look forward to seeing him lead the Ladybirds basketball program, strengthen relationships with our student-athletes, and continue to promote the values of teamwork, dedication, and the 'ALL IN' philosophy that Southern Nash represents."

Under Coach White's leadership, the program will focus on player development, teamwork, discipline, and community engagement.

The school also looks forward to strengthening connections with feeder schools, families, and the broader Southern Nash community to support the continued growth of girls basketball.

KNIGHTS

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Northern Nash defense, one that has now rattled off five-straight shutouts and six total over the course of the 2026 gridiron season.

The Knights' defense has been quite the story in recent weeks, a unit that has quite frankly dominated its competition as of late.

In the month of October, Northern outscored its five opponents – C.B. Aycock, Southern Wayne, Hunt, Southern Nash and Rocky Mount – by a whopping 265-0 margin, with the only points the team allowed in conference play coming against 8-2 Fike in a 34-20 victory on Sept. 25.

Fittingly, it was actually the Knights' defense that got the scoring started in Friday's regular-season finale, as fewer than 90 seconds into the game Gryphon quarterback Jason Battle – the son of the school's head coach that shares the same name – was intercepted by Northern's Santrevor Silver, who returned the takeaway for a 35-yard return and a touchdown that gave Northern an early edge before its offense even took the field.

Just like the defense, the Knights' offense found the end zone on their first drive of the game, doubling its early lead after star running back Myles Eatmon scampered for a 12-yard touchdown.

Eatmon found the endzone once more in the first half on a four-yard rush, and then it was quarterback Jaice Johnson's turn to build on an already-impressive performance by Northern.

Johnson crossed the goal line on a red zone keeper and followed that up by connecting with receiver Hassan Davis-McKinney on a 50-yard score, inflating the Knights' lead to 36-0 – with a Caleb Walston field goal prior to halftime pushing the lead to 39 points.

If that wasn't already convincing enough, Kamren Freeman then returned the opening kickoff of the second half for a 95-yard touchdown, putting a bow on a wire-to-wire one-sided performance, something that's become a bit of a habit for Northern throughout the back half of the season.

The Knights' 8-2 overall record and conference championship crowning resulted in drawing the No. 3 seed in the Class 6-A Eastern Region, with the first round of the state playoffs starting this Friday night.

Fortunately for Northern, though, is that the team's regular-season efforts were enough to earn a first-round bye – meaning that the team won't take the field in the postseason until Nov. 13.

The Knights will host the winner of this weekend's game between No. 14 Westover and No. 19 West Johnston next week, while their six league rivals will each be competing in the 5A classification.

Both Rocky Mount and Southern Nash will be opening the playoffs at home this week – with the ninth-seeded Gryphons slated to host conference foe No. 24 C.B. Aycock while the No. 15 Firebirds will face No. 18 Rockingham County.

Both Rocky Mount and Southern Nash will kick off at 7 p.m. this week, while details about Northern's Nov. 13 home game will be available at a later date.

BIRDS

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School Athletic Association State Football Playoffs.

This Friday at historic Firebird Stadium, Southern Nash will entertain Rockingham County from Wentworth in a first-round contest.

Both squads will enter the event with matching 4-6 worksheets.

But the Cougars have been playing better later in the year and have two of their last three gridiron outings.

Ironically -- and rarely -- both teams will enter the game coming off of bye weeks.

Due to the odd-numbered nature of the Big East Conference, the Firebirds didn't play during the final week of the regular season.

Veteran SNHS head coach Brian Batchelor felt like the week off gave his club some valuable practice time -- something that is necessary for his young group.

The extra time also gave the Firebirds an opportunity to heal some nagging injuries.

Batchelor also hopes the extended break will provide a reset for a club that, after a solid start, limped to the finish line on a four-game losing streak -- albeit against quality competition in the Big East.

Despite the high level of its foes, Southern Nash had only lost three straight games by 14 points or less -- until running into a Northern Nash buzzsaw on October 23.

That Nash County showdown went the Fighting Knights' way by a convincing score of 49-0, and NNHS would go on to once again claim the Big East's regular season crown.

It will be interesting to see how Southern Nash will bounce back from that disappointing defeat -- especially considering how young and relatively inexperienced the Firebirds still are.

But a winnable first-round game could provide SNHS with some much-needed momentum, along with serving as a possible foundation to build upon for the 2027 campaign.