

2026 BIG EAST CONFERENCE FOOTBALL SEASON
SN STREAK SNAPPED



SOUTHERN NASH'S DJ BAKER TRIES TO TURN THE CORNER AGAINST RIVAL WILSON FIKE
(Photo Submitted by Carl Copeland)

Firebirds fall on the road against Wilson Fike



SOUTHERN NASH'S
TREY SMITH
By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

WILSON -- Multiple streaks fell within the Southern Nash High Football program last Friday night. Most recognizably, the Firebirds lost their first game since Sept. 4 and ended a three-game run of victories that included a come-from-behind rivalry win over Nash Central and

See FOOTBALL, Page 2B



SOUTHERN NASH'S DINYATRAL BLACKWELL CELEBRATES A BIG PLAY



2026 BIG EAST CONFERENCE GIRLS GOLFERS POSE TOGETHER
(Photo Submitted by Brian Taylor)

Fike Continues Big East Excellence
Demons undefeated as a team to date in conference action

From Staff Reports

MOUNT OLIVE -- Match Six of the Big East Conference girls golf season concluded just like all of the previous ones this fall -- with the Wilson Fike Lady Demons resting atop the score sheet. Fike's clean sweep of the Big East standings continued on September 28 at Southern Wayne Country Club as the Lady Demons secured the team victory with 129 strokes. CB Aycock was second at 143, followed by Northern Nash (156), Wilson Hunt (171) and Southern Nash (175).

Fike also boasted the Top-Three individual finishers, led by Loulie Harrison with an effective 42 on the challenging SWCC track. Harrison's heroics edged teammates Kensley Hill (43) and Payton Durham (44) for the medalist position. Northern Nash, coached by the legendary Brian Taylor, received a strong performance from freshman Emma Matthews, who carded a 47, which was good enough for a tie for fifth

See BE GOLF, Page 2B



NASH CENTRAL'S
BRAYLON WHITLEY



NASH CENTRAL'S
ELIJAH DUNN

Bulldogs stopped by L'burg

By CHANCE PUCKETT
Correspondent

LOUISBURG -- Unfortunately for the Nash Central High Bulldogs, win No. 1 of the Carter Varnell era has yet to make its way into the record books.



After a disappointing run in non-conference play that included losses to county foes Northern Nash, Southern Nash and Rocky Mount in addition

See NCHS, Page 2B



NASH CENTRAL'S
ELIN JOHNSON

NCHS golfers shine in QCC

From Staff Reports

ROCKY MOUNT -- The Nash Central Lady Bulldogs' golf season is winding down as the schedule moves into October. Faced with rebuilding the entire roster to start the season after having a team of seniors has been a



See NC GOLF, Page 2B



SOUTHERN'S ZAVAD CURTIS (6) BREAKS UP A PASS VS. FIKE

FOOTBALL

continued from page 1B

back-to-back Big East Conference triumphs over Southern Wayne and C.B. Aycock.

But on a bigger scale, Southern lost to longtime rival Fike for the first time since 2013, ending a run of 11-straight victories over the Golden Demons.

The final tally was 29-19 in Friday's matchup between Southern Nash and Fike, with the Golden Demons' frustratingly-balanced offense too much for the young and inexperienced Firebird defense to overcome.

Fike quarterback and Elon University commit Sam Finch threw for two touchdowns and ran for another in an impressive performance, something that's becoming a theme for the Golden Demon senior.

Finch finished the evening with 179 yards through the air and 34 more on the ground — spinning his two passing touchdowns to dangerous targets Darryl Loatman, who's also committed to Elon, and breakout junior Braylen Loftin.

As they almost always do, Southern Nash still managed to make its mark on the ground, ending the highly-anticipated matchup between the two schools with a whopping 281 rushing yards.

Junior D.J. Baker tabbed 157 rushing yards and two touchdowns while sophomore Trey Smith added 119 yards on 23 carries. Quarterback L.J. White found the end zone once as well on



NN'S PRESTON MCDANIEL

a keeper, but the efforts of the Southern Nash offense weren't enough — as the 'Birds were shut out in the second half.

