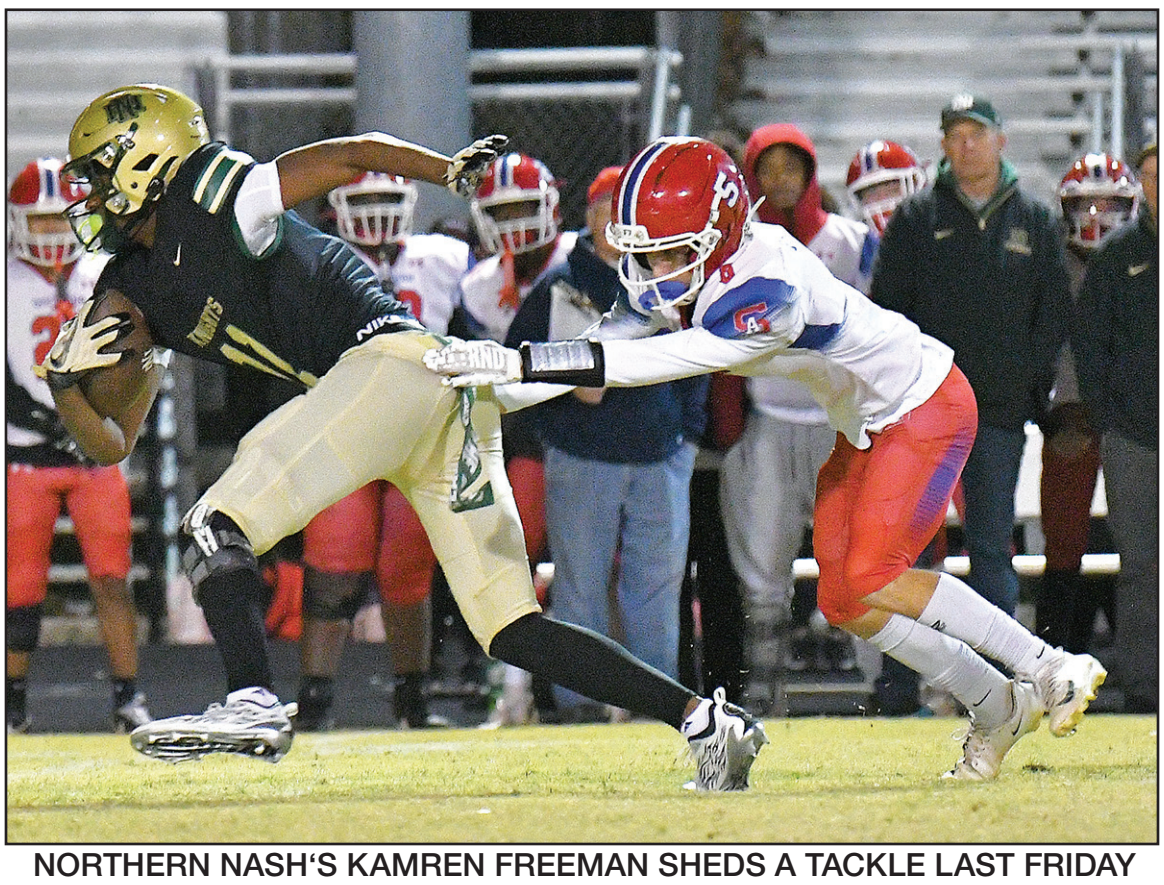
Knights Advance To Elite Eight



NORTHERN NASH'S KAMREN FREEMAN SHEDS A TACKLE LAST FRIDAY
(Photos Submitted by Meryn Johnson)

Northern Nash cruises to huge home conquest

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

RED OAK – Another victory was added to the résumé of the Northern Nash High Football team last Friday evening, this one coming in the form of a third-round victory in the NCHSAA Class 6-A State Playoffs.

The Knights' 51-0 dismantling of No. 6 Southern Alamance served as the team's staggering seventh shutout of the year and their sixth in the last seven games, while the 51 points totaled by the offense was the third time Northern

See KNIGHTS, Page 2B



NORTHERN NASH'S SEMAJ PARKER
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

Knights open with road win

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

ROCKY MOUNT -- Basketball season in Nash County tipped off with a bang last Wednesday evening as longtime rivals Northern Nash and Nash Central squared off on the hardwood in each team's season opener.

Despite having multiple players out due to its ongoing football playoff run and the task of opening the 2026-27 campaign on the road, the first leg of Northern's state title defence was a successful one, with the Knights' boys leading by as many as 21 points in the second half in an 84-66 victory over the homestanding Bulldogs at The Dawg Pound on the NCHS campus.

