

2025 NORTHERN NASH HS FOOTBALL
THAT'S A WRAP



NORTHERN NASH'S JAMARCUS ROBINSON LUNGES FOR EXTRA YARDAGE
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

Football season concludes in Nash Co.

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

RED OAK -- Six-time Grammy winner Jason Isbell has described the end of a high school football career as "a boy's last dream and a man's first loss."

Well, that loss unfortunately took place for Northern Nash's senior class last Friday evening, as the second-seeded Knights saw their season come to a close in the fourth round of the Class 6-A state playoffs at the hands of Middle Creek, 31-24, at Death Valley on the NNHS campus.

Northern inevitably failed to overcome four turnovers, two of which came in the second half while on the Mustangs' side of the 50-yard line.

"I think that's the difference," said eighth-year Northern Nash head coach Andrew Farriss of the team's turnovers,



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NNHS' PRESTON MCDANIEL HANGS ON TIGHT



NASH CENTRAL'S JAYCI SEWARD RUSHES UPCOURT VS. SOUTHERN NASH
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

NC Boasts A Solid Mix

Veterans blending well with talented newcomers

From Staff Reports

STANHOPE -- An interesting mix of veterans and newcomers has Nash Central's girls basketball program primed for excellence this season -- and well into the future.

Central, coming off an 18-9 campaign that

featured a journey to the third round of the state playoffs, returns several key performers from that club, led by senior standout JaKayla Gay, who has already joined the 1,000-point career scoring club as a junior.

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NC'S ZACH LYNCH SENDS ONE DOWN
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

RIVALRY GAME
Nash Central tops host SNHS

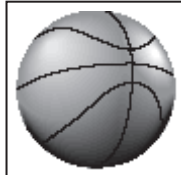
By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

STANHOPE -- The Nash Central High School Boys Basketball team picked up the first win of its 2025-26 campaign just before Thanksgiving, bouncing county foe Southern Nash 70-52 last Tuesday.

It was the second of back-to-back road games for the Bulldogs to open the season, with Central leveling its record at 1-1 after tipping off the year with a 29-point loss at Northern Nash on November 18.

"We understood that we were better than that," said fourth-year Nash Central head coach Brian Thomas, who commended how his young team responded from its opening night setback.

It was a response that



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SOUTHERN NASH'S ZAMIR CANNADY



THE GREAT RANDALL KING IN ACTION

Campbell's King nabs all-conference honors

From Staff Reports

BUIES CREEK -- Trayjen Llanas-Wilcox, Randall King and Freddie Pelling represent Campbell University on the Coastal Athletic Association's 2025 football all-conference teams.

Additionally, Monmouth running back Rodney Nelson received Offensive Player of the Year honors and Rhode Island linebacker A.J. Pena earned Defensive Player of the Year accolades.

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NORTHERN'S KAMREN FREEMAN IS OFF AND RUNNING

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the most costly being the Knights last offensive play of the game, a Gehrig Miller interception with less than five minutes remaining in the game while in Middle Creek territory.

"You just can't do it."

Northern's pair of second-half turnovers halted any momentum the offense had built up throughout the night, with the Fighting Knights storming back from two 14-point deficits in the first half, even taking a brief lead in the third period.

Northern found itself trailing 14-0 just five minutes into the game and then once again down two scores at 21-7, as the Mustangs' air attack was too much for the Knights to handle early.

"We just didn't do what we practiced," said Farriss of Northern's defense, a unit that surrendered four touchdowns and 343 yards through the air to Middle Creek.

"I think a lot of it was us blowing coverages."

Despite a long night defending the Mustangs' air attack, the Knights' defense kept them in the game during the second quarter in bend-don't-break fashion.

Northern forced Middle Creek into a trio of third down stops dangerously close to the endzone, resulting in the Mustangs missing two field goals and committing a turnover on downs late in the period, keeping the Knights within striking distance.

Farriss' squad was then able to take advantage of Middle Creek's miscues, trimming the Mustangs' lead to seven points on a 75-yard connection between Miller and wideout Kamren Freeman followed by running back Preston McDaniel's second touchdown of the contest moments after Terrance Saunders intercepted Middle Creek Lex Sevilla.

