

2025 ALL-BIG EAST CONFERENCE FOOTBALL TEAM
THE BIG EAST TITANS



COACH ANDREW FARRISS LED NORTHERN NASH TO ANOTHER BIG EAST FOOTBALL CROWN
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

Knights lead the way on all-conference squad



SNHS' CAM LYONS
From Staff Reports

RED OAK -- Northern Nash has firmly established itself as one of the top high school football powerhouses in Eastern North Carolina -- and that trend continued once again during the 2025 campaign.

See BIG EAST FB, Page 2B



SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR STANDOUT LUKE FAULKNER



NNHS COACH HENRY DRAKE

Knights unbeaten early on

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

RED OAK -- The Northern Nash Boys Basketball team is off to a hot start in its 2025-26 campaign, picking up a pair of victories over East Wake last week en route to a 5-0 start to the season.

The Fighting Knights wrapped up the second leg of

their home-and-home against the Warriors on Friday evening, securing a fifth-straight double-digit victory at 72-61 just a few days removed from beating East Wake on the road, 62-48 on December 1.

"I am pleased that we can put the ball in the basket effectively most of the time," said 12th-year Northern Nash head coach Henry Drake of his team's early success, with some changes coming to the Knights' roster on the horizon.

With football season now over at Northern, a slew of student-athletes are shifting their focus from the gridiron to the hardwood, with six new



See NN HOOPS, Page 2B



SOUTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL VOLLEYBALL ALL-LEAGUE PICKS (L-R) PEYTON COOKE AND MACY STRICKLAND

SN Showed The Way
Ladybirds atop the all-conference spike list

From Staff Reports

STANHOPE -- Southern Nash's best-ever volleyball season closed with five Ladybirds -- and one coach -- being saluted by the Big East Conference.

Southern standout setter Abigail Marks was tabbed as the Big East Player of the Year, while legendary skipper Melanie Mercer was the automatic selection as the Conference Champion Coach of the Year.

Mercer guided the Ladybirds to a school-record 20-2 worksheet, which featured Big East



regular season and tournament titles, along with a trip to the second round of the state playoffs.

Other Ladybirds to be picked to the All-Big East Team were Macy Strickland, Peyton Cooke and Olivia Ordess.

Freshman Brooklyn Rice earned a spot on the honorable mention list.

Across the county, Northern Nash enjoyed a quality campaign with a young roster. The Lady Knights went 10-10 overall and once again qualified for the playoffs.

See BIG EAST VB, Page 2B



NASH CENTRAL SENIOR JAYDEN WHITAKER
(Photo Submitted by Meryn Johnson)

THE LINE LEADER
Whitaker starred for Bulldogs

From Staff Reports

ROCKY MOUNT -- In a perfect world, high school football coaches would prefer to utilize players on just one side of the ball for both stamina and responsibility purposes.

But high school football is hardly a perfect world, especially

at a depth-challenged school such as Nash Central.

But that proposition worked out tremendously this fall for the Bulldogs when veteran skipper Chris Lee opted to also play his star offensive tackle Jayden Whitaker on the

See QCC FB, Page 2B



NORTHERN NASH WIDE RECEIVER JAH'MARZEA WILLIAMS

BIG EAST FB

continued from page 1B

Coach Andrew Farriss' Fighting Knights once repeated as the Big East Conference champions before reaching the third round of the state playoffs -- and closing with a sterling 11-2 overall ledger.

And with so many underclassmen contributing this fall, the NNHS gridiron program is showing no signs of slowing down.

Farriss was the automatic selection as the Big East Conference Champion Coach of the Year, while 10 Knights were selected to the All-Big East Conference Team -- along with one honorable mention.

Runner-up Wilson Hunt, which is playing for a state title this week, featured quarterback Mez Harris as the Offensive Player of the Year, while Rocky Mount's Micahis Jones was the Defensive Player of the Year.

Hunt's Will Doll was the Special Teams Player of the Year, and Southern Nash's Caden Day was the Lineman of the Year.

In addition to NN, both Southern Nash and Rocky Mount enjoyed solid campaigns that featured at least one playoff victory.

The complete 2025 All-Big East Football Team is as follows:

2025 All-Big East Conference Football Team

- Josh Pryor, Northern Nash
- Myles Eatmon, Northern Nash
- Gehrig Miller, Northern Nash
- Jah'Marzea Williams, Northern Nash
- Holton Westbrook, Northern Nash
- Tyler Richardson, Northern Nash