Three games remain on the schedule for the now 4-3 Firebirds — with perhaps the team's trio of most difficult games within the league left to play. Southern has 6-0 Hunt, 4-2 Rocky Mount and 4-2 Northern Nash left on the schedule, with the Firebirds expected to be the underdog in each of their remaining contests.

Southern has lost its last two outings to Hunt, three of its last four to Rocky Mount, and seven of its last eight to Northern — so needless to say, a tough schedule lies ahead as the Firebirds hope to boost their résumé ahead of the postseason.

As for the Northern Nash Knights, head coach Andrew Farriss'

squad is riding the high of three consecutive victories after walloping conference foe C.B. Aycock 61-0 last Friday night.

The game between the Knights and Golden Falcons was quite frankly never competitive, with Northern racing out to a 28-0 lead in the first quarter and taking a 55-0 advantage into halftime.

Aycock finished with just 25 yards of total offense, all of which came through the air and courtesy of quarterback Justice Legg.

Northern's defense sacked Aycock eight times, as Tollie West IV, Holton Westbrook and Logan Lynch each registered two apiece while linebacker Derrek Morris contributed a game-high ten tackles.

The Knights recovered five fumbles and intercepted Legg once, while offensively Jaice Johnson threw for three touchdowns and Myles Eatmon led the way on the ground with 82 yards and one trip to the end zone.

This week's key matchup between Southern Nash and Hunt will be held in Stanhope at Firebird Stadium with kickoff set for 7 p.m., while its Homecoming Week on the campus of Northern Nash High School.

The Fighting Knights will face 3-4 Southern Wayne High School in Death Valley on the campus of Northern Nash High School on Friday night, with the contest also set for a 7 p.m. start.



NASH CENTRAL'S TRISTIAN WHITLEY CELEBRATES A BIG PLAY LAST FRIDAY NIGHT AGAINST LOUISBURG (Photos Submitted by Meryn Johnson)

NCHS

continued from page 1B

to Warren County and Varnell's former school SouthWest Edgecombe, the opportunity to reset things presented itself last Friday night.

The second year of Quad County Conference gridiron action began for Central last week with a trip to Louisburg — a squad that's off to a fast start after an 8-3 campaign in 2025.

Despite seven different Bulldog ball-carriers combining for an impressive 267 rushing yards, a pair of turnovers that resulted in defensive touchdowns for the Warriors proved to be too much for the Nash Central offense to overcome.

Early in the evening, Bulldog quarterback Emory Bynum was hit by sophomore defensive lineman Deaven Holmes — knocking the ball loose and allowing Holmes' trenchman counterpart Eli Jackson to scoop it and score from 15 yards out.

That turnover-turned-touchdown gave Louisburg an early 7-0 edge, with the Warriors defense building on an already-big night a few drives later.

Bynum — who ended the evening with 90 passing yards highlighted by a 35-yard connection with Tristian Whitley — was later intercepted — a turnover that was once again returned for a touchdown by the Warrior defense.

A pick-six that was registered by Louisburg senior Trashawn Manson, the top member of the Warriors' secondary, added to an already impressive 2026 résumé for the fourth-year defensive back.

The interception was Manson's

fourth of the season, but his first since Sept. 3. He also caused a fumble in Louisburg's Aug. 28 win over Southeast Collegiate Prep Academy — establishing himself early as one of the premier havoc-wreckers on the Warriors' stellar defense — one that's already pitched three shutouts this season.

Despite the loss, as they've seen all season there was noticeable growth within the now 0-6 Nash Central squad.

Six different ballcarriers for the Bulldogs registered runs of ten yards or more, with Varnell spreading the wealth amongst his talented backfield.

Sophomore stud Braylon Whitley led the way in the running game for Central with 88 yards, followed by senior Elijah Dunn who totaled 54 yards on the ground.