See NN BOYS, Page 2B

2026-27 NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS HOOPS

MONEY IN THE BANK



NASH CENTRAL'S A'DIA CASH ADVANCES THE BALL AGAINST RIVAL NORTHERN NASH
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

Cashes lead Lady Bulldogs into basketball season

From Staff Reports

ROCKY MOUNT -- Fun fact -- there has always been at least one Cash on the sideline for a Nash Central High School girls basketball game, as Coach Terri Cash is the lone skipper the school has known since its inception in 2002.

That number doubled last year as Coach Cash's daughter, A'dia, made her freshman debut in grand style at NCHS, helping the Lady Bulldogs repeat as Quad County Conference Champions -- along with being named the QCC Player of the Year.

This season, make it a triple as Terri and A'dia have been joined by Coach Cash's son, Montre'-- a former standout for the Bulldogs and Averett University.

Montre' has been serving as a junior college assistant the past handful of campaigns, but has returned home and will now be an assistant coach for the Lady Bulldogs, along with working full-time for the Nash County Parks and Recreation Department.

Expectations are high this winter for the Cashes and Company as Nash Central looks for a three-peat in the QCC thanks to the return of several key performers.

A'dia Cash and Harmony Dupree proved to be freshman phenoms in

See NC GIRLS, Page 2B



NORTHERN NASH'S KINGSTON LITTLE

SN SIGNING TRIO

Firebirds ink collegiate deals



SOUTHERN NASH'S ABIGAIL MARKS

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

STANHOPE -- A trio of Southern Nash High student-athletes pledged their collegiate commitments last week, each signing on for a different respective sport at the next level.

The lone fall athlete to affirm their next chapter last week was Ladybird Volleyballer Abigail Marks, one of the most tactical players in the Big East Conference in recent years.

Marks, who was a member of two conference championship teams and made the playoffs in each of her four seasons on the court, held down the top spot

See BIRDS, Page 2B



SOUTHERN NASH'S ALIYAH CROLL SIGNS WITH NORTH CAROLINA A&T
(Photos Submitted)

NCHSAA STATE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF SKED, RESULTS

From Staff Reports

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

Listed are last week's third-round results and this week's fourth--round schedule:

Class 4-A
East Regional
Third Round
Last Week

- East Duplin 28, SW Randolph 7
- Reidsville 41, West Craven 31
- SW Edgecombe 38, Clinton 31
- High Point Andrews 49, Eden Morehead 14

Fourth Round
This Week

- Reidsville (5) at East Duplin (1)
- SW Edgecombe (6) at High Point Andrews (2)

West Regional
Third Round
Last Week

- Hibriten 42, Lake Norman Charter 7
- Burns 42, Wilkes Central 14
- West Stokes 32, West Iredell 21
- Stuart W. Cramer 42, Tuscola 7

Fourth Round
This Week

- Burns (4) at HibritenHigh School (1)
- Stuart W. Cramer (7) at West Stokes (6)

Class 5-A
East Regional
Third Round
Last Week

- Southeast Alamance 42, Havelock 15
- Croatan 64, Seaforth 63
- Wilson Fike 47, Wilson Hunt 27
- Northside-Jacksonville 59, Eastern Alamance 16

Fourth Round
This Week

- Croatan (4) at Southeast Alamance (1)
- Wilson Fike (6) at Northside-Jacksonville (2)

West Regional
Third Round
Last Week

- Shelby Crest 17, Oak Grove 10
- South Point 49, Monroe 41
- Jay M. Robinson 35, West Rowan 0
- East Lincoln 48, Franklin 42

Fourth Round
This Week

- South Point (4) at Shelby Crest (1)
- East Lincoln (7) at Jay M. Robinson (3)

Class 6-A
East Regional
Third Round
Last Week

- Middle Creek 27, Greenville Rose 25
- Scotland 34, Union Pines 19
- Northern Nash 51, Southern Alamance 0
- Jacksonville 42, Burlington Williams 14

Fourth Round
This Week

- Middle Creek (8) at Scotland (4)
- Northern Nash (3) at Jacksonville (2)

West Regional
Third Round
Last Week

- Asheville 35, Greensboro Dudley 32
- Kings Mountain 42, Gastonia Ashbrook 18
- Northern Guilford 31, Asheboro 23
- TC Roberson 28, Charlotte Catholic 11

Third Round
This Week

- Northern Guilford (11) at TC Roberson (2)

KNIGHTS

continued from page 1B

crossed the half-century mark in 2026.