- Kamren Freeman, Northern Nash
 - Jessie Wade, Northern Nash
 - Jaquaye Arrington, Northern Nash
 - Caleb Mayfield, Northern Nash
 - Luke Faulkner, Southern Nash
 - Jeremiah Battle, Southern Nash
 - Caden Day, Southern Nash
 - Jaden Hartsfield, Southern Nash
 - Cooper Wheaton, Southern Nash
 - Cam Lyons, Southern Nash
 - Jaylen Carr, Southern Wayne
 - Xavier Rivera, Southern Wayne
 - Christopher Dickens, Wilson Hunt
 - Judah Harris, Wilson Hunt
 - Mez Harris, Wilson Hunt
 - Will Doll, Wilson Hunt
 - Aarion Bryant, Wilson Hunt
 - Jamauris Howard, Wilson Hunt
 - Doryan Jones, Wilson Hunt
 - Isaiah Chadwick, Wilson Hunt
 - Connor Spencer, Wilson Fike
 - Sam Finch, Wilson Fike
 - Braylen Loftin, Wilson Fike
 - Darryl Loatman, Wilson Fike
 - Devarion Archie, Wilson Fike
 - C'Quarhion Mitchell, Rocky Mount
 - Kenan Barnes, Rocky Mount
 - Micahis Jones, Rocky Mount
 - Amarion Dance, Rocky Mount
 - Jack McKellar, Rocky Mount
 - Denari Harrison, Rocky Mount
 - Tavoris Parker, Rocky Mount
 - Janeson Steele, CB Aycock
 - Jeremiah Hendricks, CB Aycock
 - Marshaun McCullen, CB Aycock
 - Rashad Rushing, CB Aycock
- Honorable Mention**
- Tollie West, Northern Nash
 - Trevorous Cooper, Wilson Hunt
 - Riley Boswell, Wilson Fike
 - Logan Denning, Southern Wayne
 - Ryan Jones, Rocky Mount
 - Braden Brinchi, CB Aycock

NN HOOPS

continued from page 1B

players joining the Knights' bench.

Terrance Saunders Jr., KhaNydre Wardrett, Kamren Freeman, Gehrig Miller, Jah'Marzea Williams and Chase Morgan have each transitioned to the basketball court with the football slate now wrapped up, creating a deeper, more talented team for Drake and his staff to manage.

"We have gone back to the drawing board to learn the team all over again," remarked Drake, with a chunk of those players seeing their first action of the year in Friday's win over East Wake.

This roster shift isn't the first for this year's Northern Nash squad, though, with the off-season headlines for the program dominated by the departure of CJ Rosser, the team's star from its two previous seasons.

Rosser, one of the nation's top players in the class of 2027 that has garnered attention from the nation's top collegiate programs, announced over the summer that he was transferring to Southeastern Prep in Florida, just weeks after he helped the Team USA U16 squad win the Gold Medal in the FIBA Men's AmeriCup.

"The team has handled this very well," stated Drake of Rosser's decision. "They have all stepped up collectively and will continue to do so."

One of the biggest pieces to the Knights' shuffled puzzle has come in the form of a first-year player, as freshman Quantay James has been a key contributor for Northern so far.

A 6'5 forward, James entered this week averaging 14 points per outing, with his young career highlighted by a pair of 19-point performances in each game against East Wake.

"He accepts criticism well and gives 100-percent in practice," said Drake of James. "Quantay has proven that he's a varsity player and can contribute to the team."

James is only shy of senior point guard Christian Barnes in scoring, with Barnes a hair above James at 14.3 points per game. Barnes is one of four Knights currently averaging double figures in scoring, with junior Kingston Little just short of James at 13.8 points per game while senior

Jamiere Harris is rounding that group out at 10.2 points per outing.

Perhaps the biggest surprise for Northern has been the emergence and improvement of seven-footer Chris Silver, who is putting up over nine points per game while snagging a team-best 8.6 rebounds per game as well. Silver averages less than four points and four rebounds per game a season ago, doubling his production from his junior season thus far.

"I think he will continue to get better on both sides of the ball," said Drake, with the team's defense looking to be an early strength as the Knights sift through its offseason slate.

Northern Nash was expected to play Roanoke Rapids on Monday until the game was postponed due to weather, and moved to 6-0 on the year with a 65-62 defeat of Nash Central on Tuesday night.

The Fighting Knights now have just one game left before kicking off conference play on December 19 at Fike, with a Saturday, December 13 neutral site matchup against Eastern Wayne on deck.



NORTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL STAR AVA LLOYD

BIG EAST VB

continued from page 1B

- NN players saluted by the Big East were Ava Lloyd and Piper Jones on the All-BE Team, along with Harper Wilson was an honorable mention pick.
- The complete 2025 All-Big East Volleyball Team is as follows:
- 2025 All-Big East Conference Volleyball**
- Macy Strickland, Southern Nash
 - Abigail Marks, Southern Nash
 - Peyton Cooke, Southern Nash
 - Olivia Ordess, Southern Nash
 - Makenzie Collins, Wilson Hunt
- Maddie Bennett, Wilson Hunt
 - KaDee Bass, Wilson Hunt
 - Ella Moyer, CB Aycock
 - Keytah Kermode, CB Aycock
 - Ava Lloyd, Northern Nash
 - Piper Jones, Northern Nash
 - Maleah Davis, Wilson Fike
 - April Leon, Wilson Fike
 - Mylee Wiggs, Southern Wayne
 - Morgan Brimberry, Southern Wayne
 - Jada Jones, Rocky Mount
 - Hannah Battle, Rocky Mount
- Honorable Mention**
- Brooklyn Rice, Southern Nash
 - Savannah Comstock, Wilson Hunt
 - Ava Jenkins, CB Aycock
 - Harper Wilson, Northern Nash
 - Jaide Simpkins, Wilson Fike
 - Emma Kornegay, Southern Wayne
 - Trinity Taylor, Rocky Mount
- Top Honors**
- Big East Conference Champion Coach of the Year -- Melanie Mercer, Southern Nash
 - Big East Conference Player of the Year -- Abigail Marks, Southern Nash

QCC FB

continued from page 1B

- interior of the defensive line.
- Whitaker excelled so much that he was tabbed as the Quad County Conference's Defensive Player of the Year while helping the Bulldogs reach the state playoffs.
- "It was a situation where we just kind of needed Jayden on defense," Lee said. "He responded to the challenge."
- "Not only did he play well on both sides of the ball, but he was also a leader for our team. He was a captain all season and was the only senior offensive lineman."
- "He'll end up playing in college somewhere -- it's just a matter of finding the right fit."
- And Whitaker's prep football career isn't quite over yet as he will participate in the prestigious East-West All-Star Football Game later thismonth in Greensboro.
- Bunn's Jessiel Romero was tabbed as the QCC Coach of the Year after leading the Wildcats to the regular season championship.
- Other top awards went to Louisburg's Mikah McKnight (Offensive Player of the Year), Wake Prep's Jayden Battle (Co-Special Teams Player of the Year) and Louisburg's Emmanuel Bulson (Co-Special Teams Player of the Year).
- The complete 2025 All-Quad County Conference Football Team is as follows:
- 2025 All-QCC Football Team**
- Clifton Kearney, Bunn
 - David Smith, Bunn
 - Spencer Riley, Bunn
 - Tyler Perry, Bunn
 - Josiah Rice, Bunn
 - Latavion Taborn, Bunn
 - Ta'Ron Mitchell, Bunn
 - Mahki Wilder, Bunn
 - Ethan Watkins, Bunn
 - John Turner, Bunn
 - Der'Ron Williams, Bunn
 - Ta'Shawn Crudup, Bunn
 - Austin Battle, Wake Prep
 - Landon Roberts, Wake Prep
 - Justin Battle, Wake Prep
 - Jackson Martin, Wake Prep
- Sandford Sweet, Wake Prep
 - Brad Strait, Wake Prep
 - Myles Peterson, Wake Prep
 - Noah Taylor, Wake Prep
 - Hudson Hill, Wake Prep
 - Jackson Waddle, Wake Prep
 - Caiden Gasiewicz, Louisburg
 - Demetrius Jacobs, Louisburg
 - Dondre Allen, Louisburg
 - Trashawn Manson, Louisburg
 - Travis Brown, Louisburg
 - Zachary Castenada, Louisburg
 - Jeremiah Closs, Louisburg
 - Chance Roberson, Louisburg
 - Avery Flowers, Nash Central
 - David Porter, Nash Central
 - Taliek Morris, Nash Central
 - Kameron Tucker, Nash Central
 - Liam Kopf, Nash Central
 - Braylon Whitley, Nash Central
 - ZaQuez Britt, Nash Central
 - Aiden Parks, Nash Central
 - Bobby Hawkins Jr., Roanoke Rapids
 - Quentez Richardson, Roanoke Rapids
 - JT Bolton, Roanoke Rapids
 - Holden Ford, Roanoke Rapids
 - Joe Huss, Roanoke Rapids
 - Wes Jenkins, Roanoke Rapids
 - Anthony Jimenez, ALA
 - Kegian Blanchard, ALA
 - Elijah Fulton, ALA
 - Josh Crenshaw, ALA
- Honorable Mention**
- Cayden Davis, Bunn
 - Kevin White, Louisburg
 - Bodie Williford, Wake Prep
 - Semaj Graham-Pierce, Roanoke Rapids
 - Demarr Williams, ALA
- Top Honors**
- Offensive Player of the Year -- Mikah McKnight, Louisburg
 - Defensive Player of the Year -- Jayden Whitaker, Nash Central
 - Co-Special Teams Player of the Year -- Jayden Battle, Wake Prep
 - Co-Special Teams Player of the Year -- Emmanuel Bulson, Louisburg High School
 - Coach of the Year -- Jessiel Romero, Bunn



Subscribe Today!

ONE YEAR
Nash County

\$40

the **NASHVILLE GRAPHIC**

Nash County's First Newspaper Since 1895

The Nashville Graphic • 203 W. Washington St • Nashville, NC 27856 • 252-459-7101