While the stat sheet may have been lopsided at the halftime intermission,

the scoreboard was all square at 21-21, with Northern having made up some serious ground over the final three minutes of the first half.

"We finally settled in and started playing a little better," said Farriss of the team's lightning-fast comeback, one that even led to the Knights taking a brief lead in the second half.

Aided by a roughing the punter penalty on fourth down, Northern's offense struck first in the third quarter on a 37-yard Caleb Walston field goal, but it would be the team's final points of the evening.

After taking a 24-21 lead, the Knights' defense let up a 20-yard touchdown pass in which Middle Creek retook a 28-24 advantage, the final lead change of the evening.

Northern's last two offensive drives resulted in crossing the 50 both times, but turning the ball over, one fumble and one interception.

The Mustangs added three more points for insurance to kick off the fourth frame and push their lead to seven, but they wouldn't need it thanks to their defense swiping away a fourth turnover.

The year comes to a close for Northern Nash at an impressive 11-2, winning a fourth conference championship in five seasons and saying goodbye to a senior class that won a staggering 49 games in four seasons.

A group that were each first-years when the Knights made the program's second-ever trip to a state championship game in 2022, they have overseen what is undoubtedly one of the best four-year runs in school history.

"These guys have left a legacy," said Farriss of his senior class. "They've set a bar for the guys coming after them."

No. 3 Middle Creek will face top-seeded Jacksonville on Friday with a tripto the State Championship on the line.

KING

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Other major award recipients included Rhode Island's Jim Fleming as CAA Coach of the Year, Villanova running back/kick returner Ja'brriel Mace as Special Teams Player of the Year, Elon quarterback Landen Clark and Towson quarterback Andrew Indorf as Co-Offensive Rookies of the Year and Monmouth defensive end Lamont Lester, Jr. as Defensive Rookie of the Year.

CAA Football's all-conference awards were voted on by the league's head coaches.

Llanas-Wilcox earned third team honors as a punt returner following his first season as a Fighting Camel. The junior posted a Campbell record 90-yard punt return for a touchdown in the Camels' home finale, the program's first punt return TD since 2017.

A year after earning Third Team Freshman All-America honors from Phil Steele, King earned honorable mention All-CAA accolades in 2025, leading the Camels with 689 yards receiving on 59 catches with five touchdowns, despite suiting up in only eight games this season.

The Northern Nash High School graduate also returned 12 kickoffs (20.3 average) and five punts (5.7 average), leading the team with 948 all purpose yards.

King totaled four 100-yard receiving games, including a season-high 142 yards with a school record-tying four touchdowns in Campbell's double overtime win over Bryant, garnering CAA Football Co-Offensive Player of the Week honors.

King also crossed the century mark against Furman (105), Elon (103) and Towson (121).

King is regarded as one of the best all-around standouts Northern Nash has ever produced. He helped the Knights to one state final appearance and two state semifinal trips during his gridiron career at NNHS.

King also excelled in basketball and earned a spot on the East-West All-Star Game hoops roster to cap off his prep career.

Pelling, meanwhile, also earned honorable mention honors after his second season with the Camels as CU's primary left tackle.

Behind Pelling, the Camels produced 352.8 yards of total offense per game, collecting 200 or more yards rushing three times, including 301 in CU's win at Hampton, a school record against a CAA opponent. Campbell also posted a pair of 300-yard passing games, including a season-high 351 in its double-OT win against Bryant.

BOYS GAME

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not only gave the Bulldogs their first win of the season, but also their first win over a fellow Nash County opponent since January 5, 2024, when Central upset Rocky Mount 85-73 in Thomas' second year leading the program.

The Bulldogs were led by a 20-point performance from senior Maurice Parker, who contributed nine of the team's 13 points in the opening quarter and was the only member of Central's roster to score in all four periods.

Zachary Lynch, a sophomore returner from last year's squad was the lone other Bulldog to finish in double figures, rounding out the evening with ten points while Southern Nash's Jaden Hartsfield led the way for the Firebirds with 15.

It was largely a game of runs throughout the contest, which Central took the strongest advantage of.