It took just one play for the Knights to break the ice against the Patriots, with quarterback Jaice Johnson setting the tone just 16 seconds in on a 52-yard keeper that went for a touchdown.

Less than three minutes later, it was time for the Northern defense to cross the goalline as well.

Senior Caleb Mayfield recovered a Southern Alamance fumble and returned it for a touchdown with 9:08 still left on the clock in the first period, doubling the Knights' lead to 14-0 before the Northern offense had even run a second play from scrimmage.

Once they got the ball a second time, it took just two plays for the Knights' offense to find the end zone once again.

This time, Johnson connected with star wide receiver Kamren Freeman on a 50-yard score, bumping the score up to 21-0 just over eight minutes in.

One more touchdown was registered by the Knights in the opening stanza, with Myles Eatmon getting in on the fun prior to the break at the end of the quarter.

Eatmon, the team's star running back and leading rusher, scored from 34 yards out while Northern's lead grew to 28-0, this one all but wrapped up with three frames left to play.

The Knights' feature back would make one more trip to the end zone in the second period, while Northern finished the half on a 36-yard field goal courtesy of kicker Caleb Walston that resulted in a 38-0 lead at halftime.



NORTHERN NASH'S (L TO R) JESSIE WADE AND MYLES EATMON

A one-yard score from Jamarcus Robinson as well as a rushing touchdown tacked on by backup quarterback CJ Mercer in the second half completed a comprehensive beatdown of the Patriots, one that the defense played a strong factor in as well.

The aforementioned seventh shutout of the season also resulted in the Knights holding Southern Alamance to a season-low 180 yards of offense, though the Patriots were without star running back Sincere Thompson, who was sidelined due to an injury.

Third-seeded Northern is now off to the state quarterfinals in the 6A East, with a Black Friday showdown against No. 2 Jacksonville next up.

The Cardinals thumped Walter M. Williams High of Burlington in the third round after knocking off Gray's Creek in their second-round opener, now sitting at 9-2 overall.

Jacksonville's only losses of the regular season came at the hands of Northside-Jacksonville and J.H. Rose, both of which fired off unbeaten campaigns in the regular season.

Friday's highly-anticipated contest will be held on the campus of Jacksonville High School, with kickoff slated for 7 p.m. between the Knights and Cardinals.

BIRDS

continued from page 1B

on Southern's roster in both assists and aces, registering 277 of the former at nearly six per set played and 63 aces, which accounted for more than 30% of her total serves.

Her standout tenure with the Ladybirds overlapped with a travel career playing with the FC Firecrackers Volleyball Club, her high school career now wrapped with 230 aces, 170 kills, 544 digs and a whopping 1,439 assists.

Marks, whose profile includes accolades such as the Big East Conference Player of the Year in 2025 in addition to being a two-time All-Big East selection, will now be taking her talents to Pitt Community College where she's on track to majoring in radiography.



SOUTHERN NASH'S ABIGAIL MARKS SIGNS WITH PITT CC

The first of two student-athletes on the diamond to pick their next home was Isaiah Battle, who opted for the Baseball program at Belmont Abbey.

Battle, who is the son of Firebird legend and head baseball coach Kwamaine Battle, is a former three-sport standout who chose to focus solely on baseball in his upcoming senior campaign,

He previously played both basketball and football, where he was most notably a two-year starter at quarterback for the Firebirds.

The numbers speak for themselves when it comes to Battle's résumé, with his three completed seasons adding up to an impressive .424 career batting average, 52 RBI, 15 doubles and six home runs. This past season, he ranked top-20 in the state in slugging percentage — mashing at a .955 clip.

While he's expected to play the infield for the Crusaders at the collegiate level, Battle has been a key piece of the Firebirds' pitching staff while playing at Southern.

In 2026, Battle made six appearances in the mound while compiling a stellar 3.50 earned run average (ERA). He was selected as the Big East Conference Player of the Year and to the North Carolina Baseball Coaches Association All-State team this season, as well.



SOUTHERN NASH'S ISAIAH BATTLE SIGNS WITH BELMONT-ABBEY COLLEGE

Battle intends to major in business while at Belmont Abbey.

Lastly, multi-sport star Aliyah Croll was in high demand both in flag football and softball, but eventually settled on the softball program at Division I North Carolina A&T in Greensboro.

