

Northern Nash Erupts For Victory



NORTHERN NASH'S DEFENSE CAME UP BIG LAST FRIDAY NIGHT
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

Knights ready for a rematch against 71st

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

RED OAK -- Northern Nash High's football team used a 35-point second-quarter explosion to advance to the third round of Class 6-A state playoffs last Friday night, dropping 18th-seeded White Oak 48-18.

The Knights used a whopping five touchdowns and 35 points in the second period, responding loudly to an early 6-0 lead taken by the Vikings.

"It's definitely big to

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NORTHERN NASH'S
PIPER JONES

Northern excelled on court

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

RED OAK -- Northern Nash High School reached the state volleyball playoffs for the third time in as many seasons during its 2025 campaign, ending the year at 10-10 overall with a 7-5 mark in league play.

The Lady Knights finished their inaugural season in the Class 5A/6A Big East in fourth place, securing two-match sweeps over Fike, Southern



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NORTHERN NASH'S
LILLY TEETS

2025-26 NASH COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL SWIM SEASON WATER WONDERLAND



NORTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL SWIMMER LAYLA SHERRILL

County squads kick off swimming campaign

From Staff Reports

ROCKY MOUNT -- Nash County's Big Four public high schools might not all be in the same league anymore, but look for action to continue to be hot and heavy in the pool this winter as part of the area swimming season.

Northern Nash, Rocky Mount and Southern Nash are still in a revamped Big East Conference, while Nash Central has moved to the new Quad County Conference.

But the four squads will still compete in plenty of meets together at the Harrison Family YMCA, with the latest



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SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL SWIMMER EMMA BATCHELOR
(Photos Submitted by Meryn Johnson)

IT'S SEQUEL TIME Birds, Hunt slated to meet again

From Staff Reports

STANHOPE -- One of the most important steppingstones in Southern Nash's football history came back in 2009, when the Firebirds won a postseason contest at long-time rival Wilson Hunt en route to reaching the semifinals of the state playoffs for the first-ever time.



Southern Nash will get an opportunity to replicate those heroics this Friday when the Firebirds once again travel to Hunt for a third-round showdown in the Class 5-A



JADEN HARTSFIELD

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SOUTHERN NASH'S MARLEE ALSTON SPEEDS UPFIELD IN THE PLAYOFFS
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)



NORTHERN NASH'S MYLES EATMON SHEDS A TACKLE

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get any win in the playoffs,” said eighth-year Northern Nash head coach Andrew Farriss. “I think we needed to get over that early playoff loss from last year.”

And get over it they did, rushing for more than 300 yards on the backs of Preston McDaniel and Myles Eatmon.

After falling behind 6-0, Eatmon got the Knights on the scoreboard in the opening frame on a nine-yard touchdown run, giving Northern its first lead of the game at 7-6.

That was one of nine carries and three touchdowns that Eatmon contributed in last Friday’s second-round matchup, with the third-year running back accounting for 115 rushing yards as well.

Eatmon then opened the second quarter by bumping the Knights’ lead to eight points, scoring from five yards out to gain a 14-6 advantage.

That’s when the McDaniel show began.

Northern’s second-string running back, who has found a home on the defensive side of the ball this season as a linebacker, had a breakout game in the backfield - totaling a game-high and career-best 126 yards on the ground on just four touches. Two of those four carries resulted in touchdowns, the first coming from 48 yards out while the second was a 51-yard run.

“I’m very proud of him and happy for him,” said Farriss. “He works hard and never complains.”

McDaniel’s 48-yard score would push the Knights ahead 21-6, a margin that wouldn’t last long after White Oak’s Joshua Smith connected with Elliot Pineda on an 82-yard touchdown pass, shrinking Northern’s advantage to 21-12.

From that point on, it was all Green and Gold.

After the Vikings trimmed the Knights’ lead to single digits, Northern tabbed three touchdowns before half-time to build out a 30-point, 42-12 lead prior to intermission.

Ja’Marcus Robinson scored on a 13-yard run, Eatmon added his third and final score - an eight-yard rush

- and Northern fired its lone score through its passing game, a 30-yard reception hauled in by Jah’Marzea Williams from quarterback Gehrig Miller, all before the end of the half.

Each team reached the end zone once in the second half, Northern’s trip coming on McDaniel’s 51-yard run, the Knights’ having an impressive evening on the defensive side of the ball as well.