The Bulldogs created separation at the end of the first half by Lynch generating back-to-back finishes at the rim paired with a duo of three-pointers from Kameron Tucker. All of course before a last-second lay-in by Parker, a basket that gave the Bulldogs a 33-18 advantage as they headed into the locker room for halftime.

That quick spurt was one of two crucial runs for Central, ones that Southern struggled to match and was a key component in the Bulldogs distancing themselves from the Firebirds.

"Part of it is learning to string together the right plays," said Thomas of his team's two crucial runs. "The ball has energy. The more people that touch it, the more people have it."

The Bulldogs' closed the third quarter and began the fourth frame on an 18-3 run, but not



NASH CENTRAL'S ZACCAI ALLEN

before the Firebirds posed a threat in the penultimate period.

Southern opened the second half in impressive fashion, trimming Central's lead to as few as three points at 37-34 on a sequence highlighted by a spectacular three points that came the old-fashioned way from Javean Perry, laying in a pass that was headed out of bounds but redirected back into the paint by Hartsfield and adding a free throw to go with it.

But in true "game of runs" fashion, the Bulldogs countered by taking advantage of back-to-back Firebird turnovers that resulted in opportunities on the other end, proceeding to hold the Firebirds without a field goal for more than six minutes of play. In the end, Nash Central's lead grew to as many as 24 points at 66-42 in the second half.

"Defensively, the 1-3-1 has been a staple of my program over the last two years," said Thomas, who stated that he felt the system worked last season despite the team's 4-19 record, believing that the offense was the root of most of his previous squad's issues.

Thomas shared a long embrace in the postgame

handshake line with Southern Nash's Sterling Leonard, who led the Firebirds onto the court as the program's head coach for the first time on Tuesday, marking a new era for Southern Nash basketball.

Leonard, a longtime assistant at Southern Nash and a Firebird alumnus, took over the job from Robbie Kennedy, the school's athletic director, who had served as the program's head boys basketball coach for 23 seasons prior to announcing his retirement from the position over the summer.

"He's a good man and a family man. He works hard on his craft," remarked Thomas, who said that he and Leonard have been friends for many years and are often in communication with one another.

"He's a winner, he knows how to change a program and build a culture," stated Thomas, specifically referencing Leonard's previous success as Southern Nash's head boys Track & Field coach.

With both squads each taking some time off for Thanksgiving, it's back to work this week with each team taking the court multiple times.

GIRLS GAME

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But what is just as exciting at The Dawg Pound is the fact that the Lady Bulldogs have five skilled freshmen on their varsity roster this winter -- and all are expected to make an immediate impact.

This scenario is no surprise as Nash Central Middle School won back-to-back conference championships with this group, which includes A'dia Cash -- the daughter of long-time legendary NCHS head coach Terri Cash.

Blending everyone together has been a pre-season priority for Coach Cash.

"We are learning to play together," Coach Cash said. "The freshmen are learning what it takes to play successfully on varsity with the change in the pace and the physicality of the game. My returners are adjusting to playing with new players and changing roles."

"If we play to our potential and continue to grow, we should have a solid year."

Central opened up on November 18 with an impressive 67-17 decision at backyard rival Northern Nash as five players reached double figures in scoring, led by ninth-grader Harmony Dupree with 20 points to go with a whopping 18 rebounds.

A'dia Cash was also sharp with 11 points, 10 assists and seven steals.

The Lady Bulldogs kept up the pace once again last Tuesday with another county road conquest -- this time by a 63-29 triumph at Southern Nash.



NASH CENTRAL'S A'DIA CASH NAILS A JUMPER AGAINST SOUTHERN NASH



SOUTHERN NASH'S LEIGHYAH HINNANT MAKES A MOVE TOWARD THE BASKET

Central was never threatened after delivering 14 unanswered points in the first quarter of action.

Cash came through with 22 points along with eight steals and five assists.

The clubs played another Wednesday night at The Dawg Pound.

Certainly, the Lady

Bulldogs are considered one of the favorites in the new Quad County Conference with their strong, deep lineup.

Nash Central's first conference showdown will be January 16 at home against Louisburg High School -- a club the Lady Bulldogs defeated last year in the state playoffs.



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YOUR TEAM'S SCORE IN
the *Nashville*
GRAPHIC SPORTS