Sophomore Jontae Williams finished with 49 rushing yards while bruiser Avery Flowers ended the night with 40.

As 5-1 Louisburg now readies for American Leadership Academy - Johnston (ALAJ), Central is now set for a matchup with Roanoke Rapids in the Bulldogs' penultimate home game of 2026.

The Yellow Jackets are set to visit the Dawg Pound riding a three-game losing streak after starting the year at 3-0, having most recently surrendered 14 fourth-quarter points in a 23-14 loss to conference foe Wake Prep Academy.

This week's Homecoming night kickoff between Nash Central and Roanoke Rapids is slated for 7 p.m., and will be held on the campus of Nash Central High School.



2026 NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS GOLF TEAM

NC GOLF

continued from page 1B

challenge, but one that has been met.

The team consists of 8 girls, but many of them are pulling double duty as members of the school's JV volleyball team.

With one 9-hole match and the Quad County Conference 18-hole Championship match remaining on the schedule the Bulldogs are in third-place teamwise and only 18 shots behind Wake Prep Academy.

The girls continued to improve and shot a season best team score of 161 two weeks ago, and will serve as host to the final two matches of the season at Peachtree Golf

and Country Club.

Individually, the girls have improved week by week.

Sophomores Aubrey Poland and Elin Johnson each posted season best scores of 51 two weeks ago and are in the running for a Top-10 conference finish and all-conference honors — and hope to qualify for regionals.

This year's lone senior, Kimberly Ventura Vasquez, is playing her first year of golf and has worked hard all season in practice and is also in the running for all-conference honors.

So as the regular season is coming to a close the

Lady Bulldogs have a lot to play for and are ready to compete.

On September 23, the QCC played a match at The River Golf Club at Lake Royale in Franklin County.

American Leadership Academy of Johnson County was the team winner with a score of 153.

Nash Central was a solid second with its season-best performance of 161 strokes — three shots ahead of Wake Prep Academy.

Rounding out the team standings for the QCC girls golf matchup was Roanoke Rapids with a 172.

BE GOLF

continued from page 1B

place overall in the individual standings.

NN's Hayley Moss, a junior, also closed in the Top 10 -- 10th overall with a 51.

Southern Nash's best finish came courtesy of junior Bella McCullen, who fashioned a 57 -- good enough for a tie for 13th place.

Results from the event were as follows:

Big East Conference Girls Golf Team Scores

- 1) Wilson Fike 129
- 2) CB Aycock 143
- 3) Northern Nash 156
- 4) Wilson Hunt 171
- 5) Southern Nash 175
- 6) Southern Wayne 178

Top 20

Individuals

- 1) Loulie Harrison (Wilson Fike), 42 (Medalist)
- 2) Kensley Hill (Wilson Fike), 43
- 3) Payton Durham (Wilson Fike), 44

- 4) Katherine Horton (CB Aycock), 46
- 5) (tie), Emma Matthews (Northern Nash) and Addison Barnes (Wilson Fike), both with 47s

- 7) Sophie Lester Veal (CB Aycock), 48
- 8) Mikyla Cosgriff (CB Aycock), 49
- 9) Addison Brinkley (Wilson Fike), 50
- 10) Hayley Moss (Northern Nash), 51
- 11) Courtney Barfield (Wilson Hunt), 55

- 12) Ella Farmer (Wilson Hunt), 56
- 13) (tie) Bella McCullen (Southern Nash) and Ava Cooper (CB Aycock), both with 57s

- 15) (tie) Pier Rochelle (Northern Nash), Andrea Allen (CB Aycock) and Alondraa Perdomo (Southern Nash), all with 58s

- 18) (tie) Kenzie Johnson (Southern Wayne) and Camden Sullivan (Southern Wayne), both with 59s

- 20) (tie) Jenna Antill (Southern Nash), Julia Cox (Southern Wayne), Hadley Collins (Wilson Hunt), Ava Martin (Wilson Hunt) and Ashtyn Toler (CB Aycock), all with 60s