Northern limited the Vikings to just 202 total yards of offense, most impressively holding them to just 39 rushing yards, a pure dominant performance along the trenches.

“We had to commit to stopping their run first,” remarked Farriss, emphasizing the need to limit Smith, White Oak’s quarterback, on the ground.

“Thankfully we held up enough in the pass game to stop them overall.”

Now having advanced to the third round, courtesy of a first-round bye and their win over White Oak, the Knights are now primed for their third matchup in the last four postseasons against Seventy-First.

Northern’s first matchup in this stretch against the Falcons came in the 2022 Eastern Regional Final, where the Knights won and advanced to the state championship game for just the second time in school history.

A year later, Seventy-First got its revenge in the same game, sending themselves to the state title game.

This year, while it comes a bit earlier than previous meetings, the stakes are just as high.

The Falcons are 9-2, having won nine-straight games after opening the year with back-to-back losses to Terry Sanford and Cape Fear, the latter of which came via forfeit.

The Falcons were awarded the No. 7 seed in the 6A East as a result of their regular-season success, receiving a first-round bye just like Northern Nash and defeating South Johnston 22-3 in the second round.

This week’s third round tilt between Northern and Seventy-First will be held at Death Valley on the campus of Northern Nash High School on Friday. Kickoff is slated for 7 p.m



SOUTHERN NASH'S CADEN DAY TAKES A HANDOFF

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State Playoffs.

Just don’t expect a low-scoring slugfest like the one in 2009. Instead, expect plenty of points to be posted if the clubs’ previous meeting this fall was any indicator -- a 51-34 Hunt triumph back on October 10.

That decision helped catapult the Warriors toward a second-place finish in the Big East Conference, along with earning a top seed in the Eastern Regional for the playoffs.

The loss provided an opposite effect for the Firebirds as it was the first setback of three in a row to cap off the regular season after a strong start.

But Southern Nash, now 7-4, rebounded nicely last Friday night with a 58-39 home decision over Southern Alamance in second-round action at historic Firebird

Stadium on the SNHS campus.

The offense had no problem putting up huge numbers on the scoreboard -- and the defense showed improvement from the closing stretch of the regular season.

Jaden Hartsfield (123) and Camron Lyons (107) combined for 230 rushing yards to go with four touchdowns, while veteran quarterback Isaiah Battle completed five passes for 108 yards and two scores.

Southern Nash was as healthy as it had been in quite awhile following its two-week break -- one for the end of the regular season and the other for an opening-round playoff bye.

And the Firebirds played vigor as they delivered 22 unanswered points in the second frame to cruise into intermission with a 34-10

advantage.

The final score was not a true indicator of how the game went as the visitors scored 16 points in the row in the fourth frame as legendary SNHS head coach Brian Batchelor was utilizing a liberal substitution pattern.

Defensively, the Firebirds came through with six sacks, two fumble recoveries and one interception.

Now comes a rematch with Hunt, which will carry a 9-2 worksheet into the proceedings under the direction of former Nash Central assistant Juan Jackson.

Wilson Hunt edged traditional powerhouse Eastern Alamance by a 30-28 total last Friday night at home.

The Warriors’ lone losses came home against titans Northern Nash and Tarboro.

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coming last Thursday.

Northern Nash, which has dominated the Big East over the past two years, was the boys team winner with 151 points, followed by Nash Central at 99.

In girls action, North East Carolina Prep out of Tarboro finished with 96 points to edge Northern Nash (88) for the top position.

Northern Nash has experienced a program renaissance over the past few years under the direction of head coach Tracy Dodrill.

It’s still unclear which of the new schools in the Big East will post the biggest threat to NN’s recent supremacy, but the Fighting Knights should still be exceptional thanks to the return of the majority of its roster, led by the Dynamic Duo of Conner Ezzell and Logan Denton.

Results from the event were as follows:

- Team Scores**

Girls

 - 1) North East Carolina Prep 96
 - 2) Northern Nash 88
 - 3) Southern Nash 61
 - 4) SW Edgecombe 25
 - 5) Nash Central 16

Boys

 - 1) Northern Nash 151
 - 2) Nash Central 99
 - 3) Southern Nash 55
 - 4) Rocky Mount 39
 - 5) Tarboro 15
 - 6) Hobgood Charter 12
 - 7) North East Carolina Prep 8

Events

 - Girls 200 Medley Relay -- North East Carolina Prep 2:14.67
 - Boys 200 Medley Relay -- Northern