A top player both for the historic Ladybird softball squad and the Fuquay Phenoms travel club, Croll has a career .446 batting average at Southern while adding 71 RBI and 30 extra-base hits — six of which were home runs.

She also has slugged at a career .704 clip while getting on base in over half of her career plate appearances, that percentage averaging out to .520 over her three seasons in the red and blue.

One of her most impressive attributes as a player is her manner on the basepaths, Croll posting a spotless 43-of-43 on stolen base attempts while holding down a stout .978 fielding percentage as well.

Croll's athletic talents extend far beyond the softball field though, as aside from flag football she's also a member of the school's field basketball, track and cheerleading teams.

She'll be joining the Aggies' softball program, which competes in the Division I Coastal Athletic Association alongside fellow North Carolina schools Elon, Campbell and UNC-Wilmington.

Of course, both Battle and Croll have their senior campaigns on the schedule this spring, while Marks' career at Southern wrapped up in the second round of the playoffs in October.

NC GIRLS

continued from page 1B

2025-26 as both averaged in double figures in scoring.

Important rotation players Jayci Seward, Marquisha Warren and Jaleesa Perry are also back and are joined by transfer Kaidyn Brown, but the Lady Bulldogs still have a few depth questions that need to be answered as, despite the number of players back, there are lineup holes to be filled.

JaKayla Gay, one of the best players in program history, was among the graduates after her solid career at NCHS, which included the eclipsing of the career 1,000-point mark.

Gay is now a member of the women's hoops squad at Averett University, and is garnering significant playing time as a freshman.

Another former starter who graduated is Jayden Baggett, known for her perimeter shooting excellence and defensive tenacity.



NASH CENTRAL'S JAYCI SEWARD

"Even though A'dia and Harmony are sophomores, they have to play like seniors every single day at practice and in the games," Coach Cash said. "We have to continue to build and prepare every day like we are trying to win a championship."

Nash Central opened its much-anticipated season last Wednesday by rolling past rebuilding rival Northern Nash by a 73-17 margin at The Dawg Pound on the NCHS Campus.

A'dia Cash paced Nash Central with 28 points to go with 10 assists, seven steals and five rebounds.

Dupree was also sharp for the Lady Bulldogs with a near double-double of 18 points and nine rebounds -- along with six swipes.

"We hope to make it past the third round (of the playoffs) this season," Coach Cash said. "A conference championship is for sure again our main focus, but we hope to have more playoff success than last year."

Northern, which has only two seniors on its roster, received six points apiece from Kashmere Avent and Ja'Liyah Stallings.

The teams were slated to play again Monday at the NN Gymnasium.

NN BOYS

continued from page 1B

The Knights were led in a big way by sophomore Quantay James, who registered a career-best 28 points while snagging a game-high 13 rebounds as well.

James, who is expected to be focal point for Northern this season, was one of two Knights that posted a double-double, with Rocky Mount transfer Semaj Parker the other.

Parker – a junior who averaged double figures for the Gryphons last winter – finished with 10 points and 10 rebounds each, while senior Kingston Little bucketed 22 points.

While the final line might've indicated that the contest was largely uncompetitive – that certainly wasn't the case.

After Northern held a six-point, 43-37 edge heading into halftime, Central climbed its way to a one-point deficit at 49-48 after firing up an 11-0 run of its own.

Despite the Bulldogs coming oh-so-close to jumping out in front, the Knights were able to diffuse that spark quickly, countering with a 16-4 spurt to close the third period.

Bryson McWilliams made the basket that brought Central within a point, two of his 10 points on the evening while Zaccai Allen added 11 and Tristian Whitley led the way with 16.

Early scores from McWilliams and Whitley trimmed the Bulldogs' deficit down to nine points as the final stanza began, but once again Northern Nash had the answer.

James, who else of course, responded by drilling a pair of triples just before Parker picked up three points the old fashioned way, establishing a lead that would be too much for Central to overcome.

The two foes met once again on Monday evening in the Bulldogs' return trip to the gymnasium at Northern Nash, with the Knights hosting their State Championship Ring Ceremony in the school's first game back on their home floor since claiming the 2026 6A crown.

This week's tilt was also each team's last outing prior to a brief break for Thanksgiving, with both squads set to take the floor once again next Monday.

Northern will host the second of four-straight home games next Monday evening as East Wake visits The Castle, while Nash Central is due for another rivalry matchup – this time against Rocky Mount High School.

Both games are slated to tip at the conclusion of the preceding varsity girls game, which is estimated to be 7:30 p.m.