- Nash 1:48.78

 - Girls 200 Freestyle -- Emma Batchelor, Southern Nash, 3:01.20
 - Boys 200 Freestyle -- Blake Denton, Northern Nash, 2:03.17
 - Girls 200 IM -- Erin Wilson, Northern Nash, 2:33.54
 - Boys 200 IM -- Dominic Wozniak, Nash Central, 2:12.07
 - Girls 50 Freestyle -- Avery Savage, North East Carolina Prep, 30.59
 - Boys 50 Freestyle -- Blaine Dawes, Hobgood Charter, 25.65
 - Girls 100 Butterfly -- Emily Mann, North East Carolina Prep, 1:05.86
 - Boys 100 Butterfly -- Nicolas Groesser, Northern Nash High School, 57.71
 - Girls 100 Freestyle -- Rorie Lunsford, North East Carolina Prep, 1:20.15
 - Boys 100 Freestyle -- Blaine Dawes, Hobgood Charter, 56.53
 - Girls 500 Freestyle -- Erin Wilson, Northern Nash, 5:58.09
 - Boys 500 Freestyle -- Blake Denton, Northern Nash, 5:31.93
 - Girls 200 Freestyle Relay -- North East Carolina Prep, 2:01.06
 - Boys 200 Freestyle Relay -- Northern Nash, 1:51.22
 - Girls 100 Backstroke -- Bianca Sabatini, Southern Nash, 1:10.90
 - Boys 100 Backstroke -- Conner Ezzell, Northern Nash, 58.15
 - Girls 100 Breaststroke -- Eason Melton, North East Carolina Prep, 1:18.35
 - Boys 100 Breaststroke -- Dominic Wozniak, Nash Central, 1:07.07
 - Girls 400 Freestyle Relay -- Northern Nash, 5:52.97
 - Boys 400 Freestyle Relay -- Northern Nash, 3:40.93

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Wayne and archrival Rocky Mount in their league slate. Northern additionally split its two-match series with C.B. Aycock, as well as found a pair of victories outside of conference play against Triton.

Not only did 2025 mark the program’s third straight playoff appearance, it was also the school’s third-consecutive year hosting a playoff game and its first playoff appearance as a member of the 6A Classification.

The Lady Knights bounced back above the .500 mark in conference play, finishing the year at 7-5 after a 6-7 clip a season ago.

Mimicking its playoff streak, it was the third-straight season that Northern Nash finished the year at either .500 or above, totaling 37 wins over the last three campaigns highlighted by second round playoff appearances in 2023 and 2024.

This season didn’t come without its challenges, though, as fourth-year head coach Emily Engelking was tasked with replacing four graduating seniors from her

2024 squad, including the showstopping Nevaeh Ingram who took her talents on the volleyball court to NCAA Division I St. Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania.

Ingram was one of three seniors from last year’s squad to go onto play a sport at the collegiate level, with Kailey Burden joining the flag football team at Barton College and Emily Clay now playing softball at Valdosta State University in Georgia.

The productivity from that trio, as well as graduate Mahogany Phillips, was largely replaced by this year’s senior class, a group that also consists of four Lady Knights.

Lilly Teets, Ava Lloyd, Maylee Garner and Ramsey Harris each played key roles for Northern in the final season of their high schools careers, with Harris and Garner each entering the playoffs having participated in a team-best 71 sets followed closely behind by Teets with 68 and Lloyd with 65.

Lloyd ranked second on the team with 108 kills prior to the Lady Knights’ 3-1 first-round

loss to White Oak on October 18, aided offensively by Garner who led the way with a whopping 249 assists.

Each of the four seniors contributed heavily in terms of digs as well, all individually totaling over 100 with Lloyd the leader amongst the senior class at 242. On the service line, Garner and Teets were in the team’s top three in terms of aces, combining for 100 between the two of them.

While the loss of that group will certainly hurt, 2026 could be a breakout year for the Lady Knights.

Northern is expected to return star junior Piper Jones, who led the team in kills, aces and digs while adding 160 assists as well, second to only Garner.

Aside from Jones, 2025 sophomore Harper Wilson is primed to see her growth continue as she turns into an upper classmen, while Joelle Drake - the daughter of the school’s boys basketball coach Henry Drake - and Jamie Smith are expected to have breakout campaigns during next year’s senior season as well.

HERE'S OUR PITCH....CATCH
YOUR TEAM'S SCORE IN
the *Nashville*
GRAPHIC SPORTS